



**IUL School of Social Sciences**

Dispositional honesty-humility and moral disengagement in explaining gossip:  
Does ethical leadership make any difference?

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*“It always seems impossible until it is done.”*

Nelson Mandela

To my parents, my sister and my grandparents for all the love and support. For making me believe that I was capable and never stop liking me even in my bad days (which were many);

To Lucky for being my company every day and the one who always loves me no matter what;

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### **Resumo**

A desvinculação moral ocorre quando a função de autorregulação de um indivíduo não é ativada, permitindo dissociar-se das consequências resultantes dos seus comportamentos, tornando-se mais propenso a tomar decisões não éticas - e.g. fazer intrigas acerca dos colegas de trabalho. Sabe-se que a personalidade é um preditor da desvinculação moral, nomeadamente o traço de personalidade honestidade-humildade, que representa a tendência que um indivíduo tem para ser justo e sincero, contrariando processos de desvinculação moral. Por fim, a liderança ética surge também como um desencorajador pois, através da aprendizagem social, os indivíduos comportam-se como o seu líder ético, reduzindo assim a ocorrência de condutas não éticas. Falta compreender em que medida as duas interagem e se uma liderança não ética consegue anular o efeito detrator da personalidade. Deste modo, o presente estudo pretende descobrir em que medida a Desvinculação Moral medeia a relação (negativa) entre a honestidade-humildade e a intriga. Em acréscimo, procuramos compreender se a liderança ética tem um papel moderador entre a honestidade-humildade e a desvinculação moral – também com uma relação negativa entre si. Com uma amostra de 358 trabalhadores, os resultados mostraram que a honestidade-humildade está negativamente associada à desvinculação moral e que esta relação é moderada positivamente pela liderança ética. Por fim, este estudo também nos permitiu concluir que a desvinculação moral medeia a relação negativa entre a honestidade-humildade e a intriga (apenas no caso da intriga instrumental) bem como a liderança ética modera, positivamente, essa relação.

*Palavras-chave:* Desvinculação Moral, Liderança Ética, Honestidade-Humildade, Intriga

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### **Abstract**

Moral disengagement occurs when an individual's self-regulatory function is not activated, allowing them to dissociate from the consequences resulting from their behaviors, becoming more prone to make unethical decisions - e.g. gossip about coworkers. It is known that personality is a predictor of Moral disengagement. The Honesty-Humility personality trait, which represents an individual's tendency to be fair and sincere, opposes Moral disengagement processes. Finally, Ethical Leadership also emerges as a deterrent since, through social learning, individuals behave as their ethical leader, avoiding the occurrence of unethical behaviors. It is yet unknown how both interact and if an unethical leadership is able to override the personality deterrent effect. Therefore, the present study aims to find out if Moral disengagement mediates the (negative) relationship between Honesty-Humility and Gossip. Additionally, we try to understand if Ethical Leadership has a moderating role between Honesty-Humility and Moral disengagement - also with a negative relationship between them. With a sample of 358 employees, findings showed that Honesty-Humility is negatively correlated with Moral disengagement and that this relationship is positively moderated by Ethical Leadership. Finally, this study also allowed us to conclude that Moral disengagement mediates the negative relationship between Honesty-Humility and Gossip (only in the case of instrumental gossip) as well as Ethical Leadership positively moderates this relationship.

*Keywords:* Moral disengagement, Ethical Leadership, Honesty-Humility, Gossip

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**List of Abbreviations**

<b>AVE</b>	Average Variance Extracted
<b>CFA</b>	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
<b>CFI</b>	Comparative Fit Index
<b>CR</b>	Composite Reliability
<b>DF</b>	Degree of Freedom
<b>DV</b>	Dependent Variable
<b>EFA</b>	Exploratory Factor Analysis
<b>IV</b>	Independent Variable
<b>KMO</b>	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
<b>M</b>	Mean
<b>MD</b>	Moral disengagement
<b>MSA</b>	Measure of Sample Adequacy
<b>RMSEA</b>	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
<b>SD</b>	Standard Deviation
<b>TLI</b>	Tucker-Lewis Index

## Introduction

People are the engine of organizations and, in this sense, it is important to understand how they act in the work context and why they behave in a certain way so that it is possible to take advantage of their full potential, maximize their performance and, consequently, increase the productivity of the organization.

That being said, we have decided to focus on the unethical behaviors of employees and on a concept that can serve as a justification for these behaviors - Moral disengagement, more specifically, one of its mechanisms: Displacement of Responsibility. Albert Bandura's theory of Moral disengagement states that people set their own moral standards and if those are violated, personal discomfort will be experienced. However, this does not make unethical behavior cease to exist. According to Bandura (1999), people can use Moral disengagement as a strategy to avoid the discomfort, guilt and self-condemnation associated with their unethical behaviors, rationalizing them and becoming disassociated from their consequences (Bonner, et al. 2014). It is important to note that eight cognitive mechanisms constitute Moral disengagement: moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, distorting consequences, dehumanization, and attribution of blame. In this dissertation we will only consider the Displacement of Responsibility, due to the relationship it establishes between people and individuals hierarchically above as, through this mechanism, followers behave wrongly if a legitimate authority accepts responsibility for the consequences of this behavior, ceasing to feel responsible for actions (Bandura, 1990, 1999; Bonner, Greenbaum, & Mayer, 2016).

Despite this, not everyone has the same propensity to be Moral disengaged, and one's personality has an impact on the development of this phenomenon. In this respect, we have decided to study Honesty-Humility (a dimension of Ashton & Lee, 2007 HEXACO Personality Model), since it acts oppositely to the concept defined above - this dimension represents the tendency that a person has to be fair and honest when dealing with others (Ashton & Lee, 2007), which makes us believe that an individual who presents this personality trait, will have a lower level of Moral disengagement.

Usually, when we talk about a work team, we also talk about a leader. Therefore, we thought it was important to understand how the existence of an ethical leader has an impact on the relationship described above (honesty-humility personality and moral disengagement), weakening it, i.e., contributing to the decrease of unethical behaviors by followers. According to Bandura's (1986) theory of social learning, everything can be learned by observing the



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behavior of others and its consequences (positive or negative, i.e., rewards or punishments). Consequently, followers observing leaders behaving in a certain way, behave similarly to their superiors (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). In this way, the existence of an ethical leader will contribute to ensuring that employees' behaviors are in line with the organization's moral values, avoiding unethical conduct and reducing moral disengagement in teams (Bonner et al., 2016).

Lastly, we find it interesting to relate the followers' Moral disengagement with the Gossip practiced in organizations, believing that a person who is more prone to practice an unethical conduct is also more likely to gossip about their coworkers since they do not feel bad about it.

All things considered, the purpose of this research is to understand if the Honesty-Humility personality trait reduces Moral disengagement and if indeed Ethical Leadership moderates this relationship. Alongside, we want to understand how the personality of an individual contributes to the practice of Gossip and ascertain if this relationship is mediated by Moral disengagement.

The present dissertation is organized in four chapters. Chapter I refers to the state of the art, i.e., existing body of knowledge about the variables mentioned above and their interrelations; Chapter II and III concern the methods used and the relevant results of the study, respectively. Chapter IV discusses results, as well as the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research. Finally, a conclusion is presented that summarizes all the results drawn from this work.

## Chapter I – State of the art

### 1.1. Moral disengagement

*“So far, about morals, I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after.”*

Ernest Hemingway

People are usually concerned with acting ethically and following societal values. This moral reasoning is translated into actions through processes of self-regulation rooted in moral standards (Bandura, 1999). These processes provide motivational and cognitive regulators of moral conduct that serve as guides to monitor people's conducts, define the conditions under which they occur and control them based on the consequences they can bring – people do things that give them satisfaction and, at the same time, refrain from behaviors that violate their moral standards since these lead to condemnation by themselves and others (Bandura, 1999). Nonetheless, these self-regulation mechanisms only work if activated and this activation depends on various psychological systems through which moral control can be selectively activated or disconnected from conduct (Bandura, 1990).

On this basis, Bandura (1999) developed the theory of Moral disengagement as an extension of the Social Cognitive Theory. This last theory refers to a perspective on human behavior, which claims that individuals exercise control over their thoughts and behaviors through self-regulatory processes (Bandura, 1986) – the way people intervene in the world is determined by a self-regulatory system that includes the monitoring of conduct, as well as the reaction to it, taking into account the internal moral patterns that guide good behavior and avoid bad behavior, since having behaviors that contradict these patterns result in self-censorship. In this way, individuals establish moral standards and behave most of the time in a manner consistent with them since, if they are violated, they will lead to personal discomfort and/or self-condemnation. However, people can avoid this discomfort and self-condemnation by dissociating themselves from the negative consequences of their behavior.

In this sense, the Moral disengagement theory (Bonner et al., 2016) emerges, helping to understand the processes by which individuals rationalize their unethical behaviors since,

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normally, when people's moral standards are different from their behaviors, this leads to psychological discomfort caused by cognitive dissonance – as is often the case, when there is dissonance, strategies are used to solve it. Moral disengagement can be used as one of these strategies as it makes unethical or unfair behaviors look normal and acceptable (Festinger, 1957). In this sense, Moore (2015) states that Moral disengagement is directly related to several personality traits, being positively associated with machiavellianism, cynicism and moral relativism, and negatively related to moral identity, empathic concern, guilt, awareness, and Honesty-Humility.

