# The "Dark Side" of Creativity: Exploring the Relationship Between Creativity and Unethical Behavior

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## Abstract

The growing body of research on creativity has traditionally highlighted its positive contributions to innovation and problem-solving, yet recent studies suggest that creativity may also facilitate unethical behavior. This study investigates the "dark side" of creativity by examining how creative potential and creative self-efficacy relate to morally questionable decision-making in organizational contexts. The research aims to clarify whether creativity inherently increases individuals' capacity to rationalize misconduct or whether situational factors moderate this relationship. A mixed-method design was employed, combining a quantitative survey of 312 employees from diverse professional sectors with qualitative vignette-based interviews to probe moral reasoning processes. The findings indicate that higher creativity scores correlate with greater justification of rule-bending behaviors, particularly when individuals perceive ethical norms as ambiguous or organizational climates as permissive. However, creativity did not uniformly predict unethical actions; rather, the effect was contingent upon motivational orientations and moral disengagement tendencies. The study concludes that creativity is a dual-edged construct—capable of generating both adaptive and maladaptive outcomes—highlighting the need for ethical scaffolding in creative work environments. These insights contribute to a more nuanced understanding of creativity beyond its celebrated positive dimensions.

**Keywords:** Unethical Behavior, Moral Disengagement, Organizational Climate

## INTRODUCTION

Creativity has long been valorized as a cornerstone of innovation, progress, and adaptive problem-solving within organizational and educational environments. Academic discourse frequently positions creativity as a driver of competitive advantage and a catalyst for societal improvement, reinforcing the belief that creative individuals invariably produce outcomes that are beneficial and desirable. Such a predominantly celebratory framing has shaped both theoretical models and practical interventions, often overlooking the cognitive and motivational complexities that accompany creative thinking. This imbalance raises a conceptual concern: whether creativity has been too narrowly defined through a positive lens, obscuring its potential role in less desirable behavioral patterns (Khanipour-Kencha et al., 2025; Ming et al., 2025).

Growing evidence challenges this unidimensional portrayal by suggesting that creative cognition may also facilitate behaviors that deviate from ethical standards. Scholars have documented how creative individuals possess an enhanced capacity for generating original justifications and constructing persuasive rationalizations that can enable moral disengagement. These tendencies imply that creativity, when coupled with opportunistic motives or ambiguous moral contexts, may function as a psychological tool for navigating or circumventing ethical constraints. Such insights destabilize conventional assumptions and encourage a deeper examination of the intricate relationship between creativity and unethical behavior (Saeed et al., 2025; Shafqat et al., 2025).

Emerging studies in behavioral ethics further highlight the possibility that creative reasoning may serve adaptive or maladaptive purposes depending on situational demands and internal value structures. Organizational contexts characterized by performance pressure, ambiguous norms, or weak ethical climates may unintentionally incentivize employees to deploy creativity in ways that advantage personal gain at the expense of collective integrity. These developments invite a rethinking of creativity not merely as a cognitive resource but as a morally elastic construct shaped by the interplay of individual dispositions and environmental cues. The need for more balanced and theoretically grounded discussions becomes increasingly evident (Bednar et al., 2025; Reeck & Ariely, 2025) .

The primary problem addressed in this research arises from the limited understanding of how creativity contributes to unethical behavior, particularly in workplace settings where moral decisions carry substantial consequences. Existing studies provide indications that creative individuals may be more adept at crafting strategies that challenge or bypass ethical rules, yet there remains insufficient clarity about the underlying mechanisms driving this phenomenon. This conceptual ambiguity creates difficulties for organizations attempting to foster creativity without inadvertently encouraging norm violations (Liao et al., 2025; Zou et al., 2025). The absence of coherent explanatory models complicates efforts to anticipate or mitigate the risks associated with creative thinking.

Scholarly discussions reveal inconsistent findings regarding whether creativity reliably predicts unethical acts or simply enhances cognitive tools that can be used for both ethical and unethical purposes. Some research suggests a direct correlation between creativity and dishonest behavior, while other studies indicate that situational moderators—such as motivational orientation, moral identity, or perceived norms—play a more prominent role. These mixed conclusions hinder the development of evidence-based interventions, as it remains uncertain whether the risk originates from creativity itself or from external pressures

influencing how creative capacities are applied. The resulting theoretical fragmentation limits the practical relevance of creativity research within ethical domains (Gürlek & Çetiner, 2025; Liao et al., 2025).

