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RESEARCH ARTICLE



Enhancing employees' duty orientation and moral potency: Dual mechanisms linking ethical psychological climate to ethically focused proactive behaviors

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Abstract

Based on social cognitive theory (SCT), we develop and test a model that links ethical psychological climate to ethically focused proactive behavior (i.e., ethical voice and ethical taking charge) via two distinct mechanisms (i.e., duty orientation and moral potency). Results from multi-wave field studies conducted in the United States, Turkey, France, Vietnam, and India demonstrate that an ethical psychological climate indirectly influences employees' ethical voice and ethical taking charge behaviors through the dual mechanisms of duty orientation and moral potency. Additionally, we find that individuals' moral attentiveness strengthened these mediating processes. Together, these findings suggest that ethical psychological climate is an important antecedent of ethically focused proactive behavior by stimulating individuals' sense of duty and enhancing their moral potency, particularly when employees are already highly attuned to moral issues.

KEYWORDS

cross-cultural, duty orientation, ethical psychological climate, ethical taking charge, ethical voice, moral attentiveness, moral potency

1 | INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, several high-profile ethical scandals (e.g., Enron, Tyco, Volkswagen, Wells Fargo, etc.) have eroded the public's trust in business and hurt employees' livelihood and well-being

in material and non-material ways (Sims, 2009). Given this wrongdoing's immense harm, management researchers have emphasized the need to better understand what organizations can do to prevent such ethical lapses and enhance their ethical functioning (Treviño et al., 2014). One potential antidote is an *ethical psychological*

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climate, ¹ defined as employees' perceptions of an organization's procedures and practices that guide them to be honorable, just, and virtuous (Victor & Cullen, 1988). Through directly fostering ethical conduct (Mayer et al., 2010) or more distal outcomes less overtly ethical in nature (e.g., lower employee turnover intentions, Joe et al., 2018; greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment, Ambrose et al., 2008; higher job performance, Leung, 2008; and greater customer satisfaction, Schwepker, 2013), an ethical psychological climate has been shown to positively impact key individual and organizational outcomes (see Newman et al., 2017 for a review).

Yet, despite the valuable contributions these studies have made to both theory and practice, the ethical psychological climate literature remains substantially limited in two important ways. First, extant research has yet to fully consider whether an ethical psychological climate motivates employees to proactively engage in certain types of behavior that help to support the spread of ethicality and improve workplace ethical functioning. This omission is both notable and surprising, given the proactivity literature suggests employees may be driven to act in ways that support the organization, even when doing so comes with personal risk to their career and/or reputation (Morrison, 2011). In considering this possibility, we suggest such proactive acts are embedded within two ethically focused employee proactive behaviors—speaking up about ethical issues and taking charge in ethical ways (Chen & Treviño, 2022; Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Whereas ethical voice refers to employee "expression that challenges, and seeks to change, the current behaviors, procedures, and policies that are not normatively appropriate" (Huang & Paterson, 2017), ethical taking charge focuses on the constructive efforts individuals make to effect functional change with respect to the ethical execution of work. In both cases, employees are driven to take risks to proactively engage in specific, positive actions, not just abstain from undesirable ones. Because ethical voice and ethical taking charge can help forestall potential damage to both individuals and organizations and contribute to workplace ethical functioning (e.g., Babalola et al., 2022), the dearth of prior research considering how ethical psychological climate influences these specific outcomes limits our conceptual and practical understanding of how organizations can foster a more ethical workplace.

Second, the extant literature has yet to offer a clear explanation for why and when ethical psychological climate results in positive employee behaviors. This is surprising, given that answering two fundamental and critical questions—why and for whom do effects emerge (Whetten, 1989)—are critical for theory building. Hence, there is not only a need to explore the potential linkages between ethical psychological climate and ethically focused proactive behaviors but also to unpack the underlying mechanisms and conditions under which they are strengthened. By examining two key psychological mechanisms (i.e., duty orientation and moral potency) and a key boundary

condition (i.e., moral attentiveness) previously identified in the literature as germane to proactive ethical behaviors, our work helps to build new theoretical knowledge and directly addresses scholarly calls for the exploration of (a) additional outcomes associated with an ethical psychological climate and (b) its mechanisms and boundary conditions (Newman et al., 2017). In so doing, we aim to advance ethical psychological climate literature by providing a more holistic, encompassing framework for understanding why and when an ethical psychological climate motivates positive workplace outcomes.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of this paper is to provide an in-depth examination of the relationship between ethical psychological climate and ethically focused employee proactive behaviors (i.e., ethical voice and ethical taking charge). To do so, we draw on social cognitive theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986, 1991) as our overarching conceptual framework, given its emphasis on a person's moral agency to act on behalf of the organization and the dual role that both contextual perceptions and individual factors concurrently play in driving such a response. SCT touts an individual's moral agency as a self-regulatory system enabling agentic behaviors by monitoring and evaluating internal standards and situational circumstances. According to Bandura and colleagues (Bandura, 1986; Bandura et al., 1996), moral agency refers to the willingness and capability to think and act regarding right and wrong. Conceptualizations of moral agency have emphasized both an individual's desire to contribute to and support the organization and its members and honor its principles—a defining characteristic of duty orientation (Hannah et al., 2014)-and their moral capacity for agentic functioning (Bandura, 1986; Hannah et al., 2011). As both ethical voice and ethical taking charge represent important agentic, ethically focused proactive behaviors (Babalola et al., 2022; Morrison & Phelps, 1999), we posit that ethical psychological climate conveys a specific set of values that raises employees' willingness to be dutiful. In addition, by signaling norms of appropriate conduct, ethical psychological climate provides a work context in which employees learn behavioral principles that empower and enhance their capacity to act appropriately, which we operationalize as moral potency, defined as "the sense of ownership over the moral aspects of one's environment, reinforced by efficacy beliefs in the capabilities to act to achieve moral purpose in that domain, and the courage to perform ethically in the face of adversity and persevere through challenges." (Hannah & Avolio, 2010, p. 291). Thus, we contend that both duty orientation and moral potency work concurrently as key psychological mechanisms to explain why an ethical psychological climate fosters ethical voice and ethical taking charge behavior.

We consider both duty orientation and moral potency as vital to explaining the aforementioned relationship because whereas enhancing duty orientation provides a "reason to do" rationale for employees to contribute to the organization in ways that improve its ethical functioning, moral potency encapsulates the "can do" or "capacity to do" mechanism through which ethical psychological climate has been implicitly proposed to promote employee behaviors (Mayer, 2014; Victor & Cullen, 1988). Simultaneously capturing these dual mechanisms is essential, as engaging in ethical voice and ethical taking charge are risky proactive behaviors that might generate negative

¹Because individuals need to perceive and make sense of cues in their work environment before acting upon them, the individual-level construal of climate (i.e., "perceptions" of climates) is a more proximal predictor of individual cognitions and behaviors (James et al., 2008; Parker et al., 2003). As such, in our study, we focus on individual perceptions of ethical climate (i.e., ethical psychological climate).

personal consequences, such as less chance of being promoted and jeopardizing relationships with people higher in the hierarchy (Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Seibert et al., 2001). In other words, these ethically focused proactive behaviors can be hazardous agentic behaviors that require moral agency (Bandura et al., 1996). Because research has yet to assess how employees' duty orientation and moral potency may develop when employees perceive an ethical work environment, our research not only has the potential to advance theory and conceptual understanding of ethical psychological climate but also informs how organizations should invest their time and energy to build an ethical psychological climate (e.g., through enhancing employees' duty orientation and moral potency or via human resource strategies that attract and select dutiful and morally potent individuals).

We also consider when an ethical psychological climate may be most effective in building moral agency. SCT suggests that agentic moral functioning is interactive, an outcome of the interplay between personal characteristics and the social context (Bandura, 1991, 2002). The salience of ethical psychological climate on moral agency (vis-àvis duty orientation and moral potency) may thus depend on the characteristics that individuals bring to the social context, particularly those that impact the extent to which they pay attention to moral cues. These individual differences are captured in our model through the construct of moral attentiveness (i.e., the extent to which an individual chronically perceives and considers morality and ethical elements in their experiences; Reynolds, 2008). As individuals high on moral attentiveness tend to be more attuned to the moral aspects of their environment (Reynolds, 2008; van Gils et al., 2015), we suggest that moral attentiveness serves as an essential boundary condition by impacting how employees process and react to the moral cues conveyed in an ethical psychological climate, thereby affecting their sense of duty orientation and moral potency. Specifically, we suggest that the indirect relationships between ethical psychological climate and ethically focused proactive behaviors via duty orientation and moral potency will be stronger for employees with higher levels of moral attentiveness.