Moral disengagement happens when the individual's self-regulatory function has not been activated, which allows the individual to dissociate himself from the negative consequences of his behaviors (Bonner et al., 2016). Thus, this is the key deactivation process that allows people to be free from the self-sanctions and guilt that arise when their behavior violates internal moral standards, which makes them more susceptible to making unethical decisions (Detert, Treviño, & Sweitzer, 2008). However, to achieve this deactivation, eight interrelated cognitive mechanisms are used, which allow subjects to avoid the internalized moral standards and behave in an immoral manner without feeling the suffering/anguish associated with this type of behavior (Moore, 2015).

As already mentioned, according to Bandura's theory (1986), Moral disengagement operates through eight different cognitive mechanisms. These constitute three distinct groups: the first three (moral justification, euphemistic labeling and advantageous comparison) are entitled “Relabeling Unethical or Unjust Behavior” since the mechanisms belonging to this group serve to reduce the moral implications of unethical acts, facilitating the cognitive restructuring of inhuman/non-ethical acts, which causes individuals to feel more comfortable getting involved in such behaviors; they also serve to make the act seem beneficial in some way. The following two cognitive mechanisms (displacement of responsibility and diffusion of responsibility), called “Distancing and Distorting the Harmful Effects of Unethical or Unjust Behavior”, serve to minimize the individual's role in the consequences caused by their own behavior, that is allow people to distance themselves and distort the harmful effects of unethical or unfair behavior. Finally, the last three mechanisms (distortion of consequences, dehumanization and attribution of blame) – “Reducing Identification with Victims” – restructure the effects of individual actions, either by minimizing their results or by minimizing the perception of distress that these actions cause in others, by reducing its identification with victims of unethical acts (unlike the first three mechanisms, this group is not intended to

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reformulate the action positively but to minimize the true consequences that this has for others) (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Bonner, et al., 2016; Moore, 2008).

The first mechanism of Moral disengagement – Moral Justification – operates in the interpretation of behavior itself (Bandura, 1990), in its cognitive reconstruction, i.e., people usually do not engage in reprehensible behavior until they have justified to themselves the morality of their actions (Bandura, 1999). Thus, what is wrong can be made fair through this reconstruction (Bandura, 1990). In this process of moral justification, individuals are convinced that their unethical behavior is acceptable, serving as a means to reach a decent and moral end (Bonner et al., 2016). An example of the action of this mechanism would be violence and its approval: through moral justification, people say they are fighting oppressors, protecting their values, preserving world peace or even saving humanity from submission to a bad ideology in order to justify violent means and make them acceptable (Bandura, 1999).

The second mechanism – Euphemistic Labeling – is based on language. Language shapes thought patterns, i.e., behaviors and/or activities can assume different appearances, depending on how they are called and explained. In this way, euphemistic language is strongly used to turn bad conduct into something respectable or less harmful (through the use of neutral language) and, at the same time, reducing personal responsibility for it (Bandura, 1999; Bonner et al., 2016). An example where this mechanism is widely used is in an attempt to camouflage harmful activities through innocent language: "civilians who have died because of the bombs are linguistically converted into collateral damage" or "people are not fired, they receive an alternative career development" (Bandura, 1999).

Advantageous Comparison is another way to make harmful conduct look good. When one compares current behavior with another that is worse, the first becomes "less bad" and therefore acceptable or fair (Bandura, 1999) – whenever events occur or are presented sequentially, the first contributes to the way the second is perceived and judged (Bandura, 1990). For example, the promoters of the Vietnamese war and their supporters have minimized the seriousness of the murder of countless people by portraying it as a way to avoid massive communist slavery – the "domino effect" is often used to justify this type of practice (Bandura, 1999). The cognitive restructuring of behavior through moral justifications is the most effective psychological mechanism for Moral disengagement since not only the inhibitors of behavior are eliminated, but the self-approval of these same actions happens (Bandura, 1990).

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Moral control is also weakened when the agent's behaviors are hidden by Diffusion of Responsibility towards harmful behavior (Bandura, 1999) – the diffusion of responsibility exists when people believe that the consequences associated with an unethical act are attributed to many people (Bonner et al., 2016). The sense of responsibility can be spread and consequently diminished through the division of labor – when everyone is responsible, no one is really responsible (Bandura, 1986). For example, group decision-making is a common bureaucratic practice that allows caring people to behave inhumanely, because no individual feels responsible for collectively achieved politics (Bandura, 1990) – any harm caused by a group can always be attributed, in large part, to the behavior of other members (Bandura, 1999). Therefore, people act with more cruelty when their responsibility is overshadowed by a group rather than when they consider themselves personally responsible for their actions (Bandura, 1990).

Another mechanism of Moral disengagement that weakens self-destructive reactions is Disregarding or Distortion of Consequences of action. When people participate in activities harmful to others for personal gain or due to social pressures, they avoid facing the damage they cause (Bandura, 1990), because as long as the results of this conduct are ignored, minimized or distorted, self-censorship is not activated (Bandura, 1999). People distort the consequences of their unethical behavior by ignoring or minimizing the harm and instead emphasizing the benefits of the behavior (Bandura, 1986).

The mechanism of Dehumanization acts on the recipients of injurious acts. This occurs when people ignore the human characteristics of victims, making them seem unworthy of basic human considerations (Moore, Detert, Treviño, Baker, & Mayer, 2012). The strength of moral self-censorship depends, in part, on how "aggressors" view people who mistreat – people like themselves versus individuals who are strangers to themselves. While a "strange" individual can be easily depersonalized (Bandura, 1999), considering the other as human activates empathic emotional reactions through perceived similarity (Bandura, 1990). In this way, self-censorship of cruel conduct can be "disengaged" by depriving individuals of human qualities – after being dehumanized, they are no longer seen as people with feelings, hopes, and concerns (Bandura, 1999). For example, most people support the death penalty in the abstract, but the more they know about certain sentenced individuals, the less they favor its execution (Bandura, 1990). In addition to depriving enemies of human conditions, another way to weaken self-censorship is through the attribution of demonic qualities – it is easier to brutalize people when they are seen as inferior. For example, during wartime, nations release dehumanized and

demonic images of their enemies to make it easier to kill them (Bandura, 1999).

Attribution of Blame is another mechanism that refers to blaming others or circumstances for one's behavior. In this process, people see themselves as irreproachable victims, without guilt (Bandura, 1990), who are led to engage in misconduct due to forced provocation (Bandura, 1999). Thus, punitive conduct is seen as a justifiable defensive reaction – by attributing blame to others or circumstances, not only are harmful actions made excusable, they also make the person feel they acted justly in the process (Bandura, 1999). In this way, individuals argue that "victims" generally contribute (at least in part) to their situation and may be held responsible for bringing suffering upon themselves (Bandura, 1990). Like so, the attribution of guilt is generally accompanied by devaluation and discriminatory social practices that serve as a moral justification for ill-treatment.

Finally, the Displacement of Responsibility mechanism occurs by minimizing the role of the agent in the damage that someone causes (Bandura, 1999). In other words, people behave in ways they normally repudiate if a legitimate authority accepts responsibility for the consequences of such conduct (Bandura, 1990). Through the displacement of responsibility, subjects do not feel personally responsible for the actions, since they believe that another person is (Bandura, 1999; Bonner et al., 2016) – their actions derive from the authorities' orders and not from their responsibilities (Bandura, 1990). For example, the commanders of Nazi prisons and their teams stripped themselves of personal responsibility for their inhumane actions because they claimed that they were only following superior orders (Bandura, 1999). Hence, in this mechanism, the authorities explicitly authorize harmful actions and take responsibility for the damages caused by their followers – the more legitimacy and proximity to authority, the higher the level of obedience (Bandura, 1990). This mechanism is especially relevant for the research problem that motivated this study as it is a mechanism specifically involving hierarchical relations, i.e. where leadership is required to activate the mechanism. Therefore, because ethical leadership is one of the focused variables in this study, displacement of responsibility is chosen as a closely related mechanism.

### **1.1.2. Predictors of Moral disengagement**

Not everyone has the same propensity to be morally disengaged, as this depends on individual characteristics that differ from person to person – the personality of each. This differentiation (which contributes to the increase or decrease in moral disengagement) is due to the way people see others, see the events and see themselves (Detert et al., 2008).

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Detert et al. (2008) identified a set of individual differences that may influence individuals to be more likely morally disengaged, suggesting that empathy and moral identity are deterrents and that the cynicism trait, and the locus of control orientation are facilitators. Moore et al., (2012) added machiavellianism to the set of characteristics previously presented. Therefore, it is important to understand why these characteristics are considered predictors of Moral disengagement.

Empathy is an individual characteristic that describes the degree to which an individual is concerned about the needs of others and is able to put him/herself in their place (Detert et al., 2008), and that includes friendly feelings, responsiveness as well as the ability to cognitively understand the perspectives of others. Empathy has received attention as an individual difference that contributes to ethical behavior and reduces the unethical one (Moore et al., 2012). In this way, it is believed that empathy is negatively related to the propensity for moral disengagement. On one hand, those who have less empathy (and are therefore less likely to feel compassionate towards others and understand their views) are more likely to show greater propensity to disengaged morally, since moral disengagement often involves ignoring and/or distorting the feelings, needs or perspectives of others (Moore et al., 2012). On the other hand, empathic individuals are also more inclined to take other people's concerns into account, to experience their feelings and, consequently, are less likely to have behaviors that may harm others, i.e., to have moral disengagement – in this case, empathy may be considered an inhibitor of moral disengagement (Detert et al., 2008).

The trait of cynicism is defined as a widespread belief that others are not trustworthy, are selfish and do not deserve attention, being this trait associated with feelings of frustration and disappointment and with a constant distrust of other people, groups and ideologies – everything that is different is considered misleading and malevolent (Detert et al., 2008; Hochwarter, James, Johnson, & Ferris, 2004). It is also known that the subjects who present the trace of cynicism believe that the conduct of people is motivated exclusively by self-interest, adopting this same posture (Hochwarter et al., 2004). Several authors propose that this personality trait facilitates moral disengagement since individuals with a high level of cynicism have an underlying distrust of other people, and are more likely to question their motives and to think that others are not worthy of respect because they are involved in selfish acts (because everyone is), thus being more likely to shift the responsibility to others (Detert et al., 2008).

