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Effect of competitive psychological climate on unethical pro-team behavior: The role of perceived insider status and transformational leadership

1. Introduction

The competitive environment of the 21st-century has been one of the most comprehensive concepts in organizations. The employee's behaviors that go beyond the job obligation get them involved to a great extent to demonstrate the extra motivation to execute their work responsibilities within the competitive situation. Nevertheless, theoretical compounds have pointed out that competition is important in pursuing organizational anticipation in a dynamic business circumstance. Consequently, competition is interpreted as the capacity to produce better work outcomes and a probability of pursuing organizational success (Crowley, 2004; Sauers & Bass, 1990). Prior research has demonstrated the positive side of competition and how people produce high job performance in the work environment (Parton & Neumann, 2019; Zhou & George, 2001). However, in a highly

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psychological competitive environment, the employee may not have given any help to their colleagues and supported them for their performance. Thus, it suggests that competition might negatively influence the work circumstances in the organization.

There is currently widely accepted consent that the competition mainly considers the unethical factors influencing those in out-group competitions (Barreto, Ellemers, & Bulletin, 2000; Tajfel, 1986; Thau, Derfler-Rozin, Pitesa, Mitchell, & Pillutla, 2015). Considering the facts, most scholars have not paid attention to this adverse competitive circumstance in the organization. The contemporary competitive environment generates unethical pro-team behaviors and remains in the organization's uncertainty context. Scholars have also not addressed how employees change their behaviors in that competitive work environment to produce unethical pro-team behaviors. Besides, they have not covered the influence of perceived insider status on unethical pro-team behavior (Ashforth, Gioia, Robinson, & Trevino, 2008; C. Moore, 2009; Zuber, 2015).

By summing up, the study contributes by answering the questions which are not raised by previous studies that; when and how the transformational leader influences to change the employee's unethical pro-teams' behaviors in the organization. Further, the dearth of research has been conducted in the Asian context under the organizational context. Therefore, the current study is conducted in the Asian context; a new theoretical perspective of the present study attempts to fill this research gap. Thus, firstly, this study seeks to investigate the relationship between psychological climate and unethical pro-team behavior. Secondly, it tries to explain how the transformational leader controls employee unethical pro-team behaviors in a competitive situation in the organizational and Asian context.

2. Literature Review

In the ethics literature, unethical pro-team behavior means the "behavior accruing benefits to the self that violates standards or rules" (Lisa L Shu, Francesca Gino, & Max H Bazerman, 2011). It is an ordinary function of unethical behavior that violates societal and moral standards of honesty and fairness to others. Scholars have gambled that certain factors within work environments intensify the self-interested propensities that promote unethical behavior (D. A. Moore & Loewenstein, 2004; Treviño, Nieuwenboer, & Kish-Gephart, 2014), and Shu et al. (2011) has revealed that 'More and more, employees are lying, scamming, and deceiving to advance their interests'. These behaviors are called

‘workplace cheating behavior’; unethical pro-team behaviors in the way that it has the purpose to create a discriminating advantage or help to accomplish benefits that an employee would not be entitled to receive. L. Wang, Malhotra, and Murnighan (2011) have proposed that organizations may be persuaded by self-interested and unethical behavior by enhancing employees, which is needed for self-protection. Nevertheless, most importantly, both subjective and empirical evidence suggest that unethical pro-team behavior occurs for the benefit of groups (Brief, Buttram, & Dukerich, 2001; Elizabeth E. Umphress & Bingham, 2011; E. E. Umphress, Bingham, & Mitchell, 2010) and it will harm to another group or individual in the process. Indeed, we know a bit about what motivates the group members to engage in pro-team unethical behaviors. Therefore, we argue that the organization’s unethical pro-team behaviors perceive success and failure, which may differ in the extent of competition intensity.

The concept of competitive psychological climate concept is well-defined as “the degree to which employees perceive organization rewards to be contingent on comparisons of their performance against their peers” (Brown, Cron, & Slocum Jr, 1998, p. 89). The psychological climates are frequently formed on the source of the work environment’s objective and are associated with the organizational climate (Fletcher, Major, & Davis, 2008; Imran, Saeed, Anis-Ul-Haq, & Fatima, 2010). Kohn (1992) states that intentional competitiveness is internal and “concerns the desire on the part of the individual to be the number one” (p. 4). Scholars empirically verify this individual perception of competitive psychological climate is more close to the individual-level outcomes, which are considered more objective illustrations of the organizational work environment (Jones, Davis, & Thomas, 2017; Haifeng Wang, Wang, & Liu, 2018).