Our research makes several contributions to the literature. First, in contrast to much of the prior literature that has focused on the

positive associations between ethical psychological climate and ethical behaviors and job performance (see Newman et al., 2017), we adapt insights from SCT to shed new light on how ethical psychological climate may also encourage agentic, ethically focused proactive behaviors that have been less frequently examined (i.e., employee ethical voice and ethical taking charge). Second, by identifying duty orientation and moral potency as key psychological mechanisms through which ethical psychological climate influences ethically focused proactive behaviors, we help deepen our conceptual understanding of both the ethical psychological climate and proactivity literatures by providing greater theoretical precision. Third, we shed important conceptual light on when an ethical psychological climate may lead to a greater sense of duty and moral potency by highlighting moral attentiveness as a key boundary condition, thus accounting for the interplay between individual and contextual factors. Finally, most studies examining ethical psychological climate typically use single studies and cross-sectional data from one country, thus limiting the generalizability and legitimacy of ethical psychological climate research (Mayer, 2014). We contribute to this literature by testing our model across five unique countries (Hofstede et al., 2010; House et al., 2004). In this way, our work addresses current methodological limitations in the extant literature and demonstrates cross-cultural generalizability and robustness (Urbach et al., 2021).

In sum, this research offers a more precise understanding and explanation of the psychological processes and boundary conditions accounting for ethical psychological climate's influence (Mayer, 2014; Newman et al., 2017) and provides managers with more specific guidance on the conditions they may need to cultivate to motivate employees to engage in ethical voice and ethical taking charge. Per our theoretical model (see Figure 1), we suggest that employees' perception of the social context (i.e., ethical psychological climate) and individual characteristics (i.e., moral attentiveness) influence distinct but complementary mechanisms of moral agency (i.e., duty orientation and moral potency), which in turn, promote employee ethical voice and ethical taking charge behaviors. We begin by highlighting ethical voice and ethical taking charge as our key outcomes and then articulate our logic for why and when an ethical psychological climate should influence them indirectly via duty orientation and moral potency.

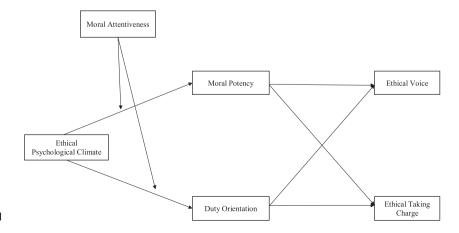


FIGURE 1 Conceptual model

2 | THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 | Ethical voice and ethical taking charge as ethically focused proactive behaviors

As part of employees' moral obligations to their organization, they are expected to take control and make things happen (Parker & Collins, 2010; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). To that end, scholars have suggested two critical ways employees can demonstrate moral agency-by expressing voice (Morrison, 2011) and taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Although taking charge is like other extrarole behaviors, such as organizational citizenship, its focus is on improving workplace procedures through change-oriented actions rather than affiliative actions (e.g., helping others). Thus, integrating the behavioral ethics literature with research on taking charge (e.g., Morrison & Phelps, 1999), we define ethical taking charge as constructive efforts made to effect functional change with respect to the ethical execution of work. In this way, ethical taking charge involves identifying ethical problems and opportunities for change and resolving them by making necessary changes to work policies, processes, and procedures.

Conceptually related to but distinct from ethical taking charge. ethical voice is focused on verbally suggesting ideas for improving the ethical situation and challenging the status quo (Chen & Treviño, 2022; Rees et al., 2013). Ethical voice can thus be described as an employee's expression of concerns about violations of ethical standards (Morrison, 2011). As extant research has shown, both employees and organizations greatly benefit when employees express ethical voice, through improved leadership behaviors (e.g., Babalola et al., 2022) and ethical performance (Huang & Paterson, 2017). Thus, finding ways to encourage more ethical voice within organizations continues to be an issue of significant theoretical and practical importance (Babalola et al., 2022; Chen & Treviño, 2022). In short, both ethical voice and ethical taking charge serve as two related but distinct forms of ethically focused proactive behavior that effectively capture employees' desire to make a positive difference in their organizations (Babalola et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2015; Kim & Liu, 2017; Weiss & Morrison, 2019).

Yet demonstrating such agentic behavior can be both challenging and intimidating because of the risks associated with taking charge and speaking up (e.g., lower performance evaluations, being viewed unfavorably during promotion assessments, higher job strain) (Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Milliken et al., 2003; Strauss et al., 2017). Ethical voice and ethical taking charge thus require overcoming fear of these risks through a combination of individuals' sense of obligation or internal self-standards (i.e., "ought to do" forces or deonance) and personal capacity to do what is right (i.e., "can-do" or moral efficacy) (Huang & Paterson, 2017). Henceforth, we suggest that an ethical psychological climate can indirectly motivate employees to take the risk of engaging in ethical voice and ethical taking charge by heightening their sense of moral agency through both a greater sense of duty and capacity to act. In developing these arguments, we draw upon Bandura's (1986) SCT, which positions moral

agency as a meta-construct that involves both the willingness to act appropriately and the capacity to make deliberate moral judgments concerning one's internal standards. We argue that this moral agency is at the heart of what propagates agentic behaviors (Bandura et al., 1996), such as ethical voice and ethical taking charge, and can be captured through the dual constructs of duty orientation and moral potency.

2.2 | Linking ethical psychological climate to ethically focused proactive behaviors via duty orientation

Duty orientation is a psychological state (rather than a trait) embedded in deonance, which refers to the obligation one has to a group and organization (Folger, 2012; Hannah et al., 2014). The three essential elements of duty orientation are duty to members (i.e., a willingness to be faithful to and serve one's group and its members), a duty to mission (i.e., the volition to take personal risks and sacrifice and exert effort to accomplish the missions and objectives of the organization), and duty to codes (i.e., steadfast adherence to ethical codes and mores in accordance to the customs of the group and organization) (Hannah et al., 2014). These three dimensions together "comprise a normative orientation toward fulfilling obligations and impel individuals to think and act through the lens of their duties to the group and organization" (Hannah et al., 2014, p. 223). In this respect, the obligations one feels towards their group and organization are triggered by social contexts that bear beliefs about the relevance of moral directives and represent the instigation of an "ought to force" (Hannah et al., 2014; Wren. 2010).

We propose that ethical psychological climate is an important contextual factor that helps develop duty orientation in employees. In developing SCT, Bandura (1991) and Bandura et al. (1996) argue that one way to establish an individual's internal self-standards (i.e., "ought to do" forces or deonance) is through exposure to the ethicality of one's work context. Such ethicality is particularly salient in an ethical psychological climate—"the prevailing perceptions of typical organizational practices and procedures that have ethical content" (Victor & Cullen, 1988, p. 101). Individuals form ethical climate perceptions through repeated exposure to consistent expectations and by observing regular patterns of moral values and behaviors (e.g., honesty, showing care and respect, and abiding by ethical principles) within the work context (Huang et al., 2019; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Mayer, 2014; Schneider et al., 2002). When employees perceive that these values are desired, supported, and rewarded by the organization, ethical psychological climate triggers their sense of moral responsibility and commitment to the workplace (Cullen et al., 2003; Schwepker, 2001). Therefore, as employees perceive ethics of care that typically underscore an ethical psychological climate (Mayer, 2014; Newman et al., 2017; Victor & Cullen, 1988), they will likely realize the importance of serving others, supporting the group and organization's mission, and upholding high ethical standards, thus enhancing duty orientation.

Furthermore, an ethical psychological climate highlights how employees can use their knowledge of the organization's moral norms as a guideline for appropriate conduct (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009; Mayer et al., 2010), thereby raising their obligation to fulfill relevant duties. Indeed, extant research has shown that ethical psychological climate is a powerful contextual force that shapes individuals' understanding of expectations, norms, and behaviors, particularly about their conduct and obligations in work settings (Decoster et al., 2021; Kuenzi et al., 2020; Mayer et al., 2010). In this respect, ethical psychological climate guides employees on how they should go about their duties by reinforcing the normative systems that drive appropriate behaviors (Newman et al., 2017; Victor & Cullen, 1988). Ethical psychological climate will, therefore, provide employees with the requisite knowledge that motivates their sense of duty to ethical codes/ principles, the organization, and its members in ways that are appreciated.