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According to Detert et al. (2008), the locus of control orientation is related to the way people think about the events in their lives. This orientation is a relatively stable provision that differentiates people who believe they have personal control over what happens in their lives from those who believe that everything that happens is controlled by chance or by powerful people. Individuals who have a strong locus of control orientation see clear connections between their own behavior and its consequences – Treviño (1986), relates the locus of control orientation to ethical decision-making, arguing that those who believe that there is a connection between their behavior and its results are more likely to take personal responsibility for that behavior, activating moral norms (Schwartz, 1977). Based on all this, Detert et al., (2008) propose that individuals with a higher locus of control orientation are less likely to have Moral disengaged behaviors since they feel responsible for their actions. The locus of control orientation should also be negatively associated with Moral disengagement since those with stronger internal guidelines are more likely to consider the consequences of their actions and less likely to blame others (Detert et al., 2008).

The moral identity refers to the way individuals think about themselves (Detert et al., 2008), and allows to understand how someone's self-concept embodies the importance of being a moral person, with a strong relationship between moral identity and pro-social behavior, which leads to the reduction of unethical behaviors (Moore et al., 2012). For individuals with highly self-important moral identity, moral concerns and commitments are central to their self-definition and self-concept (Detert et al., 2008). This characteristic is expected to be negatively related to the propensity for moral disengagement, since individuals with a prominent moral identity are concerned about the harm and suffering they may cause to others (including those who do not belong to their group), taking on all the responsibilities for their behavior (Detert et al., 2008; Moore et al., 2012). A highly self-important moral identity inhibits the mechanisms of moral disengagement that serve to minimize and misinterpret others (dehumanizing them) and to blame them for the consequences of their actions (Detert et al., 2008).

Finally, Machiavellianism represents the propensity of an individual to be manipulative in the pursuit of their own goals. Machiavellianism is positively related to several unethical decisions and to various transgressor behaviors such as anti-social behavior, lying, and the will to exploit others. Therefore, it is believed that those who have this characteristic have a propensity for moral disengagement because they use various cognitive mechanisms to achieve their goals, regardless of the means necessary, without the occurrence of self-censorship (Moore et al., 2012).



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Despite having a notion of some of the predictors of Moral disengagement, still little is known about the subject – although it is extremely important to understand the likelihood of it occurring. Further research on this topic would be very useful for organizations as it would allow them the knowledge to comprehend whether individuals would be predisposed to evidence Moral disengagement, enabling the aforementioned organizations to allocate resources to improve the decision-making processes towards them (Detert et al., 2008).

### **1.1.2. Moral disengagement in organizational contexts**

After discussing the possible antecedents/predictors of moral disengagement, and taking into consideration the objective of this study, it is relevant to understand its consequences for organizations.

Moral disengagement is not seen as a stable trait, but rather as a cognitive orientation to the world that develops over time and is influenced by the social contexts in which it operates – depending on them – resulting from the interaction between personal and social influence (Bandura, 2002; Moore, 2008). That is, it is important to look at the moral disengagement with a malleable characteristic of individuals rather than being measured as the "rotten apple" of a person because it is an orientation to the world that is socially learned and not a genetic heritage (Bandura, 1986; Moore, 2008).

In a work context, it is possible to state that moral disengagement is directly related to counterproductive and unethical behaviors, unethical decision making that involves lies and theft (Detert et al, 2008; Moore, 2008), behaviors that violate social and organizational norms such as corruption, violation of legal and safety norms (Fida et al., 2015), among others – taking into account that, as already mentioned, the moral disengaged reasoning causes a negative act to disassociate from guilt and self-censorship (Detert et al., 2008). Moral disengagement is a strong predictor of unethical organizational behaviors since it reflects an individual's tendency to disconnect from self-sanctions that would otherwise prevent this type of behavior (Moore et al., 2012). Also, on decision-making, moral disengagement (through its eight mechanisms) allows the subject to make unethical decisions more easily since it prevents the psychological discomfort (caused by cognitive dissonance) that is experienced by individuals when they choose to adopt certain types of morally questionable behaviors (Moore, 2008).

Taking a closer look at the leader's position in this type of behavior (since this topic will be addressed later on), it is possible to claim that followers who obey unethical orders from their leader can do so through the displacement of responsibility mechanism, attributing the

blame to the one who instilled a certain order in them. In conclusion, individuals who believe that leaders have more responsibility than followers are more likely to obey a leader's unethical order since they believe they have no responsibility for its consequences (Hinrichs, 2007).

However, it is also argued that Moral disengagement may be associated with the experience of negative emotions such as anxiety and irritability and the perception of the organizational climate as less favorable, leading to low levels of job satisfaction (Claybourn 2011; Fida et al., 2015). Thus, when people are negatively activated, Moral disengagement can make them realize that adopting unethical behavior can be a useful and appropriate strategy to deal with these stressful situations and avoid moral responsibility towards others and the organization, providing a cognitive framework in which counterproductive behavior seems appropriate (Fida et al., 2015; Paciello, Fida, Cerniglia, Tramontano, & Cole, 2013). According to Claybourn (2011), employees who show a relatively high tendency towards moral disengagement were subjected to negative behaviors at work, reacting emotionally to colleagues and the environment experienced in the organization, which causes them to initiate the process of moral disengagement that allows them to engage in harmful behaviors towards others without weighing their conscience.

Although context is important to explain behavior, it is of especial interest to develop Moore et al. (2012) and Moore (2015) views that there are dispositional traits that concur to reduce the risk of moral disengagement. One of such traits is Honesty-Humility from HEXACO (Ashton & Lee, 2009) that is yet to be explored although it is the only personality dimension that actually differentiates this model from most current Big-Five factor models (e.g. McCrae & Costa, 1999).

### **1.2. Honesty-Humility**

According to several authors, a person's personality is a predictor of his/her propensity to be Moral disengaged, and these individual differences make people see themselves, others and events in a more or less morally disengaged way (Aquino, Reed, Thau and Freeman, 2007; Detert et al., 2008). We can assume that Moral disengagement is more than a state of mind and can be considered a personality trait (Aquino et al., 2007; Paciello et al., 2008) – personality can be defined as the set of organized and relatively durable psychological traits of an individual, which influence all his/her interactions and adaptations to different environments (Larsen & Buss, 2009).

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It is also important to address the personality in an organizational context since it will influence all organizational behavior and dynamics (Hogan, 2004).

Over time, various instruments have emerged to measure the personality of individuals. The best-known model would be the Big-Five model (McCrae & Costa, 1987), derived from lexical research, where personality is measured taking into consideration 5 different dimensions: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1999).

However, Ashton and Lee (2009) presented a new six-dimensional model to measure personality – the HEXACO model – which serves as a viable alternative to the former.

The Hexaco model also evolved from a lexical approach – an approach that provides a justification to select a set of personality variables that will represent each of the main dimensions of this, avoiding the problem of researcher biases in the selection of these variables (Ashton & Lee, 2005). This model is composed of six different dimensions (Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience) and foresees several important personality phenomena that are not explained in the Big Five theory. Three of these dimensions (Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience) are very similar to the Big-Five ones while the Emotionality and Agreeableness dimensions have a more complex relationship with the two remaining dimensions of Big-Five, differing in important aspects. Besides, the authors added the Honesty-Humility dimension, which is the key feature that differentiates the two personality models (Ashton & Lee, 2007).

The Honesty-Humility dimension represents an individual's tendency to be fair, honest, modest and genuine when dealing with others, in order for them to cooperate in situations in which the aforementioned individuals could be exploited without suffering consequences. High levels of Honesty-Humility are associated with fewer opportunities for personal gain arising from the exploitation of others but also with less risk of loss stemming from the end of cooperation on the part of others (Ashton & Lee, 2007).

In conclusion, in addition to the Honesty-Humility dimension of the HEXACO model being the major difference between the two models used to measure personality (Big-Five model), it is also the dimension that most interests this study, due to its link with justice. Considering all that has already been said, it is possible to state that Moral disengagement acts in the opposite way to Honesty-Humility. Accordingly, our first hypothesis is:

***H<sub>1</sub>: Honesty-Humility will negatively correlate with moral disengagement.***

Dispositions, per se, are a poor explanation for behavior from a psychosocial point of view, because behavior is also a product of its interaction with social context. Among the many variables that depict work context, leadership can be one of the most influential in the sense that leaders are expected to condition behavior in order to uphold the best interest of the organizations, and such influence extends to moral dimension (Treviño, Brown, & Hartman, 2003).

### **1.3 Ethical Leadership**

#### **1.3.1. Leadership**

Leadership has been a focus of interest for many years due to its impact on personal and organizational success (Bolden, 2004). In this sense, scholars have been trying to define this concept for more than 100 years (Northouse, 2018). However, presenting a definition of leadership is not easy. According to Stogdill (1974), "there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it" (p. 259). This difficulty passes through two questions: on one hand, leadership is a complex construct that leads to subjective interpretations, where each person has their own vision based on their experiences; on the other hand, how leadership is defined depends on the theoretical position of each person - leadership as a trait (this arises as a consequence of the characteristics/traits that leaders have) versus leadership as a social process that emerges from group relations (Bolden, 2004).