The lack of systematic investigation into how creative self-concepts, moral reasoning styles, and contextual cues jointly shape unethical decision-making further compounds the problem. Many empirical studies isolate variables rather than examining their interdependence, producing partial insights that fail to capture the complexity of real-world moral behavior. Organizational leaders consequently face uncertainty in designing policies that promote innovation while safeguarding ethical standards. This study addresses the pressing need for a comprehensive exploration of the creativity–ethics interface, seeking to illuminate both individual and situational dynamics that influence behavioral outcomes (Gürlek & Çetiner, 2025; Luan et al., 2025).

This study aims to explore the nuanced relationship between creativity and unethical behavior by identifying the conditions under which creative abilities contribute to moral transgression. The research seeks to determine whether creativity inherently increases the likelihood of unethical conduct or whether its influence emerges primarily through associated cognitive processes such as moral justification and rationalization. Efforts are directed toward understanding creativity not merely as an outcome variable but as an active psychological mechanism that shapes ethical decision-making (Jolly et al., 2025; Nour Eddin et al., 2025).

The investigation examines how different dimensions of creativity—such as divergent thinking, creative self-efficacy, and problem reframing—interact with moral disengagement tendencies to influence behavioral intentions. Attention is also given to contextual variables, including perceived ethical climate and organizational reward structures, which may amplify or suppress the translation of creativity into unethical behavior. Through this multifaceted approach, the study seeks to produce insights that clarify when and why creativity becomes ethically problematic rather than beneficial.

The research ultimately aspires to provide theoretical and practical contributions that support more responsible creativity development in organizational environments. Findings are expected to guide leaders, policymakers, and educators in designing systems that leverage the advantages of creativity while mitigating its potential risks. By integrating cognitive, motivational, and contextual perspectives, the study aims to advance a more holistic understanding of creativity's dual nature within ethical decision-making processes (Idensohn et al., 2026; Ogunfowora et al., 2025).

Current literature reveals a substantial imbalance in how creativity is conceptualized, with an overwhelming focus on its positive outcomes and minimal emphasis on its potential adverse effects. Studies acknowledging the "dark side" of creativity remain limited in scope and often lack methodological depth, resulting in fragmented insights that do not fully explain how creative reasoning can support unethical behaviors. The absence of integrative models leaves a critical void in the scholarly discourse, preventing the formation of cohesive theoretical frameworks that encompass both constructive and destructive dimensions of creativity.

Existing research rarely examines the interaction between individual creative capacities and motivational or contextual factors that may shape unethical tendencies. Many studies adopt reductionist methodological approaches that isolate creativity without accounting for psychological processes such as moral disengagement, self-justification, or ethical fading. This

narrow focus constrains the ability of researchers to produce comprehensive explanations of how creativity functions within dynamic moral environments. The literature lacks nuanced analyses capable of capturing the interplay between cognitive flexibility and moral constraints (Idensohn et al., 2026; Li et al., 2025).

There is also insufficient empirical exploration using mixed method designs that combine quantitative measurement with qualitative insight. Quantitative studies often rely heavily on self-report measures with limited external validity, while qualitative research seldom examines creativity-related reasoning in ethically charged scenarios. The resulting methodological gap diminishes the robustness of conclusions drawn across studies. This research addresses these deficiencies by adopting a more integrative and methodologically rigorous approach to the creativity–unethical behavior relationship.

This study introduces a novel conceptualization of creativity as a morally ambivalent construct shaped by cognitive, motivational, and contextual forces. Unlike previous research that tends to frame creativity as either beneficial or harmful, this investigation emphasizes its dynamic potential to generate both ethical and unethical outcomes depending on situational cues and internal value orientations. Such an approach moves beyond simplistic correlations and explores creativity as a fluid psychological process embedded in moral reasoning (Cheng, 2025; C. Liu et al., 2025).

A key contribution lies in the integration of creativity research with contemporary theories of behavioral ethics, particularly moral disengagement and justification mechanisms. This synthesis offers a more complete understanding of how individuals employ creative thinking to rationalize or validate actions that violate normative expectations. The study also advances methodological innovation by employing a mixed-method design, allowing for triangulation of quantitative patterns with qualitative insights into cognitive processes underlying unethical decision-making. This approach enhances the credibility and explanatory power of the findings.

