



## Examining Etiological Connection between Antisocial Behavior and Moral Disengagement: Evidence from Tourism & Hospitality Sector



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**Abstract** *It is estimated that by 2025, tourism & hospitality sector will contribute US\$7.1 billion (Rs 1 trillion) to the economy of Pakistan. However, one can only attach such high hopes to this sector when human resource in this sector displays prosocial behavior to both domestic and foreign tourists. The objective of the study is to examine the level of antisocial behavior of the managers working in this sector and test its relationship with moral disengagement. We also examine ethical orientation as mediator and ethical leadership as moderator in this relationship. Data were collected from 253 managers working in the hospitality and tourism sector of Pakistan. We find that moral disengagement has significant effect in promoting anti-social behavior by easing and expediting a process where actors convince themselves that ethical standard do not apply on them. We also find that ethical orientation mediates and ethical leadership moderates this relationship respectively.*

**Key Words:** Moral Disengagement, Anti-Social Behavior, Ethical Orientation, Ethical Leadership

### Introduction

With every new corporate and business scandal surfacing, the term morality comes into limelight. Morality, according to [Kohlberg \(1973\)](#), is key to all models of psychological improvement. In this connection, however, moral thoughts and development have dominated the scholarly discourse while moral conduct as an important aspect of morality remained under-emphasized in most of the theories of psychology and moral agency. In view of such a growing disregard of moral conduct, [Bandura & associates \(1996\)](#) introduced Moral Disengagement theory. These authors found that moral disengagement is actually a procedure through which individuals legitimize their activities—e.g., aggressive or bad or immoral behavior (Bandura et al. 1996; [Vollum, Vollum, and Longmire, 2004](#)).

Moral disengagement is considered important for examining and explaining the way people can draw transgression, for example, corruption, military and political savagery or corporate violence ([Bandura, Caprara, and Zsolnai, 2000](#); [Zheng et al., 2019](#)). [Cimbora and McIntosh \(2003\)](#) proposed that individual's moral conduct and disengagement might be a key to understanding anti-social behavior. It is asserted that anti-social behavior is stimulated by sentiments of dissatisfaction and inadequacy established when someone faced humiliation, rejection and degradation ([Donnellan et al., 2005](#)). It consists of the activities that damage the wellbeing and prosperity of other people ([Hyde, Shaw, and Moilanen, 2010](#)). This explanatory study shall fill this gap by studying how moral disengagement effects anti-social behavior.

In broader sense, ethical and Moral values are related to the employee's ethical orientation. Whatever is taken as ethical or moral in one organization might be different in others and at times might be viewed as unethical or immoral in other organization (Chiu, 2003). Ethical orientation fundamentally comprises of essential orientation—i.e., utilization of employees in making ethical decisions, creating an environment of trustworthiness and justice, developing self-interest, cultural recognition and utilitarianism ([Uyar & Ozer, 2011](#)). Previous researchers suggested that ethical orientation of the employees influences moral behaviors ([Alder, Schminke, Noel, and Kuenzi, 2008](#)). While ethical orientation may affect behavior (anti-social behavior), we aim to check if the relationship of moral disengagement with anti-social behavior could be mediated by ethical orientation. We also bring the Ethical leadership into the equation and examine if the effect of moral disengagement on ethical orientation is mediated through ethical leadership. In a rapidly growing tourism sector of an emerging country—i.e., Pakistan, this study is inevitable as research that

examines this set of variables involving tourism & hospitality industry of Pakistan is virtually non-existent.

## Literature Review

### Moral Disengagement

Moral disengagement is a procedure through which an individual disengages herself from the self-sanctions or be able to defend his or her hostile, bad or destructive behavior. According to Bandura (1986) moral self-sanctions are considered as important to regulate behavior. Bandura (1986) was the one who introduces the concept of moral disengagement that he adds in his theory of social cognitive. He further added Social cognitive theory by describing it as abilities of self-judgment to work more appropriately, through the help of self-administration bad or hostile behavior are easily predictable, individuals suppose that they might be indulged in the conducts that strife their hidden principles of moral behavior ([Bandura, 1989](#)). Social cognitive theory describes that how self-regulatory procedures may be failed once the process of moral disengagement restricts organizations among hostile and self-sanctioning behavior that should disappoint it ([Bandura, 1999, 2002](#)).