Despite the vast array of ways in which leadership has been conceptualized, some aspects are common to all authors: leadership is a process that implies influence, occurs in a group context and involves common objectives (Northouse, 2018). Considering these characteristics, several authors managed to create a definition for the concept. According to Yukl (1998), leadership is an intentional process of influence over other people, the main goal being guiding, structuring and facilitating activities and relationships within a group or organization. Northouse (2018) ends up defining the concept as a process by which a person influences a group of individuals in order to achieve a common goal. Smircich and Morgan (1982) see leadership as a process where one or more individuals have the right or the obligation to define the reality of others.

By stating that leadership is a process, it can be understood that it is not a trait that resides in the leader, but rather an event that happens between the leader and the followers, where not only the former affects the group but also the latter affects the leader, since both need one another (Northouse, 2018). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that leadership is an

influence process that occurs naturally within a social system, where the leader influences what the group does, how it does, and how it relates to each other, while the group itself also exerts influence (even if indirect) on the leader (Yukl, 1998). However, there are several characteristics that an individual must have to be able to exert influence in a group effectively: he must be dynamic and charismatic, have the ability to inspire others, offer security to employees and show them a purpose (Bolden, 2004).

Despite everything that has been said before, not all leaders are good and do not consider the ethical and moral values of the society and the organization in which they are inserted. In this sense, it is important to highlight ethical leadership and understand how leaders are able to influence their followers and how the behavior of the former has an impact on the behavior of employees.

### **1.3.2 Ethical Leadership**

The occurrence of numerous ethical scandals in organizations has raised important questions about the role of leadership in the development of ethical conduct, and this issue has become one of organizations main concerns (Brown et al., 2005; Colvin, 2003; Mehta, 2003; Revell, 2003). Thus, it is important to address this question due to the leader's power to influence its followers' behavior, resulting in a direct impact on organizational performance (Trevino, Brown, & Hartman, 2003).

Ethical leadership is defined as a "demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (Brown et al., 2005; p. 120). This means that those who are seen as ethical leaders have to show conduct that followers consider morally appropriate (honest, credible, integral, fair, impartial, concerned about others and respectful), making the leader a legitimate and reliable model of conduct (Brown at al., 2005; Treviño at al., 2003), through a two-way communication where followers have a voice. Concerning the term "reinforcement", it is expected that leaders, when establishing ethical standards, reward those who comply with them and discipline individuals who do not follow them, leading to vicarious learning.

Based on the definition that was just clarified, Brown at al. (2005) present ethical leadership in terms of social learning, based on Bandura's theory (1986) which states that almost everything can be learned by observing the other people's behavior and its consequences. Leadership involves influence (Yukl, 2002) and, taking this into account, this perspective of social learning suggests that leaders influence its follower's ethical conducts through modeling

(e.g. learning by observation, imitation, and identification), where employees can learn what behavior is expected, rewarded and punished through role modeling (Brown et al., 2005). In this manner, leaders are an important source of this modeling considering their role in the organization and their status, and have the power to affect the behavior and results of those who follow them, as well as to control the rewards and punishments given to them - according to Bandura (1986), these consequences (rewards and punishments) facilitate learning in advance because they inform individuals about the benefits of ethical behavior and the costs of inappropriate behavior. However, to achieve this learning, it is necessary that leaders present as attractive, reliable and legitimate as ethical models, considering that they are constantly being "evaluated" and "analyzed" by their followers (Brown et al., 2005).

The existence of an ethical leadership brings several positive consequences for the organization, such as the increase in the commitment of employees, the decrease in unethical conduct in the company (Treviño et al., 2003), the improvement of the followers' performance and, consequently, the increase of the organizational productivity. However, it does not depend exclusively on the leadership style, since it cannot be responsible for the performance of workers or the achievement of organizational objectives (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002). As a result, followers also play an important role through their perception of their leader, their perceived relationship between the two, the level of support they receive and, finally, their feelings about the ability to achieve certain organizational goals (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002).

### **1.3.3. Leadership and Moral disengagement**

The fact that unethical behaviors often exist in organizations makes it important to understand why leaders and followers are involved in such attitudes (Bonner et al., 2016).

Having a non-ethical leader is undesirable for several reasons however, regarding follower's management, it becomes increasingly serious because (as previously mentioned), leaders (due to their hierarchical position in the organization) have direct influence over their teams (Bonner et al., 2016; Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, & Kuenzi, 2012). Nevertheless, some leaders end up having less appropriate behaviors, as they cognitively remove the personal sanctions associated with misconduct through the mechanisms of moral disengagement explained above. Taking into consideration that leaders set an example of how to behave in the organization, it is expected that those who are morally disengaged, provide modeling clues that support unethical behaviors, since they do not consider these wrong practices (Bonner et al., 2016), leading their employees to follow suit and behave in a similar way.

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According to Gino and Galinsky (2012), being connected to another person who is involved in dishonest/non-ethical behaviors leads people to behave in the same way, which then leads to a higher moral disengagement on their part. This happens due to the vicarious justification, i.e., when someone feels psychologically close to someone who behaved in the wrong way, the latter is more likely to consider these behaviors as less shameful and more acceptable, leading them to act in a similar way - this happens both for the good and the bad sides, that is, the psychological proximity can produce selfishness as well as can increase the generosity (Gino & Galinsky, 2012).

On the other hand, if followers absorb and reproduce the leader's behaviors, the existence of an ethical leadership will allow the followers' behaviors to be in accordance with the organization's moral values, avoiding unethical behaviors and, consequently, reducing their moral disengagement. It can be said that ethical leadership is beneficial for organizations because it reduces unethical behavior (Bonner et al., 2016). The followers who observe their leaders treating the organization with respect, justice and honesty, feel obliged to do the same, even if this implies going against their first impulse, considering that if they do not act correctly, they will be punished (Bonner et al., 2016). This is why we can confirm that ethical leadership acts as a moderator between the follower's personality and moral disengagement, weakening the strength of this relationship. Miao, Newman, Yu, and Xu (2013) reinforce this idea by stating that if employees consider that their leader is ethical, they are less likely to engage in unethical behaviors, which will reduce deviant behaviors and bullying in the workplace (Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbaum, 2010).

Concerning interpersonal relationships in organizations, ethical leaders emphasize the importance of two-way communication, being concerned with listening and interacting with their followers, showing social sensitivity and affection for others (Brown et al., 2005). Consequently, when followers observe this type of behavior from superior member towards his work colleagues, it results in a higher level of commitment, participation, trust and collaboration with others (Koys, 2001; Walz & Niehoff, 2000). In this way, employees will be more willing to listen to colleagues' opinions, avoid personal attacks on group members and show respect and consideration for others, which strengthens relationships and reduces Moral disengagement (Mayer et al., 2010).

Taking in consideration everything that was said, it is possible to state that leadership has direct effects on the followers' Moral disengagement. In this sense, it is interesting to understand to which extent the honest personality of the employee along with an ethical

leadership reduces the unethical behaviors of the individual. As a result, our second hypothesis is:

***H<sub>2</sub>: Ethical Leadership will moderate the relation between Honesty-Humility and Moral disengagement, such that the direct effect weakens when ethical leadership is higher.***

If one of the possible positive consequences of being an ethical leader is countering mechanisms of moral disengagement, its true value lies in preventing the negative consequences of moral disengagement in organizational settings. Such consequences can be as serious as corruption and legal breach (Fida et al., 2015) and many other counterproductive behaviors (Detert et al., 2008; Moore, 2008). Some may seem to be less serious but as they are taken more lightly, they can just as well be as detrimental as serious ones, due to being prevalent. Such is the case of gossip.

## 1.4 Gossip

Language has been constantly evolving and used ever since the first primates as a mechanism to unite social groups, facilitating the articulation between them as well as enabling the exchange of information (Dunbar, 2004). It is following this exchange of information (in this case regarding facts about people other than oneself) – which may not always be positive and could even pass on wrong information - that the concept of gossip arises.

Gossip can be defined as a social activity (taking into account that there are at least three people involved - Wittek & Wielers, 1998) where unconfirmed information about other people's issues is transmitted informally between individuals (Litman & Pezzo, 2005). However, according to Rosnow (1977), this exchange of information is not only "small talk" since it has a social purpose - two individuals exchange information about a third one with some goal or finality, whether it is the possibility to exchange more gossip in the future, gain status, for fun, money, social control, amongst others. Fine and Rosnow (1978), emphasizing the lack of confirmation of the information that is passed on, define the concept as “a topical assertion about personal qualities or behavior, usually but not necessarily formulated on the basis of hearsay, that is deemed trivial or nonessential within the immediate social context” (p. 161).

That being said, Gossip has been the object of study of various subjects due to its possible implications. Anthropology is focused about studying the concept as a way to maintain the interests of the group, Psychology tends to consider Gossip as a means to promote individual interests, and Management is concerned with the working groups of current organizations,



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questioning whether the Gossip increases or impairs the performance of them (Kniffin & Wilson, 2005).

Considering the subject of the present dissertation and its objective, we will focus on “organizational gossip”, divided into two types - instrumental gossip (associated with the utility that this has for the group) and hedonic gossip (related to pleasure and emotions experienced by itself). Throughout this study, these two types of gossip will always be considered, with different hypothesis for each of them.

Gossip in the workplace can be defined as “informal and evaluative talk in an organization, usually among no more than a few individuals, about another member of that organization who is not present” (Kurland & Pelled, 2000; p. 429). This phenomenon represents approximately 65% of people's interaction time, varying according to their gender and age (Dunbar, 2004; Grosser, Lopez-Kidwell, & Labianca, 2010). This indicates that the time spent in the organization is accompanied by numerous conversations about social topics, such as talking about colleagues and people who have authority over them, a boss or an employer, for example (Ellwardt, Labianca & Wittek, 2012). According to Michelson, Van Iterson and Waddington (2010), gossip is a type of narrative discourse that occurs in the "unmanaged spaces" of organizations and allows communication and opinions, emotions, beliefs and attitudes towards the work experience and organizational life. To several authors, gossip has four main functions: to inform, entertain, influence (Rosnow, 1977) and be a mechanism for imposing norms on groups (Dunbar, 2004).