Another fair argument is, the competitive psychological climate is linked with destructive work conditions that lead to unethical behaviors (Fletcher et al., 2008; Keller, Spurk, Baumeler, & Hirschi, 2016). Also, behaviors with high-risk and dark triad personalities are associated with the competitive psychological climate at work (Ordóñez, Schweitzer, Galinsky, & Bazerman, 2009; Spurk & Hirschi, 2018). Consequently, the psychological climate is significantly correlated with stress (Sahadev, Seshanna, & Purani, 2014). Furthermore, Buunk and Mussweiler (2001) have shown that comparison can increase the employee’s adverse effects or work stress (Černej, Nerstad, Dysvik, & Škerlavaj, 2014). Kohn (1992) has explained that the competition decreases the performance, motivation, and quality of the relationship while increasing the unethical behavior, anxiety, and aggression. The competitors have three raids against them. The first one is that they appear as an out-group member, the second one is that they are articulating selfish

motives, and the third one is that they contribute in uncertain information (Eliaz & Wu, 2018; Liao, 2015; Tanis & Postmes, 2005).

In a highly competitive psychological environment, behaviors might change as individuals could be manipulative, harsh, and hide the information because these behaviors pursue more benefits and power in the work environment. In the competitive psychological climate circumstance “organization insider” employees who think about self-identity, believe that their goal attainment has to be better than others, and want oneself to be the winners, and others to be the failures (Bell, Rogers, & Pearce, 2019; Mukherjee, Huang, Neidhardt, Uzzi, & Contractor, 2019; Garcia, Tor, & Schiff, 2013; Gibson, Harari, Marr, & Processes, 2018). However, employees’ perceived insider status can originate from the individual’s self-value, based on their identity. It may be advantageous to the individual’s self-concept and identity (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Horng, Tsai, Hu, & Liu, 2015). Competitive employees continually compare their movement in progress with other team members. They try to be the best person in the group as well as in the organization. As a result, they frequently tend to work hard to fulfill their desire with inner motivation in achieving their goals by challenging other teams in competitive situations (Schrock, Hughes, Fu, Richards, & Jones, 2016). Sometimes, their construal level triggers them to take charge (Kumar et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the employee’s status of the self-conception of their role makes them feel that they are the organization’s insiders with positive interactions based on the organizational identity (Hongli Wang, Feng, Prevellic, & Wu, 2017). Therefore, as per their expectations during the execution process, perceived insider status at a high-level behavioral tendency is to continue and fulfill the task of the organization (Chen, Liao, Wu, & Zhang, 2017; Hongli Wang et al., 2017) that seeks established and specific types of psychological behaviors. In this sense, the competition aspiration positively directs the changes in that environment, which addresses the organization’s unethical pro-team behaviors.

Perceived insider status has been interpreted as the “significant dimension of self-concept”(Fumeng, 2017). It is described as an “individual’s interpretation and psychological awareness of relationship” at the anticipated level (Chen et al., 2017). The perceived insider status has been realized as one that stimulates the achievement of the two main organizational effectiveness goals. One of the critical factors is a high performance, and another factor is high employee performance, a fictional role as an “insider” in the organization (Ding & Shen, 2017; Stamper & Masterson, 2002; Hongli Wang et al., 2017). Insider status assists the employee in realizing his/her competitive objectives.

Conversely, we assume that individuals with a high insider employee exceptionally think about the “insider” organization elements, and especially employee has more salient acting behavior about their career success under the competitive psychological climate. Besides, the perceived competitive climate may intensify the fear of losing identity, and serving behavior revealed to be highly stressful and threatening. According to Nerstad, Dysvik, Kuvaas, and Buch (2018), a competitive climate may stimulate employees to behave in unprincipled ways by giving importance to self-interests. Based on the competitor’s self-esteem, the competition will be arising between teams, status, and organization and create complex negative perceptions, such as; discouragement that incorporates information related to the unethical behaviors (Mudrack, Bloodgood, & Turnley, 2012). Mitchell, Baer, Ambrose, Folger, and Palmer (2018) have explained that the human constitutions towards self-preservation from pressures at work may be a widespread existence of unethical acts. Consequently, it is paired with negative consequences. Based on this self -evaluation, their unethical behaviors against the other employees who work in the organization alternatively get raised.

Compared to the traditional top-down approach, leaders with self-efficacy may choose to exert their influence when it is not necessary for a work circumstance (Owens & Hekman, 2012, 2016). Hence, the influence of leader self-effacement can be substituted more easily by other factors due to transformational leaders’ professional decisions (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015; Li, Mitchell, & Boyle, 2016). Moreover, many other researchers have argued that a transformational leader is a salient substitute for reducing unethical behaviors because the leader triggers employees to specify contingencies of self-reinforcement instrumentally (Yıldız & Şimşek, 2016; Zhu & Bao, 2017). Hence, the influence of leader self-effacement can be substituted more easily by other factors due to transformational leaders’ professional decisions (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015; Li et al., 2016). Transformational leadership behaviors include “individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence.” Transformational leaders who deal with these four behaviors achieve far more extended goals through higher employees’ efforts and experience higher employee satisfaction (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994).