### Anti-Social Behavior (ASB)

Literature of previous few decades represents various types of behavior that are considered moral or immoral and bad or good for organizations are under debate. In the recent literature consideration towards the bad or hostile behaviors has been increased because it was considered as destructive or damaging environment of the organization which also affects the functioning of the organization to perform task (Griffin and Lopez, 2005). The term Anti-social behavior is considered as a destructive behavior and badly effects its stakeholders, workers of the organizations, organization itself ([Henle, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2005](#)). In another study [Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly \(1998\)](#) argued that Bad or destructive behaviors in an organization are known as ASB. Anti-social work environment is characterized as activities which are produce or bring physical, emotional and monetary damage to organization and its workforce. further [Sage and Kavussanu \(2008\)](#) added to this by suggesting that it has been utilized to allude to the morality and inhibitive behaviors. According to [Sage, Kavussanu and Duda \(2006\)](#), in nature ASB are considered voluntary and they will also badly affect other people.

## Hypothesis Development

### Moral Disengagement and ASB

Previous studies represent that whenever the worker in the organization get unfair and unequal treatment, they are bound to display behaviors that damage the association or its workers ([Kavussanu, 2014](#)). Moral contradiction isn't just effects one single level however it also effects social systems at broader levels ([Jones et al., 2017](#)). This is very necessary to understand that when at societal, cultural and corporate level the process of moral disengagement are normal then these processes are across the board and they also affect and give harm to others (Bandura, Caoprara, and Zsolnai, 2000). With the help of moral difference ordinary individuals submit activities that are awful against others.

Bandura et al. (1996) in their study proposed that Moral Disengagement theory tells about different kinds of unethical behaviors, it has blend of approaches of social cognition and morality ([Arsenio and Lemerise, 2004](#)). Moral disengagement procedure is useful to test the impact of moral disengagement on ASB. On the off chance that one individual benefit someone or immoral to another, the other ought to react too. moral disengagement is related with negative consequences such as deviant workplace behavior (Hershcovis et al., 2007; [Hyde, Shaw, and Moilanen, 2010](#)), mental distress ([Grandey, Kern and Frone, 2007](#)) and furthermore ASB ([Boardley and Kavussanu, 2009](#)).

Bandura and his associates examined that pro-social behavior (e.g., accommodation, helpfulness) is inversely affected by moral disengagement and ASB (e.g., animosity, wrongdoing, deviant behavior) in people is positively influenced by moral disengagement (Bandura et al., 2001). Past research examines that ASB additionally influences adversely. So, with the increase in moral disengagement the anti-social behavior of the employees also increases. So we develop the hypothesis:

**H1:** Moral disengagement has positive impact on ASB.

## **Ethical Leadership (EL)**

In the organizational literature ethical and moral values inside leadership has been examined. According to [Brown et al. \(2005\)](#) the term EL is defined as a different leadership style that is based on theory of social learning. [Brown and Treviño \(2006, p. 595\)](#) describe EL as 'the exhibit of normatively suitable direct through close to interpersonal relationships and intrapersonal actions, and to promote such actions and behaviours to the supporters through reinforcement, participate in making decisions and two-way communication between leader and followers'. Basically, an ethical leaders is the one who has: (1) an ethical and moral individual – person seen to be trustworthy, fair, reasonable, legitimate, principled decision-maker and dependable (Brown et al., 2005); (2) the person who is role model for their followers – one who also follow what he speaks to his or her followers, and perceived to be a role model and good example for his/her followers (Mayer et al., 2009); and (3) an ethical manager – the person who creates moral values an unequivocal piece of their leadership plan and give rewards and compensation to consider supporters responsible for ethical behaviour and conduct. This value-based methodology in overseeing ethical conduct and behaviours is contended to separate it from other leadership styles (Brown and Treviño, 2006).

### **EL Moderate between Moral Disengagement and EO**

The above given conceptualization of EL has been analyzed as unclear, as their disagreement for the 'showing of normatively proper behaviors and action' doesn't determine what comprises regularizing ethical conduct (Eisenbeiss, 2012) and is excessively in western context. Taking both an Eastern and Western context ethical philosophical methodology, the researcher contends that this leadership styles has (1) a justice or equity direction (for example settling on choices that are reliable, reasonable and without separation), (2) a human and accommodating direction (for example treating others with pride and regard and considering others to be closes and not just means), (3) a sustainability and responsibility direction (for example worry for society and environmental wellbeing/welfare and taking a long-run perspective on issues related to society and environment), and (4) a control direction (for example demonstrating restraint and modesty). These ethical leaders are required to have strong and resilient personalities (Eisenbeiss, 2012), and experimental studies also support these results (Mayer et al., 2012).