We contend that employees who develop a sense of duty orientation due to heightened deonance conveyed by an ethical psychological climate will engage in ethically focused proactive behaviors that contribute to the organization's ethical functioning. Specifically, we propose that a strong sense of duty orientation drives employees to engage in ethical voice and ethical taking charge behaviors, despite risks to the self. For instance, Hannah et al. (2014) note that "a personal sense of duty promotes moral agency and an acceptance of personal risk in service of the group's broader goals" (p. 221). Individuals engaging in such behaviors may risk not being promoted (Burris, 2012; Marinova et al., 2015) or being labeled "troublemakers" (Xu et al., 2022). Expressing ethical voice may even make observers feel threatened, partly because they are unwilling to take the risk of speaking up themselves (Chen & Treviño, 2022), Given these many impediments to employees acting proactively, those who choose to engage in ethically focused proactive behaviors likely do so out of a desire to fulfill their duty to further the organization's goals through ethical means, since duty orientation provides the necessary motivation to engage in behaviors that seek to change and improve the organization in ethical ways (e.g., Eva et al., 2020; Moss et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2022).

More importantly, employees who demonstrate loyalty to organizational members and uphold codes of conduct feel a stronger sense of obligation to fulfill their responsibilities to their organization (Hannah et al., 2014; Verplanken & Holland, 2002). According to SCT, these socially responsible beliefs facilitate appropriate courses of action (Bandura, 1991). Indeed, research affirms that duty orientation goes beyond the intrinsic need to satisfy one's obligations and involves a commitment to the ethics of one's social environment (Hannah et al., 2014; Wren, 2010). Individuals frequently see themselves as officeholders with certain obligations and responsibilities to the larger group and evaluate their ethical choices relative to their consistency with group membership obligations (Cai et al., 2019; Hannah et al., 2014). For example, research shows that duty orientation limits the extent to which employees speak ill of each other (Hannah et al., 2014), which enhances their willingness

to speak up (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). In this way, duty-oriented employees should be more likely to behave in ethically proactive ways by speaking up about behaviors or practices that violate ethical standards at work and going out of their way to ensure work is conducted ethically (Choi, 2007; McAllister et al., 2007). Engaging in these behaviors (i.e., ethical voice and ethical taking charge) helps fulfill employees' moral obligations to the group and organization and supports the organization's ethical functioning. Thus, to the extent that ethical psychological climate stimulates duty orientation, we expect duty orientation to partially mediate the relationship between ethical psychological climate and employee ethically focused proactive behaviors (i.e., ethical voice and ethical taking charge).

Hypothesis 1. Duty orientation partially mediates the positive relationships between ethical psychological climate and employee (a) ethical voice and (b) ethical taking charge.

2.3 | Linking ethical psychological climate to ethically focused proactive behaviors via moral potency

While SCT (Bandura, 1986, 1991) suggests individuals' duty orientation may be activated through an ethical psychological climate, normative processes embedded in an ethical work context, such as having ethical role models to emulate, can concurrently build employees' personal capacities that, in turn, promote ethically focused proactive behaviors. This personal "capacity to do" is captured in *moral potency* (i.e., "a psychological state marked by an experienced sense of ownership over the moral aspects of one's environment (moral ownership), reinforced by efficacy beliefs in the capabilities to act to achieve moral purpose in that domain (moral efficacy), and the courage to perform ethically in the face of adversity and persevere through challenges (moral courage)"; Hannah & Avolio, 2010, p. 291). With cues provided by role models, moral potency helps create moral conation—the impetus and agency to act in a morally praiseworthy manner (Hannah et al., 2011).

We posit that ethical psychological climate encourages employees to engage in ethically focused proactive behaviors by developing their moral potency through social learning of behavioral principles (Bandura, 2002; Lian et al., 2022). Although leaders are often expected to create moral conation within their employees (Brown et al., 2005), employees can also serve as role models via lateral influence (Kuenzi et al., 2020). In most cases, this lateral influence is more critical because leaders are not always present when employees discharge their day-to-day work responsibilities, thus making the social cognitive development of one's peers particularly relevant (Bandura, 1991). Indeed, research shows that coworkers serve as role models of appropriate behaviors (Robinson & Bennett, 1997) and

provide rewards and punishment systems that guide employees' moral agency and behaviors. For example, in ethical work climates, employees who deviate from ethical standards tend to be ostracized by their coworkers and offered negative remarks (Quade et al., 2017). Such moral condemnations contribute to employees' perceptions of ethical norms in the work environment and help them make sense of "the way things are done around here" (Zohar & Luria, 2004). Typically, people develop moral potency when they perceive that those around them adhere to ethical standards (e.g., Hannah et al., 2011) rather than violate them (Hannah et al., 2014). Accordingly, an ethical psychological climate conveys moral values that build employees' confidence in their abilities and courage to act ethically and foster a strong sense of ownership for ethical action. When individuals observe ethical role models in the work environment, they internalize their moral values and standards (Ogunfowora et al., 2021). This process is vital to developing moral potency (Hannah & Avolio, 2010; Zhang et al., 2016). Thus, as employees perceive an ethical work climate, moral potency develops, along with a strong desire to protect and maintain it (Hannah & Avolio, 2010).

The development of moral potency further helps to explain why ethical psychological climate drives employees' ethically focused proactive behaviors. SCT suggests that a person's belief in their capacity to act appropriately serves as a driving force to maintain norms of appropriate behaviors and counteract possible challenges (Bandura, 1986; Hannah et al., 2011). In support of this notion, research affirms that individuals' willingness to engage in proactive behaviors hinges, in part, on their capacity to do the right thing to improve the organization (Huang & Paterson, 2017; Morrison, 2011; Zheng et al., 2022). For this reason, moral potency should increase the likelihood of individuals engaging in agentic actions, such as expressing ideas on how to improve ethical work practices and taking steps to implement ethical work processes. Specifically, morally potent employees may reflect on what might go wrong because of refusing to voice their ethical concerns or ethically take charge at work (Babalola et al., 2022; Hannah et al., 2011; Ogunfowora et al., 2021). Given that individuals are motivated to act in accordance with their values (Bandura, 1991), morally potent employees are more likely to behave agentically by engaging in ethical voice and ethical taking charge behaviors, even when doing so may be risky. Taken together, we believe an ethical psychological climate builds employees' moral potency. In turn, employees are likely to proactively undertake actions that uphold their moral standards, such as voicing opinions and suggestions about ethical matters and effecting functional change to improve the ethical execution of work. Hence, we predict that moral potency will partially mediate the relationship between ethical psychological climate and employees' ethically focused proactive behaviors (i.e., ethical voice and ethical taking charge).

Hypothesis 2. Moral potency partially mediates the positive relationships between ethical psychological climate and employee (a) ethical voice and (b) ethical taking charge.

2.4 | The moderating role of moral attentiveness

To this point, our theoretical arguments highlight how an ethical psychological climate can motivate employees' moral agency, in the forms of duty orientation and moral potency, resulting in ethical voice and ethical taking charge. However, there are strong reasons to believe this moral agentic functioning could differ across individual employees. SCT suggests that moral action is a function of the interplay between the person and social context (Bandura, 1991, 2002). An ethical psychological climate's impact on employees' duty orientation and moral potency will thus depend on the characteristics individuals bring to the social context, particularly those that relate to sensitivity and attentiveness (Bandura, 1991). Therefore, we use SCT to identify *moral attentiveness* (Reynolds, 2008) as an employee characteristic that may account for these differences.

According to SCT, individuals are more likely to learn and develop when they pay attention to the ethicality of their environment and, in so doing, are better able to develop agentic capacity (Bandura, 1991, 1977). For this reason, we look to an employee's level of moral attentiveness, an individual characteristic that captures "the extent to which an individual chronically perceives and considers morality and moral elements in his or her experiences" (Reynolds, 2008, p. 1028). According to Reynolds (2008), moral attentiveness involves two dimensions of attention—a perceptual aspect that involves moralrelated information coding and a more reflective component that concerns introspection and action. Together, these two components facilitate chronic attention to the moral/ethical content of one's environment and impact how individuals understand and act in their moral world (Jennings et al., 2015; Reynolds & Miller, 2015; Sturm, 2017; Whitaker & Godwin, 2013). We posit that employee moral attentiveness plays a critical role in determining whether ethical psychological climate translates into moral agency (viz., duty orientation and moral potency).