The group-level transformational leader is “behavior aiming to communicate the importance of group goals, develop shared values and beliefs, and inspire unified effort to achieve group goals.” At the same time, at the individual level, a transformational leader is as “behavior aiming to empower individual followers to develop their full potential, to enhance their abilities and skills, and improve their self-efficacy and self-esteem” (X.-H. F. Wang & Howell, 2010). Our study

attempts to provide theoretical evidence which is further supported by empirical findings that transformational leaders engage in internal motivations of the employee. It improves the understanding of specific facts about transformational leadership, links self-efficacy theory, and expands the competition and unethical pro-team behaviors.

This study is the first to integrate transformational leadership that influences the reduction of unethical pro-team behavior in the organization context. The relevant literature is ordered according to the importance of each variable under the theoretical perspective. This study's primary focus is to investigate how employees within competitive psychological climate circumstances tend to be unethical pro-team behaviors and how transformational leadership behavior influences to reduce pro-team unethical behavior in the organization.

3. Hypotheses Development and Conceptual Model

We argue that employees are likely to engage in more unethical pro-team behaviors to strengthen their current performance with winning intentions when an organization arranges a more competitive psychological climate. It has already proven for their effectiveness by producing satisfactory consequences.

The development of the hypotheses for the competitive psychological climate, the unethical pro-team behaviors, and perceived insider status has the practice of testing each dimension as an independent and a dependent variable. Therefore, the hypothesis is to be tested as follows.

***Hypothesis 1:** There is a positive relationship between the competitive psychological climate and the unethical pro-team behaviors*

***Hypothesis 2:** There is a positive relationship between the competitive psychological climate and the perceived insider status.*

Houston, Harris, Howansky, and Houston (2015) discovered that competing with other employees can moderate stereotyping consequences with actions that significantly affect the relationship (Tanis & Postmes, 2005). As a result, the employee frequently behaves in a particular way to see in-group competitors as unique individuals and out-group as a non-unique member (Lin, Clay, Hajli, & Dadgar, 2018; Zhang, Jex, Peng, & Wang, 2017). Employees want to be the best person; thus, they always compare their performance with other employees and have a strong desire to win the competition. Apart from conventional resources, the current study intends to be explanatory. It utilizes quantitative techniques that have not been applied before, which is regarded as an important reason for

studying competitive psychological climate that provides a perceived “insider” status and unethical pro-team behaviors in the organization.

The reason for selecting perceived insider status is, it mediates the relationship between competitive climate to represent people’s social identity and self-conception as an insider of organization strengths rather than the weaknesses in the competitive work environment aspects. Most studies have labeled that perceived insider status demonstrates a positive relationship with ethical behaviors (Bell et al., 2019; Caron, Asselin, Beaudoin, & Muresanu, 2019; Hongli Wang et al., 2017). We, whereas, have worked on perceived insider status in a reserved-way. According to us, perceived insider status determines that employees act negatively to approach unethical behaviors in the competitive work environment. Therefore, as perceived insider status increases above the aspiration level, employees are likely to address unethical pro-team behaviors.

The unethical behaviors are initiated by the motivation to change, followed by the psychological climate, and perceived insider status via decreased social identity and efforts direct employees’ actions (Gardner, 2012). In the meantime, on the negative side of the competition, as opposed to accepting moral norms in the work environment, there is no motivation for them to change the existing routines, for instance; honesty, and treating people, respectively. Therefore, it is essential to signify the strengths of the perceived insider status that influences the unethical pro-team behaviors and mediate the relationship among competitive psychological climate and unethical pro-team behaviors. Based on observations, this study proposes the following hypothesis under the mediation effect of the perceived insider status;

Hypothesis 3: *There is a positive relationship between the perceived insider status and unethical pro team behaviors.*

Hypothesis 4: *Perceived insider status mediates the relationship between competitive psychological climate and pro-team unethical behaviors.*

The transformational leader will delegate more responsibility to the employee, which is associated with increased employee empowerment and high-quality, ethical behaviors (Carleton, Barling, & Trivisonno, 2018). Miscommunication and misunderstanding between employees and leaders have proved to be counterproductive for many organizations. The organization leader would be wise enough to consider these factors, as they work to conduct their affairs with honesty and integrity for extra alternative solutions regarding this problem. Notably, how the transformational leader behavior influences to reduce the unethical pro-team behavior under the organizational context is the unexplored

topic. This research develops a theoretical bridge among the competitive climate, perceived insider status, and transformational leadership, which has not been discussed in previous studies.