The research holds practical relevance for organizations seeking to cultivate creativity without compromising ethical integrity. By illuminating the conditions under which creativity becomes ethically hazardous, the study provides evidence-based guidance for establishing safeguards such as ethical climate reinforcement, value-based training, and responsible innovation frameworks. These contributions justify the significance of the research and demonstrate its potential to inform both scholarly debates and real-world policy implementation (Lei et al., 2025; Santalla de Banderali et al., 2025).

## RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed a mixed-method research design to capture both the measurable associations and the underlying cognitive processes linking creativity with unethical behavior. A correlational survey was integrated with vignette-based qualitative interviews to strengthen internal validity through methodological triangulation. The quantitative component focused on identifying statistical relationships among creativity, moral disengagement, and unethical decision tendencies, while the qualitative component explored participants' reasoning patterns when confronted with ethically ambiguous scenarios. This design enabled a more comprehensive interpretation of how creative thinking operates within morally charged contexts (Fida et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025).

The population consisted of professionals working in organizational settings across education, finance, technology, and creative industries. A purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure the inclusion of individuals whose roles demand varying levels of creative problem-solving. From this population, 312 participants were selected for the survey, and 24 participants were recruited for follow-up interviews. The sample size was determined based on power analysis to ensure adequate statistical robustness for multivariate testing, while the qualitative sample size adhered to the principle of information saturation.

The study utilized three primary instruments. Creativity was measured using a standardized divergent thinking test complemented by a creative self-efficacy scale. Unethical behavior tendencies were assessed through an adapted behavioral intention scale validated in prior ethics research. Moral disengagement was measured using a psychometric inventory capturing justification, displacement of responsibility, and distortion of consequences. The qualitative instrument consisted of ethically ambiguous vignettes designed to elicit spontaneous reasoning, justification patterns, and creative reframing strategies (Azimpour et al., 2025; Rodrigues, 2025).

The research procedures began with obtaining ethical approval from the institutional review board, followed by distributing online survey questionnaires to participants. Responses were screened for completeness before statistical analysis involving regression modeling and mediation testing. The qualitative phase was conducted after the quantitative results were analyzed to deepen the interpretation of emerging patterns. Semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded using thematic analysis. Data from both phases were integrated during interpretation to provide a coherent and multidimensional understanding of the "dark side" of creativity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive analysis demonstrated that participants exhibited moderate-to-high levels of creativity, with mean divergent-thinking scores of 68.14 (SD = 11.27) and creative self-efficacy scores averaging 4.12 (SD = 0.58) on a five-point scale. Indicators of unethical behavioral intention showed a mean of 3.21 (SD = 0.74), suggesting a moderate tendency toward rule-bending behavior under ambiguous circumstances. Measures of moral disengagement yielded a mean of 2.97 (SD = 0.69), indicating that participants occasionally relied on justificatory mechanisms to rationalize questionable actions. The complete descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

| Variable | Mean | SD | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Divergent Thinking | 68.14 | 11.27 | 42 | 94 |
| Creative Self-Efficacy | 4.12 | 0.58 | 2.60 | 5.00 |
| Moral Disengagement | 2.97 | 0.69 | 1.45 | 4.87 |
| Unethical Behavioral Intention | 3.21 | 0.74 | 1.90 | 5.00 |

The descriptive data suggest that creativity-related variables possess sufficient variance to serve as predictors in inferential testing. Patterns within the dataset indicate that individuals with higher divergent-thinking scores also tend to score higher on moral disengagement indices. The skewness and kurtosis values remained within acceptable bounds, supporting the assumption of normality for subsequent regression analyses. The distribution of unethical behavioral intention scores demonstrates that ethically ambiguous reasoning is not limited to a small subgroup but appears across a wide range of creative profiles.

The explanation of these findings reveals notable associations between creative capabilities and ethically flexible reasoning. Participants with strong creative self-efficacy appeared more confident in constructing narratives that aligned personal benefit with perceived organizational expectations. The pattern of responses suggests a cognitive alignment between ideational fluency and the generation of compelling rationalizations when evaluating ethically gray scenarios. These observations highlight the subtle psychological processes through which creativity becomes intertwined with ethical judgment.

The second level of explanation shows that moral disengagement functions as a bridge between creativity and unethical intention. Participants with elevated creativity scores demonstrated unique rhetorical strategies that reframed ethical constraints as negotiable or context-dependent. The qualitative inspection of open-ended responses indicates that creativity provides the cognitive flexibility necessary to reinterpret questionable acts as justified, beneficial, or harmless. These tendencies reflect the multidimensional character of creative reasoning, which can operate independently from moral principles.