Individuals high on moral attentiveness are attuned to ethical cues in their work environment (Reynolds, 2008) and are more likely to uphold ethical standards (Dong et al., 2021; Liao et al., 2018). This makes ethical psychological climate more salient for morally attentive employees, which may lead them to hold themselves accountable at work by having a strong sense of duty orientation and developing their moral potency. Thus, we expect that employees' attention to morality (viz., moral attentiveness; Reynolds, 2008) will strengthen their sense of duty orientation and moral potency when they perceive an ethical climate.

In addition, moral attentiveness represents a higher level of consciousness that makes individuals high on this characteristic more open and particularly sensitive to the morality of their environment (Reynolds, 2008; Reynolds & Miller, 2015). Compared to their peers, individuals high on moral attentiveness tend to think frequently about ethics and are more cognizant of the ethical implications of their decisions and behaviors at work (Reynolds, 2008). As a result, morally attentive employees are more likely to value the ethical psychological climate in which they operate since it makes it possible for them to uphold the duties of care, ethics, and mission of the organization.

Because of their high levels of moral attentiveness, these employees are likely to respond more favorably to ethical actors in their environment, given the heightened sense of congruence such environments provide (Reynolds, 2008; Van Gils et al., 2015), thus strengthening the development of moral potency. Indeed, as Bandura (1986, 1991) argues, social learning and cognitive development are particularly impaired when individuals are less attentive to the happenings in their environment. For these reasons, compared to their less morally attentive peers, we expect more morally attentive employees who operate in an ethical psychological climate to feel a stronger sense of duty orientation and moral potency.

In sum, we assert that moral attentiveness can enhance employees' likelihood of responding favorably to an ethical psychological climate. When morally attentive employees operate in an ethical psychological climate, they should feel a greater sense of moral agency (i.e., a stronger sense of duty orientation and moral potency) that, in turn, motivates them to act proactively by engaging in ethical voice and ethical taking charge behaviors. Hence, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3. Moral attentiveness moderates the positive relationships between ethical psychological climate and employee (a) duty orientation and (b) moral potency, such that the relationships are stronger when moral attentiveness is high rather than low.

Hypothesis 4. The indirect effects of ethical psychological climate on ethically focused proactive behaviors (i.e., ethical voice and ethical taking charge) via employee (a) duty orientation and (b) moral potency are stronger when moral attentiveness is high rather than low.

3 | METHODS

3.1 | Samples and procedures

We tested our hypotheses using five time-lagged field studies in the United States, Turkey, France, Vietnam, and India. We collected time-lagged field data from 1558 working professionals in the United States (n=459), Turkey (n=292), France (n=297), Vietnam (n=199), and India (n=311). In all countries, data were collected at two time periods (2 weeks apart) to minimize the likelihood of common-method variance (CMV) exerting undue influence on our results (Podsakoff et al., 2012). At Time 1, participants provided basic demographic information (e.g., age, gender, education, and years of work experience) and ratings of ethical leadership (control variable), ethical psychological climate, and moral attentiveness. At Time 2, the same respondents provided measures of duty orientation, moral potency, and ethically focused proactive behaviors (ethical voice and ethical taking charge).

3.2 | Cultural contexts

In an increasingly global economy characterized by multinational corporations (MNCs) operating around the world, the cross-national generalizability of our theoretical models is critical. Thus, examining our model in five countries belonging to five different cultural clusters (House et al., 2004) is quite valuable in examining and/or confirming convergence in the constituent relationships underlying our model. We, therefore, tested our full model empirically across these five countries (the United States, Turkey, France, Vietnam, and India) as they belong to five different culture clusters identified in international business research (e.g., House et al., 2004). The literature suggests that the US is part of the Anglo cluster, Turkey in the Middle East cluster, France is part of the Latin Europe cluster, Vietnam is part of the Confucian cluster, and India is in the South Asian Cluster (see House et al., 2004; Lakshman et al., 2014). Thus, testing models with sufficient degrees of cultural context variation, as we do here, is essential for assessing the crosscultural generalizability of our theoretical model (Hofstede et al., 2010; Urbach et al., 2021). Research in ethical contexts points to the importance of examining both similarities across cultures (i.e., convergence) and differences (i.e., divergence; see Lakshman et al., 2014). This literature also points to increasing evidence of convergence while not discounting divergence in ethical contexts (Lakshman et al., 2014). Following this literature, our basic premise in this study is that the nature of the effects, the psychological mechanisms, and the relationships constituting our model are likely to generalize across the five cultures examined. Therefore, we tested the proposed model using multi-group analyses to confirm convergence and/or systematically explore divergence, following suggested guidelines in the literature (e.g., Kirkman et al., 2009).

3.2.1 | US sample

Participants in this sample were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (Buhrmester et al., 2011). Participants were full-time working professionals from various industries. We obtained 615 responses in the first wave of data collection. Of these 615 respondents, we received 493 matched surveys after the second wave of data collection. After listwise deletion of those with missing information and duplicate responses, we matched 459 responses, representing a 74.6% response rate. A larger proportion of the respondents (58%) were male, and the sample average for work experience was 12.9 years. We ensured data integrity by using attention check questions, carefully screening responses, removing duplicate responses, matching responses with their response IDs, and weighting incentives towards the second wave of data collection to maximize matched, usable responses. Participants received \$3.50 after completing the Time 1 survey and \$10.00 after completing the Time 2 survey.



3.2.2 | Turkey sample

We recruited participants using a convenience sampling approach. One of the authors reached out to a Turkish colleague to help with the data collection. This researcher established contacts with several HR managers at various organizations in a regional business and industrial hub in central Turkey. The purpose of the study was explained to obtain support from the HR managers, who encouraged their employees to participate in the study. Participants came from different industries: energy, retail, manufacturing, construction, financial services, information services, and telecommunication. Of the 360 surveys distributed during the first wave of data collection, a total of 292 surveys were matched with the surveys from Time 2, yielding an overall response rate of 81.1%. Of the respondents, 60% were male, with an average age of 39.7 years and 15.4 years of work experience.

3.2.3 | France sample

Participants in this sample were recruited via Prolific in France. At Time 1, we invited 350 individuals working in French organizations. We invited the same respondents 2 weeks later to take the Time 2 surveys. Data were matched using participants' Prolific IDs. Of the 350 respondents invited to complete the survey at Time 1, 300 respondents completed the Time 2 survey. After data collection and listwise deletion of those with missing data, we matched 297 responses, representing an 84.9% response rate. Participants were 53% male and had an average of 7.8 years of work experience and received an incentive of \$13.50 for their participation.

3.2.4 | Vietnam sample

Participants in this sample were working professionals from a wide range of industries enrolled in a management development program at a premier business school in Vietnam. Participants were informed about the nature of the study (e.g., organizational behavior research, time-lagged survey, and that identifying information would be removed to preserve anonymity). The first wave of data collection yielded 273 responses. In total, we matched 199 responses, resulting in a final response rate of 72.9%. Participants were 68% female and had an average of 2.8 years of work experience.

3.2.5 | India sample

Participants in this sample were employees from various industries in India. They were informed by the data collection consultant that the data was being collected for research purposes only. We obtained 429 responses in the first wave, and of these respondents

whom we re-contacted 2 weeks later, we obtained 311 matched, usable responses, resulting in a 72.5% response rate. A larger proportion of the respondents (62%) were male and had an average of 11.2 years of work experience. Following the same study procedures as in other countries, we ensured data integrity by using attention check questions, carefully screening responses, removing duplicate responses, matching responses with their response IDs, and weighting incentives towards the second wave of data collection. Participants received a \$10.00 incentive for their participation.

3.3 | Measures

Unless otherwise stated, all variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Table 2 provides means, standard deviations, correlations, and scale reliabilities along the diagonal for measures used in the study.

3.3.1 | Ethical psychological climate

Participants rated their perceptions of ethical climate using Arnaud and Schminke's (2012) 10-item scale, which consists of five items reflecting an egoistic climate (reverse coded) and five items reflecting a nonegoistic climate (e.g., "In my work unit, it is expected that you will always do what is right for society"; α = .79). Consistent with previous research (e.g., Gorsira et al., 2018), we recoded the items related to egoistic climate, such that higher scores reflected a work climate perceived as more ethical rather than egoistic. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the two-factor, 10-item scale yielded a very good fit (χ^2 = 145.44, df = 19, χ^2/df = 7.65, CFI = .98, IFI = .98; RMSEA = .07; n = 1558²) in the combined sample. Our multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) analyses support the two-dimensional structure of this construct in each of the five country samples (χ^2 = 271.30, df = 95, χ^2/df = 2.86, CFI = .98, IFI = .98, RMSEA = .03).