To sum up, we theorize that transformational leadership moderates the relationship between psychological climate and perceived insider status on the unethical pro-team behaviors. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed for this study;

Hypothesis 5: Transformational leadership moderates the relationship between competitive psychological climate and unethical pro team behavior. Such that transformational leadership is higher, tending to weaken the relationship.

3.1. Conceptual framework

Unethical pro-team behaviors are defined as generating useful ideas better to understand its impact on the organization's employees. A competitive psychological climate as an independent variable is considered a forerunner to another subsequent circumstance, which is more appropriate for capturing unethical pro-team behaviors. Perceived insider status is regarded as a mediator, and transformational leadership is the moderating variable in this concept.

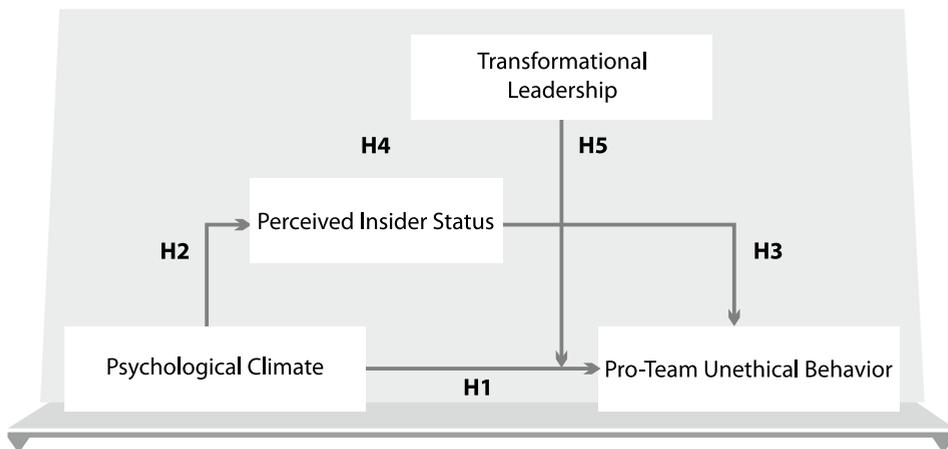


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: own study

The theoretical and empirical review has successfully attempted to build an argument on how transformational leadership influences to reduce the employee's unethical pro-team behaviors. In particular, the current study advances and tests the prediction that either offered inconclusive and conflicting findings on how competition work environment produces unethical pro-teams behavior. Hence the theoretical model is depicted in figure 1.

4. Research Methodology

The researcher conducted a survey to understand the unethical pro-team behaviors and its linkage with psychological climate and transformational leadership at financial companies in Sri Lanka. The sample of this empirical study was drawn from the financial companies which are listed in the central bank of Sri Lanka. The researchers have abundant reasons for selecting the employee of the finance company for the present study. Firstly, the emergence of finance companies in Sri Lanka is relatively visible. Sri Lanka as a developing country provides various business opportunities for those who are entering the market. Thus, there are plenty of research opportunities created through finance company who are entering the business. Secondly, there is dearth of research focused on finance companies in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the Business today 2018-2019 indicates the manner in which the banking and financial sectors have performed even through challenging times. They have rationalized their strategies and processes to ensure that the organization performs the customers for benefits. Larger businesses too have performed but in a more submissive manner.

4.1. Questionnaire Design

A structured questionnaire was designed based on the mature construct used in previous studies. The researcher used the measurement scales which have already been established and ensured the validity and reliability. Using the following self-reported scales, the participants were instructed to rate the construct's statement on a seventh-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree: 7=strongly agree).

The psychological climate was measured using the questions developed by Fletcher et al. (2008), with minor modifications to fit the current study. Four items for transformational leadership were adopted from X.-H. F. Wang and Howell (2010), with three dimensions of high communicating expectations, group

vision, and team building, four items for unethical pro-team behaviors were adopted from Thau et al. (2015). Perceived insider status scale items were adopted from Stamper and Masterson (2002); modeling the individual determinants of perceived insider status. These scales have been shown more reliable, efficient, and factorially valid measure in the research.

4.2. The Procedure of Data Analysis

The main aim of this research is to determine the influential factors of the competition climate, and how they affect the unethical pro-team behaviors in the work circumstances by developing and testing an amalgamated model of the antecedents. "Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)" was used to accomplish the research objective of the study. The "PLS Algorithm" was used to identify data calculating the measurement model (outer model), such as; item reliability and validity. Secondly, we estimated the structural model (inner model) to identify the hypothesized relationship's strength among the endogenous and exogenous latent variables.