Many organizational objectives depend heavily on informal relationships amongst the organization's employees since the quality and strength of these relationships facilitate or impede cooperation among members of formal working groups, affecting the results of the entire organization. In this sense, gossip is seen as one of the main tools to strengthen these relationships (Elwardt et al., 2012).

However, gossip is usually associated with small talk, scandals, and rumors, which is not correct. It is common to treat the terms gossip and rumor as synonyms, however, despite being related, these are two different concepts (Michelson et al., 2010; Noon & Delbrifge, 1993; Rosnow & Foster, 2005). Fine (1985) presents this distinction: "Rumor's foundation is a lack of evidence - without regard for topic; gossip specifies the topic - the moral doings of other humans - but ignores its factuality" (p. 223); the authors Michelson et al., (2010), also suggest that rumors are motivated by a desire for meaning and production of sensations while gossip is only motivated by the ego itself and by individual status needs. However, not all gossip is negative (Grosser et al., 2010). Several authors show this distinction by presenting concepts

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such as "praise gossip" vs. "blame gossip" (Elias & Scotson, 1965) or "positive" and "negative" gossip (Fine & Rosnow, 1978) - throughout this thesis we will choose the second denomination. So, the positive gossip occurs when the conversation focuses on the accomplishment or commendable behavior of a group member (Noon & Delbrifge, 1993). On the other hand, gossip is negative when it results from self-interest in relation to other individuals in the group (considered rivals) aiming at denigration and social humiliation of these individuals (Paine, 1967), when the objective is the promotion of self-image through social comparison and discrediting of others (Michelson et al., 2010), if it serves as an agent of bullying and harassment in the workplace contributing to unfairly ruin others reputations (Kniffin & Wilson, 2010). It is therefore a synonym of intrigue.

It is important to note that not everyone partakes in gossip. In other words, the physical and social proximity between the sender and receiver facilitates the transmission of information, making communication more frequent and easier. On the other hand, the relevance of the information also plays an important role – if the information is considered (by the sender) as relevant for the receiver, then its transmission is more likely to happen (Noon & Delbrifge, 1993). Another factor that increases the flow of gossip (especially the negative one) is trust – the sender has to trust that the receiver will keep the secret or that when spreading said gossip, they do so to protect the original sender (Elwardt et al., 2012).

Gossip can be seen as a vehicle for social change and has several positive functions associated with it. This allows to coordinate a team as it helps to maintain and strengthen personal connections between its members (and to fortify the social ties between them) at times when these links are not strictly necessary for the proper functioning of the organization, allowing them to increase loyalty between individuals due to the sharing of "risky" information and, lastly, gossip (due to its fun character – sometimes) can serve as an escape from day-to-day monotony, helping to combat boredom and providing moments of release from routine and stress (Beersma & Van Kleef, 2011; Litman & Pezzo, 2005; Michelson et al., 2010; Noon & Delbrifge, 1993). Another function of gossip is its ability to provide relevant information about the context in which the group is inserted, allowing communication and enforcement of group norms, which will help the cultural and organizational learning of individuals and, consequently, prevent someone from failing with these norms, due to the fear of reprehension by the group (Beersma & Van Kleef, 2011; Michelson et al., 2010).

Conversely, the occurrence of gossip can also have negative consequences for the organization and the targets of said gossip. The first ones translate into distraction of employees, loss of time and energy and breakdown of concentration (which results in reduced productivity

and, consequently, loss of profit) (Kniffin & Wilson, 2010; Noon & Delbrige, 1993), and even the loss of employees considered valuable (Grosser et al, 2010). The target of gossip (if it is negative) may suffer consequences such as the limitation of work-related success (Elwardt et al., 2012) and social exclusion (Beersma & Kleef, 2011).

In cases where gossip is used in a negative way, as revenge or as a means to acquire advantage over the "target", this can be associated with the psychological trait Machiavellianism (Rosnow, 1977). In this sense, we find it relevant to study how the existence of Moral disengagement contributes for the presence of organizational gossip, taking into account that both phenomena are associated with similar psychological traits. In addition, the association between the two concepts is almost evident: people have negative attitudes towards others without feeling guilty (using the cognitive mechanisms of Moral disengagement explained above), which makes the probability of an individual partaking in negative gossip higher when moral disengagement occurs since they take no responsibility for the consequences of such behavior (Peeren & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012). The dehumanization (a mechanism used in Moral disengagement) is also associated to Gossip and is likewise a consequence of the same – social exclusion and treating someone as if they were of an inferior status are examples of this mechanism (Van Noorden, Haselager, Cillessen, & Bukowski, 2014).

Finally, it is important to associate the personality of the individual with his propensity for gossip, considering that not everyone has the same probability to behave in this way. That being said, we believe that a person with a high level of honesty-humility will be less likely to gossip due to the characteristics associated with this personality trait – justice, sincerity and cooperation with others.

We can then conclude that, and referring to what was as explained before, the Honesty-Humility personality trait has a negative effect on moral disengagement (the more Honesty-Humility a person demonstrates, the less probability of being moral disengaged) and, after this literature review, we can deduce that it also has a negative effect on gossip (the more Honesty-Humility, the less gossip). In this way, in an attempt to conjugate these three variables, and believing that moral disengagement has an impact on the relationship between Honesty-Humility and gossip, weakening it, it makes sense to us that the third hypothesis of this study, is:

***H<sub>3a</sub>: Moral disengagement will mediate the negative relationship between Honesty-Humility and Instrumental Gossip.***

***H<sub>3b</sub>: Moral disengagement will mediate the negative relationship between Honesty-Humility and Hedonic Gossip.***

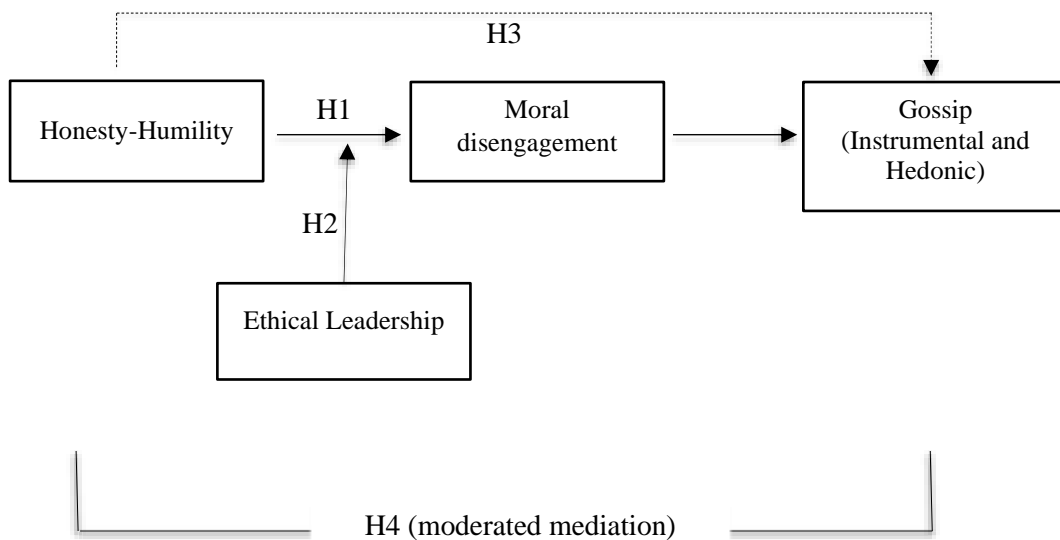
## ORGANIZATIONAL GOSSIP AND ITS PREDICTORS

Taking into consideration all the literature reviewed and the previously stated hypotheses, it is possible to relate the variables used in this report, knowing that honesty-humility has a negative effect on gossip and that ethical leadership undermines the effect of honesty-humility. In this sense, our fourth hypothesis is:

***H<sub>4a</sub>: Ethical Leadership will moderate the indirect effect of Honesty-Humility on Instrumental Gossip, such that the indirect effect weakens when ethical leadership is higher.***

***H<sub>4b</sub>: Ethical Leadership will moderate the indirect effect of Honesty-Humility on Hedonic Gossip, such that the indirect effect weakens when ethical leadership is higher.***

For clarity sake, Figure 1.1 shows the research model and respective hypotheses.



*Figure 1.1. Conceptual Diagram Hypothesis*

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## **Chapter II – Methodology**

### **2.1. Sample**

The current study presents a sample of 358 employed people chosen following convenience and snowball methods. About two thirds (67.7%) of the respondents are female (n=228) and average 40 years old (30.1% aged between 19 and 30, 46% between 30 and 50, and 23.9% were aged between 50 and 60 years old). Over half of the respondents have been working in the organization for more than 6 years (53.7%) – 26.6% have been working for less than one year, 13% from 1 to 3 years, and 6.8% from 4 to 6 years. Additionally, 66.8% of the participants are not in a leadership position.

### **2.2. Procedure**

The data was collected through an online questionnaire, created in Qualtrics – Online Survey Software & Insight Platform – which included 36 items (divided into 4 scales) plus some demographic questions – taking approximately 7 minutes to complete. All items were coded on a 5-point Likert scale where 1= Strongly Disagree and 5= Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire was digitally distributed through social network sites and the data was collected between 28<sup>th</sup> January and 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019. The answers were later analyzed in IBM SPSS Statistics 25 and Hayes's PROCESS Macro 3.2 (2013).