A system of moral and ethical values is most likely established by number of people occupationally or professionally. Moral and ethical values are significant on the grounds that it mentions to the workers what is correct and what's not right and it likewise tells about the obligations, commitments and rights ([Brass et al., 1998](#); Trevino et al., 1998). Moral and ethical values are very helpful to comprehend how one will deal, handle and behave in different organizational situations. EO is necessary and important for the workforce since employees and organizations sometimes have both, resources and skills that in one way gives profit or provide harmful loss to general public (Trevino et al., 1998).

An ethical oriented organization usually includes institutional rules and procedures that established the ethical and moral values in the workers ([McCraw, Moffeit & O'Malley, 2009](#)). An environment of EO inside the association have fully effects the behavior of workers and decision making abilities of workers ([Shim, Chung & Kim, 2017](#)), and it is broadly recognized that EO is very helpful for the betterment of the workers ([Dash & Sahoo, 2018](#)).

Previous literature posed reasonable evidence that presence of the phenomenon of moral disengagement gives rise the unethical or immoral behavior among the employees (e.g., [Wang et al., 2017](#)). Due to moral disengagement the workers' have been changes that will give rise to bad and unethical ([Aquino, Galperin, and Bennett, 2004](#)) and due to which employees didn't behave ethically.

In the recent decades, various scholars have examined the EO of managers and workers from different industries and associations (Collins, 2000). Ethical managers can possibly influence an extensive range of individual results, hierarchical and social, it is all the more explicitly essential to comprehend the variables that impact the EL ([Jordan, Brown, Trevino, and Finkelstein, 2013](#)).

Moral disengagement sometimes is encouraged and/or caught up by various individual differences that mirror the manners in which people consider others, occasions, and themselves ([Detert, Trevino & Sweitzer, 2008](#)). Pioneers are committed to construct and present a moral model for authoritative individuals and then to decide those hierarchical exercises which might be impeding to the estimations of society when all is said in done ([Brown and Mitchell, 2010](#)). EL encompasses more than the fostering of ethical behaviors ([Baker, Hunt and Andrews, 2006](#)). EL helps in EO of the employees when they feel morally disengaged with their organization. So, we hypothesized:

**H2:** EL moderates the relationship of moral disengagement and EO.

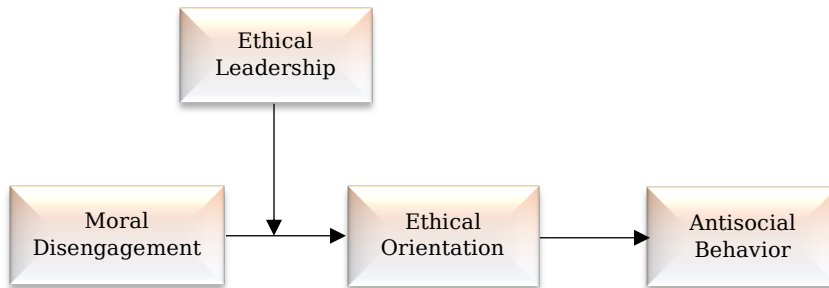
In moral disengagement process individuals can unethically behave against others. These progressions are considered as the foundations for cognitive restructuring of inhumane conduct that can later be turned into a commendable one by diffusion or displacement of personal responsibility; moral justification, advantageous comparison and euphemistic labeling; blaming or dehumanization of victims and distortion of consequences (Trevino & Brown, 2004). Due to moral disengagement unethical behavior of the employee’s increases, in light of the fact that morally disengaged or unethical behavior separates an observed action from the blame or self-endorse that would try to counter it. EO for workers can likewise influence attitudes and understanding of practices and procedures of the organization.

When an employee is ethically oriented the behavior of workers transformed from ethical to unethical because of moral disengagement. Meanwhile, the EO is fundamentally comprise of set of convictions that encourage the individual to differentiate ethical from unethical, good from bad, right from wrong right, helping in the choice of utilizing appropriate method for behavior. If the workers are morally and ethically good they can keep themselves away from unethical and bad behavior (Moore, 2008b). Ethical orientation of the employees will help to decrease ASB and will turn out to be pro-social behavior. So, EO is useful for the workers since it helps in diminishing the ASB.