4.3. Evaluation of Outer Measurement Model

4.3.1. Reliability and Validity

Composite and individual reliability, convergent validity, collinearity among indicators, significance and relevance of Outer weights, and discriminant validity were used to evaluate the "measurement model." Based on the above scales' values of five variables resembled the high internal consistency of the measurement model in this study.

The reliability analysis of 04 constructs of this study was performed by using Cronbach's (α). The reliability of all constructs is illustrated in table 1. The table represents that all the constructs' Cronbach's value is found $\alpha > 0.813$ (closer to 0.9 and above), which is considered highly reliable in this study.

The composite Reliability scale for competitive psychological climate (.935), Transformational leader (.843), Perceived insider status (.929), and Unethical pro-team behaviors (.926) values were more significant than 0.8. Based on the composite reliability, four variables resembled the high internal consistency of measurement scales in this study.

Table 1 further presents construct items loadings, Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, Composite Reliability, rho_A, and Average Variance Extracted. The

Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for all scales are as follows; psychological climate $\alpha=0.913$, transformational leader $\alpha=0.813$, perceived insider status $\alpha=0.904$, and unethical pro-team behaviors $\alpha=0.893$. Composite Reliability is above 0.843, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is; psychological climate 0.741, transformational leader 0.675, perceived insider status 0.723, and unethical pro-team behaviors 0.757.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity

Main Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Psychological climate	PHYC1	0.891	0.913	0.913	0.935	0.741
	PHYC2	0.863				
	PHYC3	0.847				
	PHYC4	0.861				
	PHYC5	0.841				
Transformational leader	TL1	0.722	0.813	1.144	0.843	0.675
	TL2	0.733				
	TL3	0.835				
	TL4	0.868				
Perceived insider status	PIS1	0.844	0.904	0.905	0.929	0.723
	PIS2	0.845				
	PIS3	0.852				
	PIS4	0.859				
	PIS5	0.853				
Unethical pro-team behaviors	UB1	0.873	0.893	0.893	0.926	0.757
	UB2	0.869				
	UB3	0.862				
	UB4	0.877				

Source: own study

4.4. Evaluation of the Inner Structural Model

The second step is to conduct a structural model evaluation to examine the hypothesized relationships among the proposed model's latent constructs. The "structural model" represents the theory with some structural equations; this is usually portrayed with a visual diagram. The structural model was tested using

five standers keys. “The coefficient of determination (R2)”, “Path coefficient (β value) and T-statistic value,” “Effect size (f^2)”, “the Predictive relevance of the model (Q2)”, and “Goodness-of-Fit (GOF)” are the key for evaluating the structural model.

4.4.1. The Coefficient of Determination (R2)

In this study, the coefficient of determination of perceived insider status and unethical pro-team behavior values was illustrated with 0.588, regarded as moderate, and 0.866 is regarded as substantial. This value specifies significant variance in the quality, respectively. According to table 2, the values are acceptable and considerable for further study.

Table 2. Square Adjusted

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Perceived insider status	0.588	0.591	0.045	12.969	0.000
Unethical pro-team behaviors	0.866	0.869	0.015	59.073	0.000

Source: own study

4.4.2. Predictive Relevance of the Model (Q2)

In the SEM, path endogenous latent construct should be greater than zero to better predictive endogenous construct validity. In PLS, blindfolding is used to assess predictive relevance. Cross-validation redundancy and cross-validation communality are the two ways that PLS assesses the predictive relevance. In this model, the Cross-validation redundancy and cross-validation communality values are given in table 3, and all the values are greater than zero. It demonstrated that the path model’s predictive relevance was at a satisfactory level.

Table 3. Cross-Validation Redundancy

	Q ² - CVR	Q ² - CVC
Psychological climate		0.576
Perceived insider status	0.399	0.554
Transformational leader		0.303
Unethical pro-team behaviors	0.617	0.553

Source: own study

4.4.3. Goodness-of-Fit Index

According to Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin, and Lauro (2005), the goodness-of-Fit (GOF) index is appropriate for assessing model fitness. Comprehensive validation of the path model values is; 0.10 (small), 0.25 (medium), and 0.36 (large), which indicates model fit respectively. Table 4 indicates the GOF calculation for the model, and the value is well ahead of the threshold values (0.71895). Therefore, it indicates that this model has strong goodness of fit.