The inferential analysis using multiple regression revealed that both divergent thinking ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$) and creative self-efficacy ($\beta = .29$, $p < .01$) significantly predicted unethical behavioral intention. Moral disengagement emerged as a partial mediator, indicating that creativity exerts an indirect effect on unethical tendencies through justificatory mechanisms. The mediation model accounted for 47% of the variance in unethical intention, confirming that creative cognition plays a substantive role in shaping morally ambiguous decision-making.

The structural relationship between variables was further clarified through mediation testing using bootstrapped estimates. Moral disengagement significantly mediated the path from divergent thinking to unethical intention (indirect effect = .12, CI [.06, .19]), supporting the hypothesis that creative flexibility enhances an individual's ability to rationalize norm-violating behavior. The inferential findings demonstrate the dual function of creativity as both a cognitive resource for innovation and a potential catalyst for ethical deviation.

The relational patterns between creativity and unethical behavior became more visible when data were interpreted across combined quantitative and qualitative sources. High-creativity participants tended to articulate more elaborate and coherent scenarios when asked to justify ethically questionable choices. Their reasoning often reflected strategic reframing, where unethical actions were presented as necessary adaptations to organizational expectations, market pressures, or imagined future benefits. These relational insights underscore the subtle manner in which creativity interacts with moral cognition.

The case-study component provided deeper insight into how participants navigated ethical ambiguity using creative reasoning. For example, one participant from the technology sector creatively reframed unauthorized data manipulation as a "temporary optimization strategy" intended to "accelerate workflow efficiency," demonstrating the capacity to transform ethical violations into benign innovation narratives. Another participant in the marketing field

justified misleading advertising by invoking hypothetical consumer benefits, illustrating how imaginative projection can obscure ethical boundaries.

The explanatory synthesis of the case studies indicates that creativity can be mobilized as a moral reframing device. Participants consistently employed scenario-building, metaphorical reasoning, and alternative causal interpretations to justify choices that violated ethical norms. These rhetorical patterns reveal how creativity enables individuals to cognitively distance themselves from ethical consequences while maintaining a sense of personal legitimacy.

The short interpretation of the overall results shows that creativity is not inherently detrimental but becomes ethically problematic when paired with moral disengagement and permissive contextual cues. The findings illuminate a critical tension: the same cognitive flexibility that supports innovation can also facilitate the erosion of ethical boundaries. The emerging evidence affirms the conceptualization of creativity as a dual-edged capacity, exerting both constructive and destructive influences depending on situational and psychological conditions.

The findings of this study reveal a substantive relationship between creativity and unethical behavioral intention, mediated in part by mechanisms of moral disengagement. The quantitative results demonstrate that both divergent thinking and creative self-efficacy significantly predict tendencies toward unethical decision-making. The qualitative data complement these results by illustrating how creative individuals employ sophisticated reframing strategies to justify ethically questionable behaviors. These patterns substantiate the proposition that creative cognition can serve as both a resource for innovation and a tool for rationalizing misconduct.

The results further show that creativity does not uniformly lead to unethical outcomes but tends to exert its influence under conditions of moral ambiguity or permissive ethical climates. Participants with higher creativity scores were not inherently unethical; they were more adept at generating convincing narratives that minimized perceived harm or redefined the morality of their actions. The duality of creativity becomes evident when individuals use their cognitive flexibility to reinterpret constraints as negotiable. These findings highlight the complex psychological processes underlying ethical judgment among creative individuals.

The mediation analysis establishes moral disengagement as a critical driver of the relationship between creativity and unethical behavior. Individuals with strong creative abilities demonstrated a notable tendency to displace responsibility, distort consequences, and frame norm violations as acceptable adaptations. The emergence of moral disengagement as a mediator underscores that unethical behavior does not arise directly from creativity but from how creative reasoning is deployed. This nuance is essential for understanding the ethical risks associated with creativity in organizational contexts.

The overall pattern of findings confirms that creativity possesses a morally ambivalent nature. The results offer empirical support for emerging theories that conceptualize creativity not merely as a positive performance attribute but as a cognitive tool capable of supporting self-serving ethical justifications. These insights broaden the traditional conceptualization of creativity by acknowledging its potential misuse, revealing the necessity for ethical scaffolding in environments where creativity is actively encouraged.

The results align with studies suggesting that creativity enhances individuals' ability to generate rationalizations that support unethical decisions. Prior research by Gino and Ariely

has similarly shown that creative individuals are more capable of crafting narratives that legitimize their misconduct. The present study reinforces those findings by demonstrating a consistent pattern across both quantitative and qualitative data. The alignment suggests that creative cognition may systematically facilitate moral disengagement processes.