### **2.3. Data Analysis Strategy**

Data analysis followed a two-step procedure, firstly by testing the psychometric quality of measures and second by testing hypotheses. To begin, psychometric quality of the measures must be tested concerning validity and reliability. To test construct validity, we use CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) that must reach minimum limits to be taken as good. For that, we expect valid models with a  $\chi^2/DF$  under 3 with a non-significant p-value (Hair, Black, & Babin, 2010) – however, this index can be waived owing to sample size biases. Furthermore, we will be expecting a minimum threshold of .95 for CFI (Comparative Fit Index) and TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index) and a RMSEA (Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation) under .07. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), composite indices entails that the whole picture has to be taken into consideration and when only one falls short of a given threshold (as long as it's in proximity) while others reach the acceptance threshold, one should not condition acceptance decision to a single index but instead should consider the entire set. In cases where the model

does not reach the minimum limits, we proceed to Lagrange Multiplier Analysis and remove items that may be hindering the psychometric quality of the constructs.

The constructs must have convergent validity and, when they are multifactorial, they must also have divergent validity. For that, we used AVE (Average Variance Extracted) that should reach 0.500 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The divergent validity occurs when the square root AVE of each construct is higher than the respective interfactor standardized correlation.

In cases where constructs do not reach the AVE threshold, one should consider Composite reliability (.700) as an alternative indicator of acceptability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Finally, in order to determine the reliability of the constructs, the Composite Reliability and the Cronbach's Alpha (both with a threshold, .700) should be taken into consideration.

With both valid and reliable measures, we proceed with testing the hypotheses which correspond to a moderated mediation model. In order to test this model with the minimal measurement error, we used PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) which relies on bootstrapping to extract a certain number of subsamples and calculates the bias corrected lower and upper bounds for the statistics of a given effect. Following recommendation of Hayes (2013) we conducted a bootstrapping procedure with 5000 repetitions and using a confidence interval of 95% (CI95). When the lower bound and the upper bound does not comprehend the value “zero” this implies the effect is statistically significant for this confidence interval. If it does comprehend the zero (no matter if both lower and upper bound values are negative or positive) it means the effect is not significant. Because there is a mediation effect being tested in this model, we will also take into consideration the statistical significance of the direct and indirect effects. PROCESS macro has a built-in procedure that offers all the output required to judge on the simultaneous occurrence of moderation and mediation effects.

## **2.4. Measures**

### **2.4.1. Moral disengagement**

Moral disengagement was measured with Bandura's et al. (1996) 4-item scale for Displacement of Responsibility (e.g. “If people are not properly supervised, they should not be blamed for misbehaving”). Amongst the mechanisms identified and measured in Bandura's full scale, displacement of responsibility is the one that most closely is associated with our research objective. In this case, our purpose is that of testing whether the external attribution of responsibility can operate as a condition that favors gossiping. Previous examples of successful

use of this measure linked with leadership is given by Hinrichs, Wang, Hinrichs and Romero (2012) that found a negative association thus encouraging its use in future similar studies. Likewise, Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2013) found good psychometric indicators for this scale also. The CFA of this scale showed an unacceptably low loading for the first item (“If people are working under bad conditions, they cannot be blamed for behaving aggressively”) which was subsequently removed. The resulting CFA comprehends only three items that results in a just-identified model (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010) and precludes computing fit indices. In these cases, following the example of Ribeiro, Bender, Selby, Hames, and Joiner (2011) we assessed the individual significant tests for each loading. In all cases the loadings are statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) where  $MD_1 = .545$ ,  $MD_2 = .829$ , and  $MD_3 = .635$ . These values indicate items adequately load into a single factor. AVE fell below threshold (.459), but CR (.711) and Cronbach alpha (.702) achieve the minimum for acceptance. Thus, we took this as a final measure for our study. Because the variable showed high skewness, we transformed it using natural log for use in regression analyses. Although this construct only concerns Displacement of Responsibility dimension, we opt to use Moral disengagement as the name of the variable just to simplify the reading.

### **2.4.2 Ethical Leadership**

Ethical Leadership was measured with Brown, Treviño and Harrison (2005) 10 items Ethical Leadership Scale (e.g. “Disciplines employees who violate ethical standards”, “Has the best interests of employees in mind”, “Can be trusted”, “Sets an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics”). A CFA test conducted on the single factor solution showed acceptable fit indices ( $\chi^2/DF = 2.422$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI=.981; TLI=.976; RMSEA=.063). Additionally, the scale has good reliability (CR=.943; Cronbach alpha=.942) and convergent validity (AVE=.625).



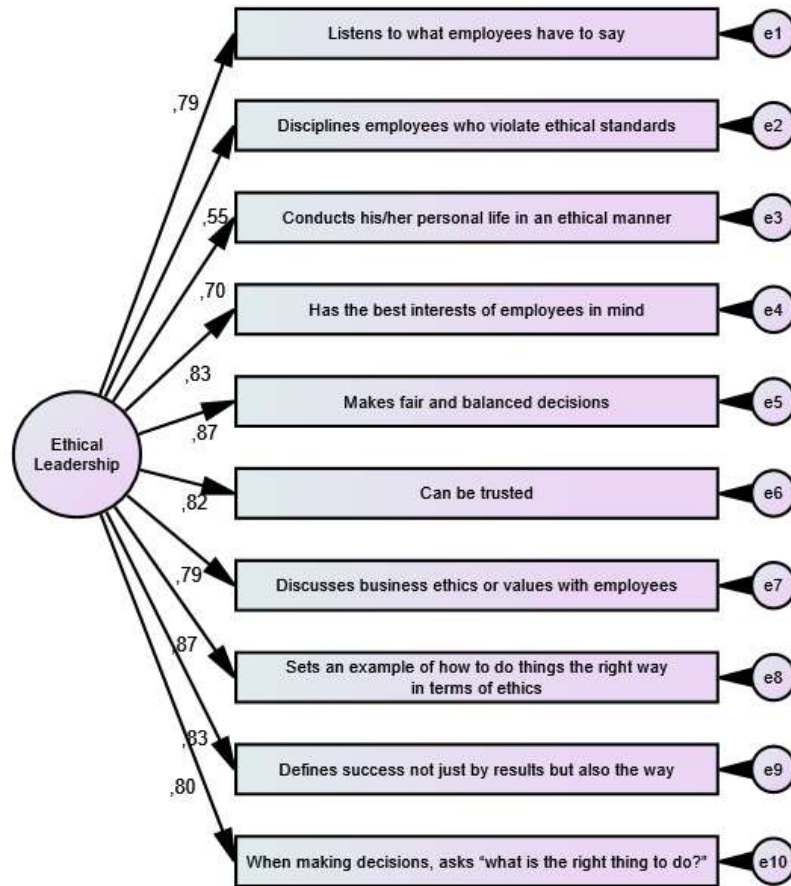


Figure 2.1. CFA for Ethical Leadership

### 2.4.3. Honesty-Humility

Honesty-Humility was measured with Hexaco's 60 homonymous subscale that comprehends 10 items matching four facets: Sincerity (3 items), Fairness (3 items), Greed Avoidance (2 items), and Modesty (2 items). The CFA of this scale showed an unacceptable fit ( $\chi^2/DF=6.531$ ,  $p<.001$ ; CFI=.834; TLI=.759; RMSEA=.124). After using Lagrange Multipliers, we identified two cases that were harming the model fit. After removal of those items we found an acceptable model ( $\chi^2/DF=2.630$ ,  $p<.001$ ; CFI=.967; TLI=.945; RMSEA=.068), but sincerity showed several correlations with errors which precluded its use in ensuing analyses and was thus excluded from the structural model. The resulting fit indices encourage its acceptance ( $\chi^2/DF=1.720$ ,  $p=.078$ ; CFI=.991; TLI=.985; RMSEA=.045). However, two of the factors showed insufficient AVE and CR (Greed avoidance AVE=.314, CR=.478, and Modesty AVE=.470, CR=.639) and were excluded from future analyses due to insufficient psychometric quality. The remaining factor (fairness) showed both convergent validity (AVE<sub>fairness</sub>=.726) and

reliability ( $CR_{\text{fairness}}=.841$ ). For simplicity sake, as this construct was only operationally measured with fairness, we shall use honesty-humility as the name for the variables although it concerns only fairness dimension.