3.3.2 | Moral potency

Moral potency was measured using Hannah and Avolio's (2010) 12-item scale (e.g., "I am confident that I can confront others who behave unethically to resolve the issue" $\alpha=.90$). The CFA of the 12-item scale yielded a very good fit to the data ($\chi^2=419.66$, df=46, $\chi^2/df=9.12$, CFI=.95, IFI=.95, RMSEA=.07), as did a MGCFA of the scale across the five countries ($\chi^2=855.38$, df=230, $\chi^2/df=3.72$, CFI=.92, IFI=.92, RMSEA=.04).

²Please note that n=1558 for all combined-sample CFAs reported in this study. Additionally, the five groups in all the reported MGCFA analyses contained $n_1=459$ (USA), $n_2=297$ (France), $n_3=311$ (India), $n_4=292$ (Turkey), and $n_5=199$ (Vietnam).

3.3.3 | Duty orientation

Duty orientation was measured using Hannah et al.'s (2014) 12-item scale (e.g., "I do whatever it takes to not let the mission/organization goals fail" $\alpha=.88$). A CFA of the 12-item scale yielded a very good fit to the data ($\chi^2=214.59$, df=27, $\chi^2/df=7.95$, CFI = .97, IFI = .97, RMSEA = .07), as did a MGCFA of the scale across the five countries ($\chi^2=367.25$, df=135, $\chi^2/df=2.72$, CFI = .96, IFI = .97, RMSEA = .03).

3.3.4 | Moral attentiveness

We measured moral attentiveness using Reynolds' (2008) 12-item scale (e.g., "I often find myself pondering about ethical issues"; $\alpha = .90$). MGCFA of the two-factor construct provided good fit to the data in each of the five country samples ($\chi^2 = 769.92$, df = 205, $\chi^2/df = 3.76$, CFI = .94, IFI = .94, RMSEA = .04). Our CFA in the combined sample also provided a good fit to the two-factor structure for the construct ($\chi^2 = 509.51$, df = 41, $\chi^2/df = 12.43$, CFI = .95, IFI = .95, RMSEA = .09).

3.3.5 | Ethical voice

Ethical voice was measured using Huang and Paterson's (2017) six-item scale (e.g., "I develop and make recommendations concerning ethical issues that affect my work"; $\alpha=.81$). Like our measure of ethical taking charge, this variable was measured using a 5-point frequency scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). CFA of the six-item scale yielded a good fit to the data ($\chi^2=27.94$, df=5, $\chi^2/df=5.59$, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, RMSEA = .05). The MGCFA of the six-item scale in the five countries also yielded a good fit to the data ($\chi^2=54.03$, df=25, $\chi^2/df=2.16$, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, RMSEA = .03).

3.3.6 | Ethical taking charge

We measured ethical taking charge by adapting the 10-item taking charge behavior scale developed by Morrison and Phelps (1999). Specifically, we asked participants to assess their taking charge behavior with a particular focus on ethical issues at work (e.g., "I often try to change how my job is executed in order to be more ethical"; $\alpha = .88$). This approach is consistent with past research that has adapted general measures of constructs to create more specific forms of the construct (e.g., Babalola et al., 2021; Greenbaum et al., 2022; Huang & Paterson, 2017; Lim & Tai, 2014). A CFA of the 10-item scale yielded a very good fit to the data $(\chi^2 = 63.03,$ df = 20, $\chi^2/df = 3.15$, CFI = .99,RMSEA = .04), as did our MGCFA analysis of the 10-item scale across the five countries $(\chi^2 = 201.38, df = 85, \chi^2/df = 2.37,$ CFI = .99, IFI = .99, RMSEA = .03).

3.3.7 | Control variables

Based on prior research showing significant relationships between demographic variables and our focal constructs, we controlled for respondents' country, gender, and work experience (Hannah et al., 2014; Tangirala et al., 2013). We also controlled for ethical leadership, organizational identification, and trust because prior research has demonstrated their potential effects on employee behaviors (Lemoine et al., 2019; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). We measured ethical leadership ($\alpha = .91$) using Brown et al.'s (2005) 10-item scale. A CFA of the scale yielded a very good fit ($\chi^2 = 151.76$, df = 20, $\chi^2/df = 7.59$, CFI = .98, IFI = .98, RMSEA = .03). The MGCFA of the 10-item scale in the five countries vielded a good fit to the data $(\chi^2 = 283.68, df = 100, \chi^2/df = 2.83, CFI = .97, IFI = .98,$ RMSEA = .03). We measured organizational identification using the six-item scale ($\alpha = .89$) developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992). A CFA of the six-item scale yielded a good fit to the data ($\gamma^2 = 166.70$, df = 9, $\chi^2/df = 18.52$, CFI = .97, IFI = .97, RMSEA = .11). The MGCFA of the six-item scale in the five countries also yielded a good fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 328.54$, df = 45, $\chi^2/df = 7.3$, CFI = .93, IFI = .93, RMSEA = .06). We measured trust in supervisor using Mayer and Davis's (1999) three-item scale ($\alpha = .80$). A CFA of the three-item scale yielded a good fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 1.16$, df = 1, $\chi^2/df = 1.16$, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, RMSEA = .01). The MGCFA of the three-item scale in the five countries also yielded a good fit to the data $(\chi^2 = 22.87, df = 5, \chi^2/df = 4.57, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, RMSEA = .05).$ Thus, we tested the relationships outlined in the model shown in Figure 1, controlling for ethical leadership, organizational identification, and trust to account for alternative explanations and provide more rigorous and accurate estimates (Becker et al., 2016).

3.4 | Analytical strategy

We began by conducting CFAs to test the model's measurement properties. We also tested model fit and other characteristics of the measurement model in the combined sample using MGCFA. In this process, we tested for measurement model invariance across the five country samples. After establishing configural and metric invariance, we tested our hypotheses using structural equation modeling (SEM), first in the combined sample controlling for "country" and then using multi-group SEM (MGSEM) analysis.3 After establishing support for the model with no control variables (except for "country"), we tested the model again after adding control variables (i.e., gender, work experience, ethical leadership, organizational identification, and trust). We first tested the model in the combined sample with all control variables and then conducted a MGSEM. In this MGSEM, we sought to verify support for our hypotheses in each of the five countries in our study. Because we do expect similarities across countries, with only minor differences, if any, we controlled for nationality in the analysis

³For all structural tests in the combined sample, we include a control for "country," even where it is not explicitly mentioned in the text.

of the combined sample, as suggested by the literature (e.g., Kirkman et al., 2009). Exploring country-level differences in this manner helps to strengthen our conceptual and empirical contribution (Kirkman et al., 2009). To further assess the model's robustness, we added two additional control variables (i.e., leader–member exchange [LMX] and identification with leader) suggested in the literature (e.g., Lemoine et al., 2019) and then repeated the model tests in the combined sample.

Means, standard deviations, correlations, and scale reliabilities (along the diagonal) of study variables are provided in Table 1. Following Conway and Lance (2010), we used a pragmatic approach to address potential CMV issues. First, self-reports of the core constructs are important within a socio-cognitive theory framework, as they pertain to how each of these is perceived by individuals and subsequently cognitively processed in arriving at the most desirable behavioral responses. Second, to verify construct validity, we ran a CFA of the measurement model in the combined sample using the hypothesized nine-factor structure where all latent constructs were represented by their respective scale items. The resulting nine-factor model (see Table 2) provided a good fit to the data ($\gamma^2 = 6244.24$, df = 1497, $\chi^{2}/df = 4.17$, CFI = .92, IFI = .92, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .04). We contrasted this hypothesized nine-factor model to alternative models with different numbers of factors (see Table 2). As shown in Table 2, a three-factor model provided poor fit to the data $(\gamma^2 = 22\ 800.56, df = 1560, \gamma^2/df = 14.62, CFI = .63, IFI = .63,$ RMSEA = .12, SRMR = .10). Additionally, the single-factor model tested provided a very poor fit $(\chi^2 = 27542.98, df = 1569, \chi^2/$ df = 17.5, CFI = .55, IFI = .55, RMSEA = .12, SRMR = .11), suggesting that CMV was not a significant problem. Together, these results support the discriminant validity of the measures and suggest that CMV does not affect measure validity (e.g., Kirkman et al., 2009). Finally, because our measures of the core constructs were drawn from the extant literature and had no overlapping scale items, and we took proactive steps in the design stage to mitigate CMV by obtaining responses at two different time periods, overall, our results provide clear evidence of measurement validity.