The effects of moral disengagement are negative so it will lead to ASB and EO is used as a mediator between these two variables. Previous researchers analyzed that the EO influences the attitude and behaviors of the employees. EO of the employees is important because it is the reason that can be supportive in decreasing the ASB which is caused by moral disengagement. So, we developed the following hypothesis:

**H3:** EO mediates the relationship between moral disengagement and ASB.

**Theoretical Framework**



**Research Methodology**

In this current research, we used cross sectional approach with descriptive nature, data were collected from managers working in tourism and hospitality sector in Islamabad/Rawalpindi. We collect data by using questionnaires by using convenience sampling technique. We distributed 235 questionnaires initially and received back 190 questionnaires. Out of which 37 were incomplete and not included in our sample. So we used 153 questionnaires in this research with the response rate of 65%. Confidentiality and secrecy of the participants’ responses have been guaranteed to the participants. For this reason, the participants shouldn't specify their names or the names of their associations on the questionnaires keeping in mind the end goal to look after secrecy. To ensure that whatever data is gathered from the participants through these surveys is valid and genuine, the questionnaires will be kept mysterious.

The data consist of 79.4% of males and 21.6% of females of different organization. Most of the employees range from 26-33, that represent 49.5%. Respondents in between 18-25 years demonstrates a level of 7.7%. 30.2% of the managers are between 34-41 years old. From 42 to 49 years old shows just 12.6%.

The sample of the current study represent 2.5% respondents are bachelors, 62.5% are master degree holders whereas 35% of respondents have MS/MPhil degree. The sample shows that the respondents have work experience of 1-5 years with the frequency of 55 and 36%. Meanwhile 78 respondent have the tenure from 6-10 years with the percentage of 51%. For time periods 11-15 and 16-20 the respondent rate was 14 and 4 with 9.1% and 2.6%. Only 2 respondents have work experience of 21 and above, which shows only 1.3%.

## Instruments

### Moral Disengagement

Moral disengagement was measured with the help of 24-items construct developed by Detert, Trevino and Sweitzer (2008). Some sample items are: "Insults don't really hurt anyone" and "It is alright to fight to protect your friends". Reliability analysis of the items of MORAL DISENGAGEMENT shows  $\alpha=.84$ .

### Antisocial Behavior

We used 9 items scale of Robin & O'Leary-Kelly (1998) to measure ASB. Items of ASB are: "Said or did something to purposely hurt someone at work" and "Damaged property belonging to my employer". Reliability of items of ASB shows  $\alpha =0.76$ .

### Ethical Leadership

For this study we used 10- items scale of Brown, Treviño and Harrison (2005) for measuring ethical leadership. Sample items are: "Listens to what employees have to say" and "Conducts his/her personal life in an ethical manner". Reliability of the items of EL represents  $\alpha=0.80$ .

### Ethical Orientation

We used Forsyth (1980) 13-items questionnaire to measure EO which is consists of 2 traits: formal trait and utilitarian trait. Sample items of this scale is: "Principled" and "Innovative". Reliability of this scale is  $\alpha=0.83$ .

## Results and Analysis

**Table 1.** Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation and Reliabilities.

Variables	Mea	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Age	3.33	.72								
Gender	2.13	.34	-.29**							
Qualification	3.21	.69	-.30**	.16*						
Experience	3.45	.91	-.40**	.70**	.85**					
Moral Disengagement	2.28	.48	-.10	.17*	.19**	-.10	(.84)			
Antisocial Behavior	2.76	.56	.14*	.26**	-.29**	.15*	.56**	(.76)		
Ethical Orientation	4.30	.73	.02	-.12	.16*	-.03	.72**	-.52**	(.83)	
Ethical Leadership	4.20	.88	.07	.32**	-.06	.05	.45**	-.38**	.63**	(.86)

*N=153; \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, S.D for Standard Deviation*

Above Table 1 presents the results of correlation reliability and descriptive statistics. The Correlation analysis represents that all the variables are significantly and positively correlated with each other such as MORAL DISENGAGEMENT show significant and positive relationship with ASB at .56. Correlation between EO and EL also represents positive and significant correlation at .63.

## Regression Analysis

Table 2 displays the values such as, R-sq= 0.71 and R-sq= .115 demonstrates the general connection of control variable with EO and ASB in step 1. In step 2 we find out that moral disengagement has positive and significant relationship with EO ( $\beta=.57***, p<.001$ ) and ASB ( $\beta=.275***, p<.001$ ), these results implies that first hypothesis of this study is accepted.