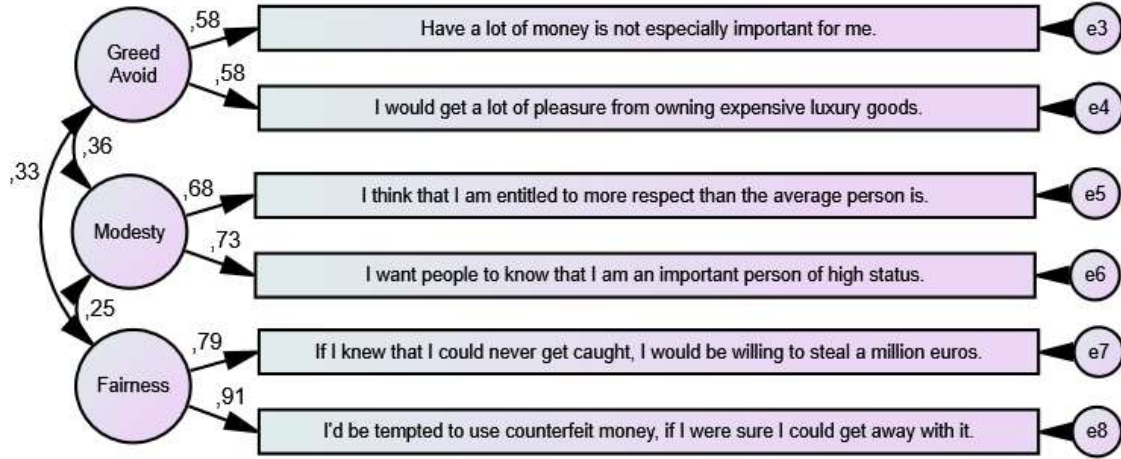


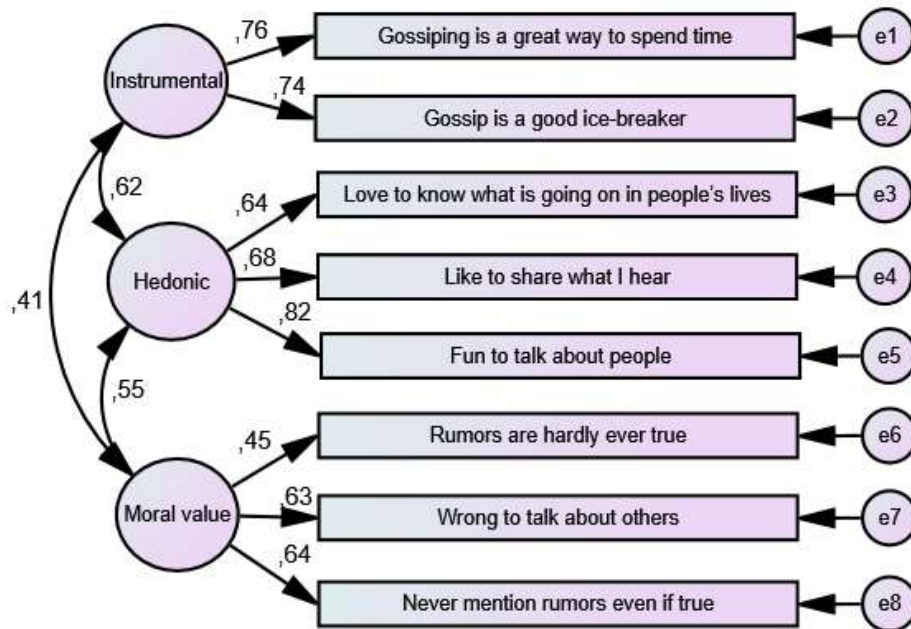
Figure 2.2. CFA for Honesty-Humility

#### 2.4.4. Gossip

Gossip was measured with Litman and Pezzo (2005) scale that comprehends two factors: Social Value (6 items, e.g. “G1b Gossip is good ice-breaker”) and Moral Value (6 items, e.g. “G2f Wrong to talk about others”). The CFA of this original scale showed unacceptable fit indices ( $\chi^2/DF=5.036$ ,  $p<.001$ ; CFI=.817; TLI=.772; RMSEA=.106) and Lagrange multipliers failed to show a clear direction. Therefore, we opted to conduct an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). After application of procedures established in “Data analysis strategy” section, the EFA extracted three factors where social value split in two ( $KMO=.814$ ,  $.766<MSA<.870$ , Bartlett’s  $\chi^2(45)=994.792$ ,  $p<.001$ , explained variance after varimax rotation=61.8%). The ensuing CFA of this 8 item three-factor solution showed acceptable fit indices ( $\chi^2/DF=1.206$ ,  $p=.245$ ; CFI=.994; TLI=.991; RMSEA=.024). The final factor solution comprehends the following structure: Instrumental gossip, 2 items (“G1a Gossiping is great way to pass time” and “G1b Gossip is good ice-breaker”), hedonic gossip (3 items, “G1d Love to know what is going on in people’s lives”, “G1e Like to share what I hear”, and “G1f Fun to talk about people”), and Moral value (3 items, “G2e Rumors are hardly ever true”, “G2f Wrong to talk about others”, and “G2d Never mention rumors even if true”). However, moral value showed insufficient AVE (.336) and CR (.598) and will then be excluded from future analyses due to insufficient psychometric quality. The remaining factors showed both convergent

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validity ( $AVE_{\text{instrumental}}=.563$ ,  $AVE_{\text{hedonic}}=.515$ ) and reliability ( $CR_{\text{instrumental}}=.720$ ,  $CR_{\text{hedonic}}=.759$ ) as well as divergent validity ( $instrumental=.75>$ ,  $r=.62<$   $hedonic=.71$ ).



*Figure 2.3. CFA for gossip*

### 2.5. Control Variables

Taking into consideration the literature review and the role of social demographics variables in the analysis, we have opted to include in the questionnaire the following potential control variables: Respondent's Gender, Respondent's Age, Leader's Gender and Respondent's Supervision Role. However, only Respondent's Age and Respondent's Gender showed relevant and significant results with the two predictors of the dependent variable (Moral disengagement and Honesty-Humility). Besides, several authors showed evidence that there are differences in the propensity to be Moral Disengaged related to age and gender. For example, McAlistar (2001), through his studies in secondary schools in the USA and Finland, showed that males are more morally disengaged than females.

### Chapter III – Results

This chapter will offer an overview of descriptive and bivariate statistics of variables as well as the findings from testing hypotheses.

#### 3.1. Descriptive and bivariate analysis

Table 3.1 depicts all descriptive statistics and correlations among the variables of our study. Amongst variables included in the research model, Honesty-Humility is the one that has been most highly reported attaining a median of 4.27 (SD=.99) followed by Ethical Leadership (M=3.55, SD=.89). All other fall below the scale midpoint where Gossip Instrumental is by far the least reported as occurring (M=1.89, SD=.86).

Bivariate statistics show a varying set of situations. As expected, the independent variable – Honesty-Humility – and the mediating variable – Moral disengagement were significantly correlated with the dependent variable – Gossip (both Instrumental –  $r_{\text{honestyhumility}} = -.186$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $r_{\text{moraldisengagement}} = .189$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and Hedonic ( $r_{\text{honestyhumility}} = -.287$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $r_{\text{moraldisengagement}} = .117$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Furthermore, Honesty-Humility is negatively and significantly correlated to Moral disengagement ( $r = -.149$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Finally, our moderating variable – Ethical Leadership (M= 3.55; SD= .89) does not show significant correlations with any of the other variables included in the research model.

Table 3.1 – Descriptive and Bivariate Statistics

Variables	M	SD	Min-max	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Respondent's gender	1.64	.48	1-2	1							
2. Respondent's age	39.78	12.55	19-65	-.153**	1						
3. Leader's gender	1.40	.49	1-2	.415**	-.157**	1					
4. Supervision role	1.74	.43	1-2	.163**	-.264**	.086	1				
5. Honesty-Humility	4.27	.99	1-5	.124*	.227**	.089	-.067	1			
6. Moral disengagement	2.17	.77	1-5	-.037	-.094	-.035	.017	-.149**	1		
7. Ethical Leadership	3.55	.89	1-5	.070	-.042	.026	-.125*	.066	-.055	1	
8. Gossip_Instrumental	1.89	.86	1-5	-.088	-.128*	-.063	.062	-.186**	.189**	-.035	1
9. Gossip_Hedonic	2.23	.82	1-5	-.046	-.239**	-.115*	.043	-.287**	.117*	.007	.449**

\*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). \*\*, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### 3.2. Hypothesis Testing

We conducted hypothesis testing by analyzing the significance of associations between constructs with Process Macro (Hayes, 2013) model 7 – shown in figure 3.1. –, where direct and indirect effects are considered to judge on the mediation path and the bootstrapped bias corrected interval for 95% confidence is analyzed for the moderation effect.

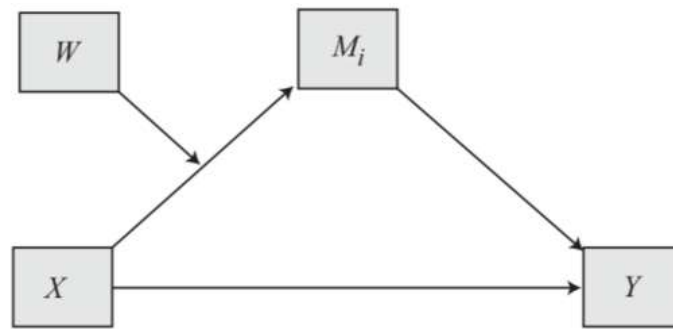


Figure 3.1. PROCESS model 7

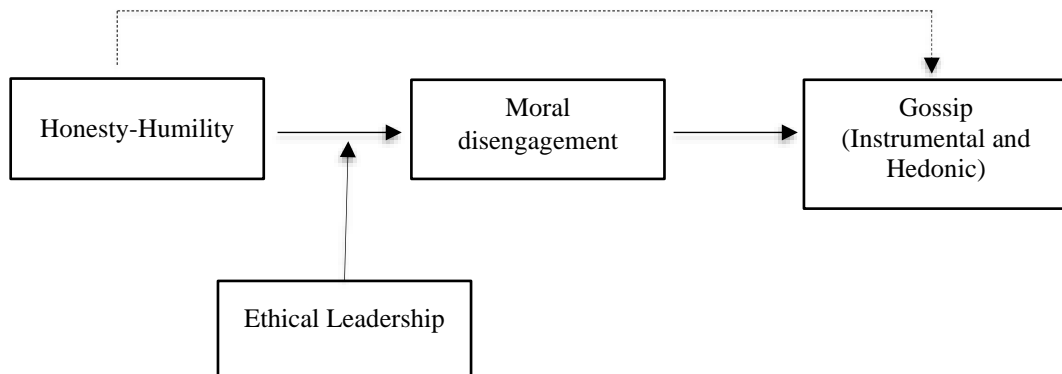


Figure 3.2. Conceptual Diagram

The first hypothesis established a direct negative effect of Honesty-Humility on Moral disengagement. Results show a negative coefficient (-.1001) with 95%CI comprehended between -.1839 and -.0162 thus supporting the first hypothesis. These results tell us that the higher the level of Honesty-Humility of a person, the lower the levels of Moral disengagement. For Moral disengagement the model explains 4.6% of the variance ( $R^2=.0457$ ;  $p < .01$ ).