Additionally, the hypothesized model provides adequate fit in all five country samples and shows evidence supporting measurement invariance across country samples. First, our MGCFA test of the ninefactor hypothesized measurement model yields an acceptable fit to the data $(\chi^2 = 11\ 292.05,\ df = 2095,\ \chi^2/df = 5.39,\ CFI = .92,$ IFI = .92, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .05) in all five countries. Moreover, all the factor loadings in each of the five country samples are statistically significant, indicating configural invariance of the measurement model. Our test for metric invariance, which consisted of constraining the factor loadings to be equal across the five samples, yielded positive results ($\chi^2 = 12\ 101.40$, df = 2,241, $\chi^2/df = 5.40$, CFI = .91, IFI = .91, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04) and supported metric invariance (model comparison statistics: χ^2 difference/df < 2, Δ CFI = .00; $\Delta IFI = .00$). Thus, the minimum condition of partial invariance across the five country samples was met (Van de Schoot et al., 2012; Vandenberg, 2002).

3.5 | Hypothesis testing

We tested our hypotheses using SEM in AMOS 28. We followed a similar multi-group analytical method for the structural tests of the model, as in the measurement model verification stage. In this structural testing phase, we first tested the mediated model in Figure 1 without the interactions to test the first two hypotheses. We tested this model without interactions (a) using MGSEM analysis and (b) in the combined sample. We repeated these tests of the model, including the interactions, to test the subsequent hypotheses. Our multigroup test of the model with no interactions yielded an acceptable fit to the data $(\chi^2 = 2428.16, df = 790, \chi^2/df = 3.07, CFI = .91,$ IFI = .91, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .04), with all the estimates of the path coefficients in each of the five groups (country samples) being significant and in the hypothesized direction. We then tested the structural model in the combined sample with a control for "country" added to the model. This model yielded an acceptable fit to the data $(\chi^2 = 1247.99, df = 151, \chi^2/df = 8.26, CFI = .94, IFI = .94,$

TABLE 1 Means, standard deviations, correlations, and scale reliability (along diagonal) of variables in combined sample

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender	1.45	0.50	-										
2. Experience (years)	14.53	87.21	03	-									
3. Trust in Leader/Supervisor	3.51	0.90	06	.05	(.80)								
4. Organizational Identification	4.08	0.72	01	.05	.52	(.89)							
5. Ethical Leadership	3.70	0.75	02	.04	.55	.41	(.91)						
6. Moral Potency	3.90	0.60	07	.07	.24	.31	.19	(.90)					
7. Ethical Psychological Climate	3.44	0.60	.01	.08	.29	.32	.25	.22	(.75)				
8. Duty Orientation	3.95	0.57	08	.08	.40	.56	.32	.60	.29	(.88)			
9. Moral Attentiveness	3.25	0.78	.01	.05	.19	.29	.18	.16	.43	.27	(.90)		
10. Ethical Taking Charge	3.69	0.74	03	.06	.34	.51	.28	.59	.32	.62	.38	(.93)	
11. Ethical Voice	3.78	0.69	03	.06	.34	.48	.25	.61	.29	.60	.33	.83	(.87)

Note: N = 1558. All correlations larger than .05 in magnitude are significant at p < .05 or better. Gender coding: (1 = female, 2 = male).

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S.			
o. No.	Model	Fit statistics	Incremental fit ^a
1	Hypothesized theoretical model (nine factors: EL; EPC; MP; DO; EV; ETC; OID; Trust)	$\chi^2 = 6244.24$, $df = 1497$, $\chi^2/df = 4.17$, CFI = .92, IFI = .92, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .04	
2	Eight-factor model (OID and Trust combined ^b)	$\chi^2 = 6905.04$, $df = 1515$, $\chi^2/df = 4.56$, CFI = .91, IFI = .90, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .05	χ^2 difference/df < 2, Δ CFI = .01; Δ IFI = .02
3	Seven-factor model (OID, Trust, and EL combined)	$\chi^2 = 10468.93$, $df = 1530$, $\chi^2/df = 6.84$, CFI = .84, IFI = .84, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .06	χ^2 difference/df > 2, Δ CFI = .07; Δ IFI = .06
4	Six-factor model (OID, Trust, EL, and MP combined)	$\chi^2 = 12560.81$, $df = 1541$, $\chi^2/df = 7.81$, CFI = .81, IFI = .82, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .07	χ^2 difference/df < 2, Δ CFI = .03; Δ IFI = .02
5	Five-factor model (OID, Trust, EL, MP, and MA combined)	$\chi^2 = 18656.26$, $df = 1547$, $\chi^2/df = 12.06$, CFI = .70, IFI = .70, RMSEA = .10, SRMR = .09	χ^2 difference/df > 2, Δ CFI = .09; Δ IFI = .12
6	Four-factor model (OID, Trust, EL, MP, MA, and DO combined)	$\chi^2 = 20083.46$, $df = 1554$, $\chi^2/df = 12.92$, CFI = .67, IFI = .67, RMSEA = .11, SRMR = .09	χ^2 difference/df < 2, Δ CFI = .03; Δ IFI = .03
7	Three-factor model (OID, Trust, EL, MP, MA, DO, and EPC combined)	$\chi^2 = 22800.56$, $df = 1560$, $\chi^2/df = 14.62$, CFI = .63, IFI = .63, RMSEA = .12, SRMR = .10	χ^2 difference/df < 2, Δ CFI = .03; Δ IFI = .04
8	Two-factor model (OID, Trust, EL, MP, MA, DO, EPC, and EV combined)	$\chi^2 = 25747.46$, $df = 1565$, $\chi^2/df = 16.45$, CFI = .58, IFI = .58, RMSEA = .12, SRMR = .10	χ^2 difference/df < 2, Δ CFI = .05; Δ IFI = .04
9	Single-factor model	$\chi^2 = 27542.98$, $df = 1569$, $\chi^2/df = 17.5$, CFI = .55, IFI = .55, RMSEA = .12, SRMR = .11	χ^2 difference/df < 2, Δ CFI = .03; Δ IFI = .03

Abbreviations: DO, Duty Orientation; EL, Ethical Leadership; EPC, Ethical Psychological Climate; ETC, Ethical Taking Charge; EV, Ethical Voice; MA, Moral Attentiveness; MP, Moral Potency; OID, Organizational Identification.

RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04). While two of the control variables (gender and work experience) were not significant in the model, ethical leadership, organizational identification, and trust in supervisor were all significant predictors.

Hypothesis 1a was supported in that the paths from ethical psychological climate to duty orientation ($\beta = 2.96$, p < .001), and from duty orientation to ethical voice ($\beta = 1.34$, p < .001) were significant and positive. Hypothesis 2a was also supported, as ethical psychological climate was positively related to moral potency ($\beta = 2.07$, p < .001), with the additional path from moral potency to ethical voice also significant and positive ($\beta = 0.45$, p < .001). Additionally, the total standardized indirect (mediated) effect of ethical psychological climate on ethical voice was positive and significant at 3.06, indicating that an increase in ethical psychological climate by one standard deviation results in an increase in ethical voice by 3.06 standard deviations. In support of Hypothesis 1b, the path from duty orientation to ethical taking charge was significant and positive ($\beta = 1.43$, p < .001). In support of Hypothesis 2b, the path from moral potency to taking charge was also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.55$, p < .001). Additionally, the total standardized indirect effect of ethical psychological climate on

ethical taking charge was significant and positive at 3.09, indicating that a one standard deviation increase in ethical psychological climate results in a 3.09 standard deviation increase in ethical voice. This leads us to conclude, in support of Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b, that the relationship between ethical psychological climate and employee ethical voice and ethical taking charge is consistent with our hypothesized dual mediation mechanisms (i.e., moral potency and duty orientation).

We tested Hypotheses 3a and 3b by adding the interaction effect of moral attentiveness to the two corresponding paths, as shown in Figure 1. We modeled moral attentiveness and a product term involving moral attentiveness and ethical psychological climate as observed exogenous variables, following established procedures (Williams et al., 2009). We also included direct paths from moral attentiveness to both duty orientation and moral potency, consistent with recommended practices for testing interactions (e.g., Williams et al., 2009). Our multi-group test of this model with interactions yielded an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 3212.01$, df = 825, $\chi^2/df = 3.89$, CFI = .91, IFI = .91, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .09), with most of the estimates of the path coefficients in each of the five groups (country samples) being significant and in the hypothesized direction. We

^aThe incremental fit statistics provided in each row compares the model in that row to the one immediately above it.

 $^{^{\}mathrm{b}}$ Refers to constructs that are combined with reference to the ones in the row immediately above; n=1558 for all rows in table.