Table 4. Goodness of Fit Index (GOF)

	AVE	R Squared	GOF Calculation
Psychological climate	0.741		
Perceived insider status	0.723	0.588	$\sqrt{\text{Average AVE} \times \text{Average R Squared}}$
Transformational leader	0.575		
Unethical pro-team behaviors	0.757	0.866	
Average	0.711	0.727	
GOF	$\sqrt{0.711 \times 0.727}$	$\sqrt{0.5168}$	0.71895

Source: own study

4.4.4. Correlation Coefficient of Latent Variables

Perceived insider status, psychological climate, and transformational leader positively correlated with each variable and statistically significant. In this study, the result is presented in table 5.

Table 5. Correlation Coefficient of Latent Variable

	Psychological climate	Perceived insider status	Transformational leader	Unethical pro-team behaviors
Psychological climate	1.000			
Perceived insider status	0.762	1.000		
Transformational leader	0.377	0.268	1.000	
Unethical pro-team behaviors	0.888	0.815	0.372	1.000

Source: own study

4.5. Hypotheses Testing Result and Findings

Hypotheses predicted that psychological climate is positively associated with unethical pro-team behaviors ($O=527$, $P=0.000$), and psychological climate has a positive impact on the perceived insider status ($O= .682$, $p < 0.000$). Therefore, hypotheses H1 and H2 were supported. Perceived insider status is positively associated with unethical pro-team behaviors ($O = .299$, $p < 0.000$), which supported hypothesis H3. The results of hypotheses H1, H2, and H3, related to direct effects, are presented in table 6.

Table 6. Direct Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	p-Value
Psychological climate -> Perceived insider status	0.682	0.681	0.046	14.695	0.000

Psychological climate -> Unethical pro-team behaviors	0.527	0.525	0.046	11.544	0.000
Perceived insider status -> Unethical pro-team behaviors	0.299	0.300	0.042	7.051	0.000

Source: own study

4.5.1. Indirect effect

Perceived insider status positively impacts the association between psychological climate and unethical pro-team behaviors ($O = .204$, $p = 0.000$). As a result, hypothesis 04 was supported. Table 7 presented the indirect effect.

Table 7. Indirect Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	p-Value
Psychological climate -> Perceived insider status -> Unethical pro-team behaviors	0.204	0.204	0.030	6.798	0.000

Source: own study

4.5.2. Moderation Effects

It indicates the presence of the moderation effect of a transformational leader in the relationship between psychological climate and unethical pro-team behaviors. The interaction term of psychological climate and unethical pro-team behaviors is statistically significant ($O = -0.093$, $t = 1.980$, $p = 0.048$). Thus, Hypothesis 05 was supported. Figure 2 has shown the interaction of the moderation effect and path coefficient, respectively.

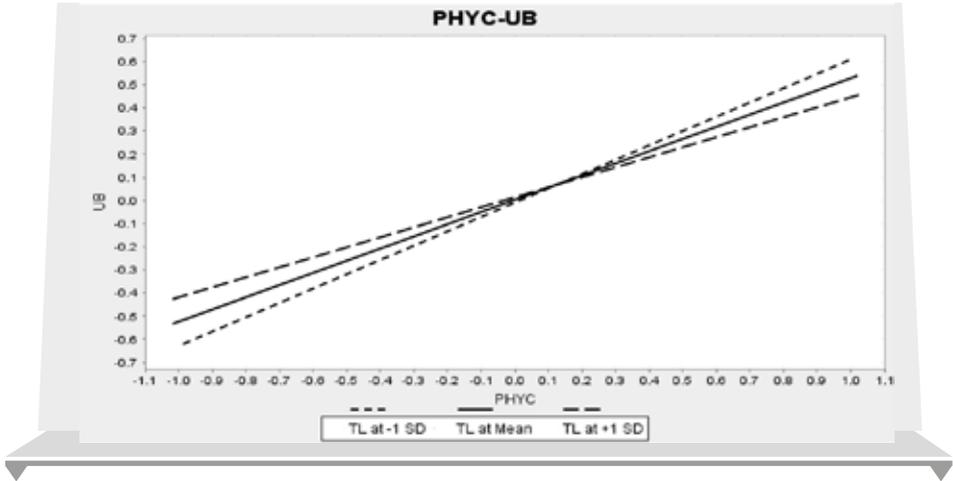


Figure 2. Graphical Representation of the Moderation Effect

Source: own study

5. Discussion

This study's main focus was to investigate how employees within a competitive psychological climate tend to be involved in unethical pro-team behaviors and how transformational leadership behavior influences to reduce pro-team unethical behavior in the financial companies in Sri Lanka. Therefore, perceived insider status was considered as the mediating variable, whereas transformational leader as a moderator. The study used a quantitative methodology to obtain quantitative analysis data to explore the relationships proposed in the conceptual model. A questionnaire was developed by borrowing items from previously developed scales to collect information on the constructs of interest. The researcher used the measurement scales which have already been established and ensured for validity and reliability.