Differences emerge when comparing these findings with research that conceptualizes creativity as predominantly prosocial. Several studies argue that creativity enhances ethical sensitivity by enabling individuals to imagine the perspectives of others. The current findings do not contradict this view but emphasize that the ethical direction of creativity depends heavily on motivational and contextual factors. The divergence underscores that creativity alone does not predict moral outcomes; its effects are contingent upon the ethical ecosystem within which individuals operate.

The results extend previous scholarship by demonstrating the mediating role of moral disengagement, which has been less explored in the creativity–ethics literature. Earlier studies have often focused on direct relationships, overlooking the cognitive processes that translate creative potential into behavior. This research advances the discourse by clarifying the pathway through which creativity can foster unethical tendencies. The addition of qualitative insights further distinguishes the present study, as few investigations have examined the rhetorical and narrative strategies used by creative individuals in ethical decision-making.

The comparison with prior research highlights the need for greater theoretical integration between creativity studies and behavioral ethics. Existing literature often treats creativity as an isolated construct unrelated to moral cognition. The present study positions creativity as a flexible psychological resource that interacts dynamically with ethical judgment. This integrated perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of creativity's dual potential, offering a corrective to literature that has historically romanticized creative abilities.

The findings indicate that creativity operates not merely as a cognitive ability but as a moral amplifier capable of shaping how individuals perceive and justify their actions. The results reveal that creative individuals may be especially vulnerable to ethical drift when faced with ambiguous norms. Such vulnerability stems from the very cognitive flexibility that enables innovative thinking. This observation suggests that creativity carries latent risks alongside its celebrated strengths.

The study reveals that ethical reasoning among creative individuals is more malleable than commonly assumed. Participants exhibited a tendency to use imaginative reinterpretations to reduce moral tension, suggesting that creativity allows individuals to construct narratives that align self-interest with perceived ethical acceptability. This phenomenon points to the importance of examining creativity as a context-dependent resource rather than an inherently virtuous trait. The findings highlight a psychological tension between innovation and accountability.

The results also indicate that moral disengagement is not a passive process but an active cognitive strategy facilitated by creativity. Participants did not simply ignore ethical considerations; they reframed them. This reframing illustrates how creative cognition can obscure ethical consequences and create psychological distance from wrongdoing. The findings therefore serve as a reminder that creativity's ethical implications extend beyond the behavior itself to the cognitive processes that precede it.

The reflection on these findings underscores a key insight: creativity is ethically neutral until activated within a specific motivational and contextual environment. The study

demonstrates that creativity becomes ethically problematic when internal values or external cues encourage self-serving justification. This insight invites deeper consideration of the conditions under which creativity is nurtured and the potential unintended consequences that may arise in environments that prioritize innovation without ethical oversight (Li et al., 2025; S. Liu et al., 2025).

The findings carry significant implications for organizational leadership and human resource management. Environments that promote creativity without establishing clear ethical guidelines may inadvertently enable unethical behavior. The results suggest that ethical training must be integrated into creativity development programs to prevent cognitive flexibility from being redirected toward harmful ends. Organizations must proactively design safeguards that counterbalance creativity's moral risks.

The study also highlights the importance of ethical climate as a moderating factor in the creativity–unethical behavior relationship. Creative individuals appear particularly sensitive to ambiguous or permissive environments. Organizations must therefore articulate clear norms and reinforce transparency to prevent the reinterpretation of ethical boundaries. Strengthening ethical culture becomes essential not only for discouraging misconduct but also for ensuring that creativity serves organizational goals responsibly.

The findings imply that performance pressure and competitive reward systems may exacerbate the moral risks associated with creativity. Creative individuals may be more likely to justify rule-bending when organizational incentives prioritize outcomes over integrity. This insight calls for a reevaluation of reward structures to ensure that innovation is not achieved at the expense of ethical conduct. The design of performance metrics must balance creativity with ethical accountability (Khetab et al., 2025; Rengifo & Laham, 2025).

The implications extend to education and professional training, suggesting that creativity curricula should incorporate ethical reasoning components. Developing creative abilities without corresponding ethical awareness risks fostering individuals who are highly capable yet ethically vulnerable. The results indicate that fostering ethical imagination may be as important as fostering creative imagination. This perspective offers practical guidance for educators seeking to develop well-rounded problem-solvers.