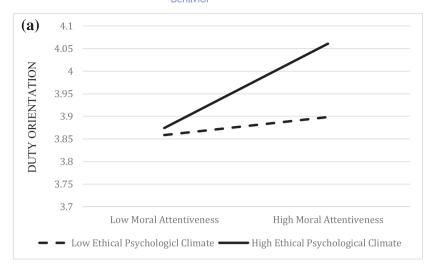
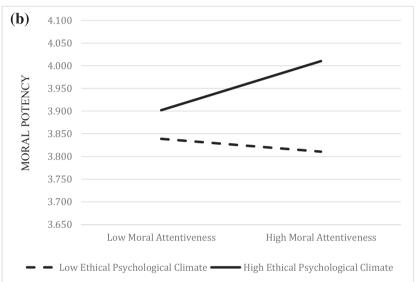


FIGURE 2 (a) Interaction plot of ethical psychological climate and moral attentiveness on duty orientation. (b) Interaction plot of ethical psychological climate and moral attentiveness on moral potency



discuss the exceptions we observed after we report our test in the combined sample. We tested the structural model in the combined sample with control for "country" added to the model. This model yielded an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 2272.76$, df = 177, χ^2 / df = 12.84, CFI = .92, IFI = .92, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .06). Additionally, Hypothesis 3a was supported, as the interaction between ethical psychological climate and moral attentiveness on duty orientation was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.16$, p < .001; see Figure 2a for the plot). Hypothesis 3b was also supported, as moral attentiveness interacted with ethical psychological climate to predict moral potency ($\beta = 0.23$, p < .001; see Figure 2b for the plot). The relationships between (a) duty orientation and ethical voice ($\beta = 0.85$, p < .001), (b) duty orientation and ethical taking charge ($\beta = 0.90$, p < .001), (c) moral potency and ethical voice ($\beta = 0.30$, p < .001), and (d) moral potency and ethical taking charge ($\beta = 0.24$, p < .001) were consistent with our model.

Finally, we performed bootstrapping analysis and estimated the standardized indirect effect of ethical psychological climate on the two outcome variables (i.e., ethical voice and ethical taking charge).

Bootstrapping analyses indicated that the total standardized indirect effect of the interaction (ethical psychological climate and moral attentiveness) on ethical voice ($\beta = 0.20$) and on ethical taking charge ($\beta = 0.20$) was significant, and the 95% CIs did not include zero. Thus, when the interaction term increases by one standard deviation, each of the two outcome variables increase by 0.2 standard deviations. This indirect effect pertains to the total effect via both paths (i.e., through duty orientation and moral potency). To isolate the indirect effect of the moderated mediation through duty orientation and moral potency, we conducted two additional tests. The bootstrapping analysis for the total standardized indirect effect of the interaction (ethical psychological climate and moral attentiveness) via duty orientation indicated that the effect on ethical voice ($\beta = 0.18$) and ethical taking charge ($\beta = 0.18$) are both non-zero and significant. The bootstrapping analysis for the total standardized indirect effect of the interaction (ethical psychological climate and moral attentiveness) via moral potency indicated that the effect on ethical voice ($\beta = 0.19$) and ethical taking charge ($\beta = 0.18$) are both non-zero and significant, thus supporting Hypotheses 4a and 4b.

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TABLE 3 Path coefficients for the MGSEM test of hypothesized model in the five country samples

S. No.	Path	USA	Turkey	France	Vietnam	India
1	$EPC \times MA \to MP$	0.34***	0.08	0.15	0.12	.12
2	$EPC \times MA \to DO$	0.27***	0.07	0.23 [†]	0.24***	.09
3	$MP \to Ethical\ Voice$	0.91***	0.87***	0.50***	0.16***	.95***
4	$DO \to Ethical\ Voice$	0.19***	0.09*	0.81***	0.76***	.09
5	$MP \to Ethical\ Taking\ Charge$	0.88***	0.96***	0.44***	0.13	.91***
6	$DO \to Ethical\ Taking\ Charge$	0.18***	0.14**	0.82***	0.93***	.12 [†]

Note: Model fit: $(\gamma^2 = 3449.66, df = 920, \gamma^2/df = 3.75, CFI = .91, IFI = .91, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .09)$. Abbreviations: DO, duty orientation; EPC, ethical psychological climate; MA, moral attentiveness; MP,

As mentioned before, the hypothesized model shown in Figure 1 is also supported by the overall fit statistics for our MGSEM test, where the five groups correspond to the five countries in our study. We subjected the estimates of the path coefficients to a closer examination to identify deviations, if any, in specific countries (see Table 3). Consistent with our report of support for Hypotheses 3 and 4 above, both interactions are significant and in the hypothesized direction for the US sample, while only the interaction between ethical psychological climate and moral attentiveness on duty orientation is significant in the Vietnam sample ($\beta = 0.24$, p < .001). While none of the other interactions are significant in the other countries, they are all in the predicted direction, with the interaction between ethical psychological climate and moral attractiveness on duty orientation being marginally significant $(\beta = 0.23, p < .10)$ in the French sample. We discuss the implications of these results in our Discussion section.

3.6 Supplemental analyses

To provide a more comprehensive analysis and strengthen conceptual understanding, we also conducted several supplemental analyses, the results of which we briefly summarize here and make available in an online supplement (Data S1). First, to account for the dimensional nature of our constructs, we modified the base model by creating three alternative models which (1) separated ethical psychological climate into its "self"- and "other"-focused dimensions (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012); (2) separated duty orientation into its three components (member, mission, and codes); and (3) separated moral potency into its three dimensions (moral ownership, courage, and efficacy). In short, these dimensionally driven results do not add any new insights, nor do they change the results of our hypothesized model. Second, we tested interaction effects proposed in Hypotheses 3a and 3b using two alternative approaches to the "partially latent approach" we described earlier (Cortina et al., 2021)-a full latent model unconstrained approach (Steinmetz et al., 2011) and multiple group analysis. Using these alternative analytical strategies generated results consistent with our original method and findings.

Third, following prescriptions for non-nested model comparisons, we conducted a test to verify the causal ordering and directionality of our hypothesized model and found support for our hypothesized causal chain (e.g., Mitchell et al., 2019). Fourth, to verify the robustness of our theorized model, we tested the hypothesized model without control variables and then with two additional control variables (i.e., LMX and identification with the leader). In both cases, we found continued support for all hypotheses. Finally, we conducted additional tests by (1) using alternative moderator constructs; (2) using alternative measures of ethical psychological climate (Victor & Cullen, 1988); and (3) testing alternative constructs in place of ethical psychological climate such as voice climate, psychological safety, and justice climate, in the model shown in Figure 1. None of these results change the support for our hypothesized model and reaffirm its stability and incremental value over others. Overall, considering both primary and supplemental analyses, our results are largely consistent with our hypothesized theoretical model.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical contributions

Our research makes several important contributions to the literature. First, our central contribution lies in connecting theory on ethical psychological climate with the extant proactivity literature. Although research points to the role of an ethical work environment in stimulating ethically focused proactive behaviors (Huang & Paterson, 2017; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009), existing work on ethical psychological climate has captured only a limited set of employee behaviors (Mayer, 2014; Newman et al., 2017). As a result, researchers have highlighted the need for further research on other outcomes associated with ethical psychological climate (Newman et al., 2017), particularly given the important role proactive employee behavior serves in shaping the workplace experience. By addressing this call, our study represents one of the first attempts to explicitly make the connection between an ethical psychological climate and two important ethically focused proactive behaviors (ethical voice and ethical taking charge).

^{*}p < .05. **p < 01. ***p < .001. †p < .10.

Using samples from five countries, we demonstrate that ethical psychological climate can encourage employees' expression of ethical voice and ethical taking charge behaviors. In so doing, we enrich the literature by introducing both ethical voice and ethical taking charge as ethically focused proactive outcomes that an ethical psychological climate may encourage. Drawing on SCT, we not only explore the relationships between ethical psychological climate and these ethically focused proactive behaviors but also the mechanisms and boundary conditions involved, which are critical elements of theory building (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007).