A total of 426 questionnaires were retained for data analysis. The results also indicated that the psychological climate relationships are the main subject to change the boundary conditions of competition intensity in the organization. Particularly, the first step was to conduct a "measurement model" evaluation to achieve the reliability and validity of latent constructs

using the PLS Algorithm. Once the measurement model was confirmed, the second step was to conduct a structural model evaluation to examine the hypothesized relationships among the exogenous and endogenous latent variables relationships.

The higher level of competitive psychological climate in the workplace provides long-term negative effects on employees' attitudes and behaviors, generating low productivity. Competition stimulates employees to compare their performance with other employees who work with them in the same organization. Employees willingly compare their performance with other team members during the competition circumstance. Therefore, employees have begun to feel very intense and stressful. Employees may hide the knowledge and information from their colleagues in a competitive climate and engage in less cooperative and more self-interested behaviors. Consequently, they frequently tend to work hard to fulfill their desire with inner motivation and achieve their goals by challenging other teams in competitive situations. However, employees enter the competition to "win" deliberately, which might lead them to unethical pro-team behavior.

In this study, results highlight the importance of competition; when engaging in comparison, employees do not meet the organization's satisfaction levels. Their yearning to success and to be better than other employees will push them towards unethical pro-team behaviors. Consequently, according to the results, the proposed theoretical model has significantly supported the relationships between the psychological climate and unethical behaviors. This study's results are impressive because it was expected that a perceived insider status employee would maintain their identity as an insider in the organization that ensures the closer alignment with unethical pro-team behaviors in the competitive circumstances. The results show that perceived insider status exerts a positive effect on unethical behaviors. Thus, the analysis result revealed that perceived insider status significantly mediates the relationship between psychological climate and pro-team unethical behavior.

This leader behavior reflects that transformational leaders will weaken the psychological climate's effect on an unethical pro-team behavior relationship. The results of this research reveal a negative but significant moderation by the transformational leader in this relationship. This may happen because, at a group level, a transformational leader will teach the team to work on standard practices within the organization, to build cohesion within the teams and outside of the team.

5.2. Implications of the Study

5.2.1. Theoretical

The findings of our study make several important contributions to literature and organizational to practical implications. These studies offer several noteworthy theoretical contributions to research literature. First, the organization's management is gaining greater attention to psychological competition, but this phenomenon barely has been examined by using the best industry framework. Thereby, this study improves and extends the current understanding of competition circumstances. Hence, it crafts a new direction to develop theoretical foundations in managing psychological competition. This enhanced access to unethical pro team behaviors. To reduce unethical behaviors, leaders should make great efforts to create a healthy work environment with a competitive psychological climate and reduce unethical behaviors. A competitive environment is encouraged by leaders to achieve the task goals in the organization. However, if competition behaviors become challenging and more motivation to produce unethical behaviors, the leader should impose restrictions on employee behaviors. Therefore, leaders must control the more competitive situation and create a positive work environment for their employees to help diminish the effect of negative behaviors that affect the out-group members. Finally, from the perception that employees should express up, both team competition and leader self-efficacy will encourage team information exchange by adoring balanced information processing. Transformational leaders will analyze evidence objectively and see the sights of other people's thoughts before creation decisions, which will broadly inspire information exchange between employees. Our study's findings emphasized that psychological competition variables well explain why and when a transformational leader may conduct different types of strategies activities in different degrees.

5.2.2 Practical

These studies have several substantial practical and managerial implications for organization leaders. Primarily, despite the common belief that competitive work environment enables one to achieve organizational performance. Our study's empirical results demonstrate that psychological competition factors trigger unethical pro-team behaviors in the organization. First, managers should acknowledge competition activities. They should know that the competitions vary to a greater degree based on employee's competitive behaviors. Increased

unethical pro team behaviors could cause financial losses due to unfounded and unethical activity in the organization. Moreover, our research provides a deeper understanding of how “organization “insider” might function in a competitive work environment. Perceived insider status gives the impression to pull people to unethical behaviors diminish in production. Hence, this kind of understanding is crucial for managers to decide what and when psychological competition investments they should make.

Second, this study findings suggest that managers need to formulate and execute different strategies in a competitive work environment. In this regard, the top management and other executives should work together in achieving alignment, thus adjusting between competition and competitive employees. Managers should pay more courtesy in expressing strategic mechanisms to ensure that the managing competition environment.