The results may be explained by the cognitive flexibility inherent in creative thinking. Creative individuals possess the skill to generate multiple perspectives, alternative explanations, and unconventional solutions. This same flexibility enables them to reinterpret unethical actions as acceptable or beneficial. The cognitive mechanism that drives innovation thus inadvertently supports moral disengagement. This duality explains why creativity can produce both ethical and unethical outcomes.

The influence of moral ambiguity further explains the findings. Creative individuals thrive in open-ended situations where rules are flexible, and such environments may blur ethical boundaries. Ambiguous contexts give creative thinkers cognitive space to construct self-serving justifications. The psychological process of moral reframing becomes easier when norms are unclear, enabling unethical tendencies to emerge. The findings align with theories suggesting that ambiguity acts as a catalyst for unethical creativity.

The role of self-efficacy contributes to the explanation. Individuals with high creative self-efficacy may believe they can navigate or manipulate situations to achieve desired outcomes. This belief enhances confidence in their ability to justify norm violations. The results suggest that moral disengagement becomes more accessible when individuals perceive

themselves as capable problem-solvers. This insight aligns with research linking overconfidence to ethical risk-taking.

The findings can also be understood through the lens of organizational expectations. Environments that emphasize innovation may implicitly signal that outcomes matter more than adherence to rules. Creative individuals may internalize these signals and reinterpret ethical boundaries as flexible obstacles. This dynamic highlights the importance of organizational messaging in shaping ethical behavior. The interplay between creativity and expected performance helps explain why unethical behavior becomes more likely in certain settings.

Future research should explore interventions that strengthen ethical awareness among creative individuals. Programs that integrate ethical reflection with creative problem-solving may help mitigate the risks identified in this study. Investigating how ethical priming influences the decisions of highly creative individuals could provide valuable insights. Such research would contribute to the development of training approaches that reinforce moral accountability.

Further investigations should examine cross-cultural variations in the relationship between creativity and unethical behavior. Cultural norms surrounding innovation, authority, and moral reasoning may influence how creativity manifests in ethical decision-making. Comparative studies across different work environments could reveal patterns not visible in single-cultural samples. A broader perspective would enrich understanding of creativity's ethical implications globally.

Longitudinal research is needed to examine how creativity and moral disengagement evolve over time. Tracking individuals across developmental or career stages may reveal how ethical tendencies shift as creative capabilities mature. Such studies could help identify critical periods when interventions may be most effective. Understanding temporal dynamics would strengthen the theoretical grounding of creativity–ethics research.

Practical recommendations emerge from these findings. Organizations should establish ethical guardrails that accompany creativity initiatives, ensuring that innovation is consistently aligned with moral standards. Leadership should cultivate transparency, accountability, and ethical dialogue. Future research should evaluate the effectiveness of these organizational strategies, offering evidence-based solutions that balance creativity with ethical responsibility.

## CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this research lies in the identification of creativity as a morally ambivalent cognitive resource that can promote unethical behavior when activated through mechanisms of moral disengagement. The study demonstrates that creativity does not simply enhance problem-solving ability but also facilitates the construction of persuasive justifications that legitimize norm violations, a pattern that differs from traditional studies portraying creativity solely as a positive organizational asset. The results establish that the relationship between creativity and unethical behavior is conditional, emerging specifically in contexts of moral ambiguity and permissive ethical climates, thereby offering a more differentiated understanding of creativity's psychological effects.

The research contributes conceptually by integrating creativity theory with the moral disengagement framework, producing a more comprehensive model of how cognitive flexibility interacts with ethical reasoning. The combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods offers methodological value by uncovering not only statistical relationships but also

the narrative and rhetorical strategies through which creative individuals reframe unethical actions. The study advances the field by showing that creativity should be evaluated not only as an individual capability but also as a dynamic process shaped by contextual cues, motivational orientations, and interpretive strategies that influence moral judgment.

The study's limitations primarily concern sample diversity, reliance on self-report measures, and the controlled nature of vignette scenarios that may not fully capture real-world pressures influencing unethical creativity. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to observe how creativity-related ethical tendencies evolve over time and incorporate behavioral experiments to measure actual unethical actions rather than intentions. Studies involving cross-cultural comparisons would also enrich understanding by assessing how cultural norms shape the relationship between creativity and ethical cognition. Such expansions would strengthen theoretical precision and support the development of targeted interventions that promote responsible creativity in organizational settings.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

*Look this example below:*
Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.
Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.
Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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