**Table 2.** Result of Regression Analysis for Outcome

Predictor	Ethical Orientation			Antisocial Behavior		
	P	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$	P	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1						
Control Variable					.071	
Step 2						
Moral Disengagement	.57***	.460	176***			

Step 1						
Control Variable		.115				
Step 2						
Moral Disengagement	.70***	.992	.054***			
Step 1						
Control Variable					.071	
Step 2						
Ethical Orientation				.275**	.42	.150**

N=153; \*p< .05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

**Moderation and Mediation Analysis**

The moderator's interaction term represents  $\beta$ -value .22 with p-value <.01 as shown in Table 3, which indicates that the dependent and autonomous variables are related. The results show that EL moderates the relationship between moral disengagement and EO in such a way that introduction of EL as moderator in this relationship, reduced the negativity of the relationship. So, our second hypothesis also accepted.

**Table 3.** Moderated Regression Analyses

Predictor	Ethical Orientation			Antisocial Behavior		
	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup>
Moderation						
Step 1						
Control Variable			.115			
Step 2						
Moral Disengagement	-.62**					
Ethical Leadership	.008	.74	.43*			
EL x MD	.22**	.76	.20**			

N=153; p< 0.001\*\*\*, p<0.01\*\*, p<0.05\*. EL= Ethical Leadership, MD= Moral Disengagement

**Table 4.** Mediated Regression Analysis

Predictor	Ethical Orientation			Antisocial Behavior		
	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup>
Mediation EO						
Step1					0.157	
Control variable						
Step 2						
Ethical Orientation				0.51**	0.43	0.31
Step 3						
Moral Disengagement				-0.26ns	0.49	0.06

N=153; p<0.001\*\*\*, p<0.01\*\* p<0.05\*

To find out that EO mediates the relationship between moral disengagement and anti-social behavior we used mediation analysis. We used Barren and Kenny (1986) method to find out the EO mediates the relationship or not. From the result we found that by controlling moral disengagement effects provides significant results  $\beta$ =.51 with p<.01, but after controlling EO, moral disengagement shows that  $\beta$ =.47 with p value <.001 towards ASB as shown in Table 3. After adding a mediator EO its effects reduce that shows insignificant relationship with  $\beta$ = -.26 in Table 3. It shows fully support of mediation effect between moral disengagement and ASB. So, Hypotheses 3 was also accepted.

**Discussion**

The current study helps to examine the effects of moral disengagement on ASB through mediation of EO and moderation of EL in the tourism and hospitality industry of Pakistan. This research works helps to easily comprehend that how moral disengagement will lead to anti-social behavior. Basically, moral disengagement is procedure related to the cognition of the individual that helps to detached or disengage the moral and ethical self-sanction and enables an individual to more easily make decisions unethically (Bandura, 1999). In the current study we test and analyzed three hypotheses. We found good support for all of the hypothesis in our research work. Our first hypothesis is fully supported by our results we found that due to moral disengagement anti-social

behavior increases. Secondly in this study we found that by adding EO as intervening variable moral disengagement decrease EO of workers but with the moderation of EL the relationship between moral disengagement and EO is affected. So, our second and third hypotheses are also accepted.

The significance and strength of current research are that we have extend the research work of moral disengagement and ASB, and also examine the effects of moral disengagement on ASB in the tourism and hospitality industry. Secondly this study also helpful to understand the behavior of managers and employees in Pakistani context because data is gathered from the managers working in different hotels and tourism sector.

The first limitation of the study is that the sample size if this study was very small. Due to which the findings of this study cannot be generalized. Secondly, due to shortage of time we collect data in one shot i.e. cross-sectional. It is a threat for internal validity of our study because it is difficult to establish moderation process in cross-sectional nature of study. The process of moderation is fully understood by using longitudinal study. Thirdly one of the key limitations is that data is collected from Islamabad and Rawalpindi only, so it cannot predict the behavioral aspects of managers because behavior of managers is different in different cities due to difference in geographical location and environment of organizations. The last limitation is that working of female employees in hotel and tourism industry is not considered respectful in our culture due to which the number of female respondents is very low.

The future researchers may conduct research on a larger sample size. By using larger sample size, the question of generalizability can be removed. Secondly, this study collected data only from Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Other researchers can collect data from different industries and from different geographical regions that will help in predicting whether the results are same for other industries or not. The current study used cross-sectional research design. In order to increase reliability of the results, other researchers can use longitudinal research design. Data is extracted from respondents using questionnaires only. The future researcher can be done using other techniques or mixed method, such as interviews etc., to confirm the results. Future researchers would also develop a new model for their research work by adding some additional variables with moral disengagement. Some other mediation and moderation such as ethical decision making can be added in these relationships to find out the effect of the added mediator and moderators on the relationship of independent variable and dependent variable.

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