Third, the study offers a practical guide to the corporate leaders in making decisions to generate competition values. Corporate leaders and practitioners recognize that competition work environment decisions should be headed not only to competition employees but also to consider the dynamic environment’s multifaceted nature. As a result, a leader should identify the ways to build a firm-wide competition capability and should do much more than merely investing by systematically examining business goals and environmental conditions. In this aspect, self-assessment (strengths vs. weaknesses), compare themselves with other competitors in the industry, and benchmarking are the potential ways to build strong dynamic competition capability. Further, similar to other progress monitoring indices, the firm should develop agility benchmarking indices for essential that allows management to evaluate where they are now, where they actually want to be, what needs to be improved from an agility perspective. Thereby, the study presents a set of actionable guidelines to managers for a richer managerial direction that emphasizes the vital role of succeeding agility and organization innovative capability.

The study has shown that the leader will delegate more responsibility to the employee, which is associated with increased employee empowerment and, thus, high-quality, ethical behaviors. Proper management calls for the appropriate issuance of effective responses to employees’ actions and effective communication to confirm that employees understand instructions given to them by their leader.

5.3. Limitation and Future Research Direction

While this study provides a new perspective for understanding when and why employees engage in pro-team unethical activities, we also acknowledge a few limitations of the research and offer a few directions for future research. First, this self-reported information's validity is questionable since the finance company employee can either overemphasize or undervalue their behaviors depending on their different purposes.

Limitations of self-reported data can be moderated by employing a few other alternative measures. Therefore, rather than mentioning one particular employee source, future studies can use multiple sources, such as asking questions from leaders and employees to assess more accurately. In this study, we limited one respondent to represent the whole organization. Further, suppose this study could have collected data from multiple respondents from leaders and different functional areas. In that case, the findings might provide a richer and better understanding of the organization's competition work circumstances.

Future research can apply these findings in other various contexts like developed contexts is necessary. Such tests can be conducted at the country level with various environmental influences. The researcher encourages future researchers, especially to extend this study in an emerging economy context where the employee contributes to economic development. Future rigorous studies can be designed and conducted in comparing across multiple countries, including world-leading economic countries, will produce superior insights.

5.4. Conclusions

Our study's objective was to expand the present understanding of the psychological climate effect on unethical pro-team behaviors—the data collected from sales representatives in finance company in Sri Lanka. The data analysis result has supported the measurement model and supported the hypothesized relationships in the structural model. We attempted to answer why employees engage in different types of behaviors in the competitive work environment. It answered that the psychological climate is likely to impact unethical pro-team behaviors due to their differences in target archives. Competitive employee considers their identity; thus, they may change their attitudes and behaviors. According to this kind of behavior, leaders tend to moderate employee behaviors. Leaders may impact psychological perception about the organization and eventually on the organization's unethical pro-team behaviors.

We theorized that the psychological climate and perceived insider status significantly affect unethical pro-team behaviors. Besides, perceived insider status's mediating effect has a considerable association between psychological climate on unethical pro-team behaviors. In that sense, the indirect effect and the direct effect are significant and point in the same direction. Nevertheless, leaders are more likely to use strategies to address and reduce these unethical pro-team behaviors. Therefore, our results indicate that transformational leaders use different types of behavioral motives for employees in a competitive situation.

Summary

Effect of competitive psychological climate on unethical pro-team behavior: The role of perceived insider status and transformational leadership

The purpose of this study is to explain why employees in financial companies in Sri Lanka are likely to engage in unethical pro-team behaviors and how transformational leaders involve controlling unethical pro-team behaviors in a competitive work environment. The study employed a quantitative approach to investigate the association between the competitive psychological climate and perceived insider status on unethical pro-team behaviors. The authors collected data from 426 sales representatives at a finance company in Sri Lanka and tested hypotheses using Structural Equation Modelling analyses through Smart PLS version 3. The results indicate that competitive psychological climate and perceived insider status are positively associated with unethical pro-team behaviors. Further, the transformational leadership's moderation is negatively significant on the relationship between competitive psychological climate and unethical pro-team behaviors. The study has shown that the leader will delegate more responsibility to the employee, associated with increased employee empowerment and high-quality, ethical behaviors. Besides, it contributes to the literature as of the new theoretical base and offers practical implications with the richer view of a nomological link between the leader, competitive employee, and competitive work environment.

Keywords: *Competitive Psychological Climate, Transformational Leadership, Perceived Insider Status, Unethical Pro-Team Behaviors.*

JEL

Classification: O15 - D2- D23.

Declaration of Interest

Statement: Authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical

Consideration: Participants were informed prior to the survey regarding the purpose of research and were given assurance for the confidentiality of data.

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