Second, our research contributes to a better understanding of the mechanisms linking ethical psychological climate and ethically focused proactive behaviors. Specifically, our findings suggest that an ethical psychological climate contributes to employees' development of duty orientation and moral potency, motivating them to speak up and take charge at work ethically. Thus, we respond directly to Mayer's (2014) call to advance the ethical psychological climate literature by clarifying "why ethical psychological climate should be associated with various outcomes" (p. 426). What is quite notable is that our findings provide strong evidence for duty orientation and moral potency as vital missing links in the ethical psychological climate-ethically focused proactive behaviors relationship, above and beyond the effects of ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005) and other alternative mechanisms (e.g., organizational identity, trust, and procedural justice). This suggests that employees may react strongly to their perceptions of an ethical work environment (above and beyond their perceptions of a leader's ethical behavior), thus enhancing the legitimacy of ethical psychological climate research as an important research stream that contributes uniquely to the broader behavioral ethics field.

Third, our work contributes to extant literature on ethical psychological climate by clarifying when such a climate is most likely to foster a sense of moral agency, operationalized as duty orientation and moral potency. Specifically, our findings suggest that an ethical psychological climate effectively stimulates greater duty orientation and moral potency when employees possess high levels of moral attentiveness. When employees are naturally attuned to moral issues and pay close attention to ethical cues, their sense of duty and moral potency to act increases, resulting in subsequent ethical voice and ethical taking charge behaviors. In this regard, our work reveals how employees' moral attentiveness can play a crucial role in strengthening an ethical psychological climate's positive influence. In so doing, we add to the limited body of work delineating the moderators of ethical climate more broadly (e.g., Arnaud & Schminke, 2012; VanSandt et al., 2006) and encourage future research to specifically explore other individual characteristics or situational factors capable of strengthening or weakening the impact of an ethical psychological climate.

Finally, our work contributes significantly to our cross-cultural understanding of ethical psychological climate. Virtually all ethical psychological climate studies to date contain single-country samples and have primarily relied on cross-sectional data. Scholars have noted that such an approach limits the legitimacy of ethical psychological climate research (Mayer, 2014), thus highlighting the need for management

scholars to improve the theoretical and methodological rigor of their research in this area (see also Newman et al., 2017). By demonstrating convergence in the positive influence of ethical psychological climate across five separate countries (i.e., the United States, Turkey, France, Vietnam, and India), our study provides initial support for the crosscultural validity of ethical psychological climate in predicting ethically focused proactive behaviors.

As expected, our findings support a broad degree of convergence in model results across countries. However, the only cultural contingency in our study is the observed lack of statistical significance for the interactive effect of ethical psychological climate and moral attentiveness on moral potency and duty orientation across all samples. Although all of the interactions are in the predicted direction, several failed to reach significance, as explained here. Moral potency, in particular, seems to be subject to the cultural value dimension of power distance. The moral ownership, moral courage, and moral efficacy components of moral potency seem to collectively work well in relatively low-power distance cultures (e.g., the United States) as opposed to high-power distance cultures (e.g., Turkey, France, Vietnam, and India). This is somewhat consistent with recent theorizing that lowpower distance cultures might have formal and informal channels of ethical voice and ethical taking charge in place (Urbach et al., 2021). Further, the influence of an ethical psychological climate on ethically focused proactive behaviors (i.e., ethical voice and ethical taking charge) via moral potency is likely to work more easily in low-power distance cultures such as the United States. In contrast, in high-power distance cultures such as Turkey, France, Vietnam, and India, employees speaking up and taking charge could be construed by management as a form of insubordination (e.g., Kwon & Farndale, 2020). Thus, we encourage future research to explicitly explore how managers appraise employees' ethical voice and ethical taking charge behaviors across cultures. Do they appraise these behaviors as a threat or as an opportunity for growth?

In contrast, the interactive effect of ethical psychological climate and moral attentiveness on duty orientation seems relatively less contingent on cultural differences. This moderated relationship is significant in two countries (US and Vietnam) and reaches marginal significance in a third country (France). In the other two countries, Turkey and India, the interactions are in the hypothesized direction, albeit not at a level of significance. Given the difficulty in finding interactive effects in field studies (Aguinis, 1995), however, our overall findings suggest that the positive influence of an ethical psychological climate via moral potency and duty orientation is convergent across cultures.

4.2 | Practical implications

In addition to our theoretical contributions, our work has important practical implications for managers operating in a rapidly changing, global business environment. Managers increasingly rely on their employees to proactively speak up about ethical issues and to take charge in contributing to their organization's ethical functioning. Our

findings provide a helpful roadmap to that end by highlighting the critical role an ethical psychological climate plays in fostering duty orientation and moral potency, which subsequently provide the impetus employees need to engage in ethically focused proactive behaviors. More efforts are needed to orient employees towards being loyal and faithful to their group and organization and morally courageous (Hannah et al., 2014; Hannah & Avolio, 2010). Creating an ethical psychological climate, which seems to operate above and beyond the positive effects of ethical leadership, LMX, trust, and employees' sense of identification with the organization, could be one useful strategy to enhance employees' duty orientation and moral potency. In this way, changing the focus of leadership development training to incorporate managerial guidance on how to foster an ethical psychological climate would be particularly useful. Doing so can foster ethically focused proactive behaviors that contribute to the ethical performance and effectiveness of the organization (Babalola et al., 2022; Huang & Paterson, 2017; Zheng et al., 2022). In short, for organizations that desire their employees to proactively engage in ethical voice and ethical taking charge behaviors, creating and promoting an ethical work climate can be a powerful motivator.

Second, given the importance of moral attentiveness in strengthening the impact of ethical psychological climate on employees' sense of duty and moral potency, particularly in the United States, organizations should seek to provide ethical training to employees and incorporate moral attentiveness in their recruitment and selection processes. Organizations can use ethical tools, such as integrity tests and assessment exercises, to evaluate employees' moral attentiveness. They can then create a discussion forum, communicate the importance of ethics, reward and support employees who behave ethically, and promote those who exhibit ethical behavior.

4.3 | Limitations, future research directions, and conclusion

Like any research, ours is not without limitations. First, our data were from a single source, and as a result, we cannot completely rule out the possibility of common-method bias. We attempted to minimize these concerns by preserving participants' anonymity and obtaining ratings of our independent and dependent variables at two points, which helps minimize CMV (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Moreover, because our research involves interactions, common-method bias is of lesser concern (Evans, 1985). Nonetheless, we recommend future research use multiple rating sources (e.g., employees and their managers) to strengthen the robustness of our findings.

Furthermore, our research is survey-based, which may raise concerns about causality. Theoretically, our model supports the causal direction of our predictions. To provide further evidence for causal ordering, we examined an alternative reversed model in which the independent variable and mediators swapped positions in our model (Kline, 2011). This revised model did not yield a good fit in terms of the Akaike information criterion (AIC; 5252.25) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC; 5258.28). Our hypothesized theoretical model

yields lower values of AIC (2955.05) and BIC (2960.11), indicating more robust support for our proposed causal chain (see, e.g., Babalola et al., 2020; Matta et al., 2017; Mitchell et al., 2019; for previous research using a similar strategy to assuage concerns about reverse causality). Nevertheless, we encourage future research to employ experimental designs to provide even greater evidence of causality and to strengthen our theoretical understanding of how an ethical psychological climate wields its positive influence.

Finally, although we focused on moral attentiveness as one important moderator in our model, other individual characteristics may also be relevant. For instance, high assertiveness, goal orientation, and felt responsibility for change might also shape the influence of ethical psychological climate. Because ethical voice and ethical taking charge behaviors involve the risk of disrupting established social ties in an organizational setting (Chen & Treviño, 2022; Marinova et al., 2015), future research could examine the moderating roles of individual political skills and influence tactics. Furthermore, although we focused on ethical processes and ethically-focused proactive outcomes of ethical psychological climate, future research could investigate the effects of ethical psychological climate on broader proactive behaviors (e.g., general voice and taking charge) and specific forms of voice (e.g., promotive vs. prohibitive) relative to other forms of psychological climates (e.g., voice climate, service climate, and justice climate). It would be interesting for such research to incorporate additional work/jobrelated moderators (e.g., level of work interdependence, job design, and task type) to expand our knowledge of the differential effects of multiple psychological climates.

To conclude, our research advances the ethical psychological climate and proactivity literatures by suggesting that ethical psychological climate can foster the development of employees' duty orientation and moral potency, which subsequently facilitates their proactive engagement in ethical voice and ethical taking charge behaviors. Across multiple field samples and countries, we found consistent support for the indirect effects of ethical psychological climate on ethical voice and ethical taking charge via the mechanisms of duty orientation and moral potency. Furthermore, moral attentiveness strengthened ethical psychological climate's impact on duty orientation and moral potency. We hope our work stirs a renewed focus on the role of ethical psychological climate in organizations, now and in the future.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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