Hypothesis 2 established a moderation effect of Ethical Leadership between Honesty-Humility and Moral disengagement, such that the direct effect weakens when Ethical Leadership is higher. Results show a positive coefficient (.0899) with 95%CI comprehended

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between .0082 and .1717 thus supporting the second hypothesis. This means that the follower's Honesty-Humility effect on Moral disengagement becomes weaker as the leader becomes more ethical.

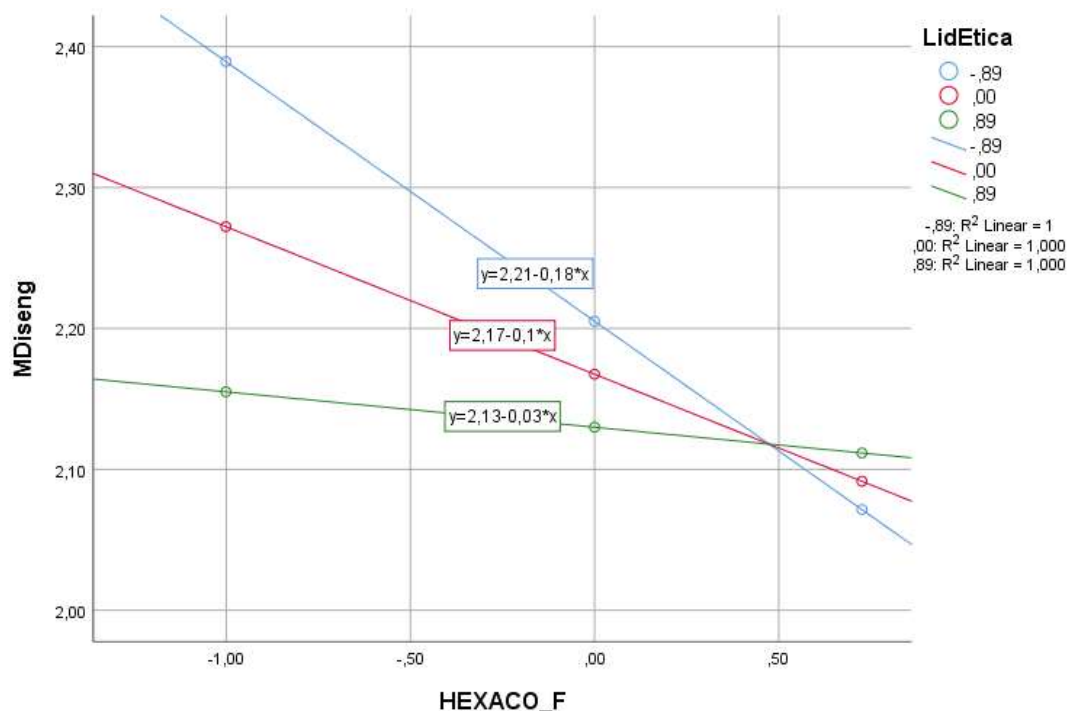


Figure 3.3. The moderation effect of Ethical Leadership between Honesty-Humility and Moral disengagement

The third hypothesis splits into two sub-hypotheses to comprehend Instrumental Gossip (H<sub>3a</sub>) and Hedonic Gossip (H<sub>3b</sub>). The hypothesis 3a predicted that Moral disengagement mediates the negative relationship between Honesty-Humility and Instrumental Gossip. The results provide support for this hypothesis showing a significant indirect effect (-.0187; 95%CI -.0431, -.0014) as well as a direct effect (-.1034; 95%CI -.1960; -.0108) which indicates that there is a partial mediation. The total explained variance reaches 7.4% ( $R^2=.0738$ ,  $p<.01$ ). In the case of Hedonic Gossip (3b), the hypothesis is not supported because even though there is a significant direct effect of Honesty-Humility on Hedonic Gossip (-.1879; 95%IC -.2741, -.1016), there is no significant indirect effect (-.0067; 95%CI -.0235, .0042) which means that Moral disengagement does not mediate the relationship between Honesty-Humility and Hedonic Gossip. The total explained variance is 4.6% ( $R^2=.0457$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Thus, it is possible to conclude that the third hypothesis was partially corroborated (supported only for Instrumental Gossip).

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Finally, our fourth hypothesis also splits into two sub-hypotheses in order to cover both types of Gossip – Instrumental Gossip (H<sub>4a</sub>) and Hedonic Gossip (H<sub>4b</sub>). Both sub-hypotheses propose that Ethical Leadership will moderate the indirect effect of Honesty-Humility on Gossip (Instrumental or Hedonic), such that the indirect effect weakens when Ethical Leadership is higher. The results for sub-hypothesis 4a show us a moderated mediation that supports our hypothesis (.0168; 95%IC .0007, .0362). For hypothesis 4b no significant results were found (.0060; 95%IC -.0038, .0194) which was an expected outcome since the mediation effect was not found previously. This rejects our hypothesis, concluding that there is no moderated mediation of Ethical Leadership on the indirect effect of Honesty-Humility on Hedonic Gossip via Moral disengagement.

### Chapter IV – Discussion

This last chapter aims to compare the results found in this study with the information from the literature review. First, we will approach the hypotheses presented in the previous chapters, trying to justify those that were corroborated and those that were rejected. Next, we will exhibit what the study adds to the already existing research and, finally, we will identify the limitations and give some suggestions for future studies.

The research motivation stemmed from asking ourselves to which extent is leadership capable of countering or reinforcing dispositional traits such as honesty-humility within the larger framework of explaining moral disengagement in organizational settings.

Therefore, the specific objective of this study was to understand the relationship between an individual's personality and their propensity to gossip, where moral disengagement acts as a mediator of this relationship. We also intended to understand if the presence of an ethical leader would moderate this relationship, reducing the unethical behaviors in followers. We believe that this dissertation contributes to the existing literature because it allows us to understand the impact that an ethical leadership has on a work team, reducing its unethical behaviors, which, consequently, brings positive results for organizations. It also helps to identify which characteristics are common in morally disengaged individuals, allowing organizations to make a more conscious choice when recruiting employees.

When the model for this dissertation was developed, the Honesty-Humility personality dimension was expected to be negatively correlated with Moral disengagement, which was in line with the ideas of several authors. Detert et al. (2008), Moore et al. (2012) and Moore (2015) stated that characteristics such as empathy, understanding, moral identity, guilt, honesty and concern for the other reduce an individuals' propensity to be morally disengaged. In this way, our findings showed a negative relationship between the two variables, which means that when a person presents characteristics of honesty-humility (honesty, justice, sincerity), they will have lower levels of moral disengagement (and vice versa). Through the analysis of the results, we can state that the IV has a negative impact on the DV, which corroborates our first hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>).

Statistical analyses also revealed that there is a moderation effect of ethical leadership in the relationship between Honesty-Humility and Moral disengagement and that in the presence of the moderator variable, the relationship between the IV and the DV weakens, allowing us to corroborate the second hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>). These results show us that the leader's



behavior conditions processes that link to employees' attitudes and is therefore an important issue for organizations. Thus, if an individual has a high level of honesty-humility (and, consequently, a low level of moral disengagement), the presence of an ethical leader is of no consequence as the range of values seen in the moderation is small. However, when the individual has a low level of honesty-humility, the ethical leader is fundamental. When the leaders have high sense of ethics, they undermine the level of moral disengagement and conversely, when the leader is also modestly concerned with ethical behavior (or giving the ethical example, as presupposed in the ethical leadership concept) they will enhance the already high level of moral disengagement in the (dis)honest followers. Therefore, ethical leadership is fundamental to counter negative consequences when followers have low disposition to be honest and humble (as measured with Hexaco's dimension). These results support the literature that states that leadership is a process of influence of a hierarchically superior individual for his followers (Yuke, 1988; Northouse, 2018), where the second observe, imitate and identify themselves with the behaviors of the first (Bonner et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2005; Mayer et al., 2012). Other authors also add that the presence of ethical leadership in a team is extremely important and has a direct impact on the reduction of unethical behaviors, increasing the morally appropriate behaviors (Treviño et al., 2003). Based on all the arguments shown so far, it is possible to affirm that having an honest-humility personality reduces the level of moral disengagement and that this relationship becomes weaker in the presence of an ethical leader.

The third hypothesis of the study (H<sub>3</sub>) assumed that Moral disengagement mediates the (negative) relationship between Honesty-Humility and Gossip (both instrumental and hedonic). The results show that, in fact, there is a significant negative correlation between Honesty-Humility and the two types of gossip. This means that the higher the level of honesty-humility of individuals, the less they will gossip, due to the characteristics associated with this dimension of personality (e.g., justice, sincerity) that decreases the probability of harmful behavior towards others (Ashton & Lee, 2007). Considering the literature reviewed, which states that there is a relationship between moral disengagement and gossip (Peeren & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012; Van Noorden et al., 2014), we attempted to understand whether this relationship is significant in both types of gossip analyzed (instrumental and hedonic). The results showed that the Moral disengagement is only significantly correlated with the Instrumental Gossip (i.e., when individuals present a high level of Moral disengagement, they are more likely to gossip because they believe it is useful for the group) and that it is not significantly correlated with the Hedonic Gossip (i.e., the fact that a person is morally disengaged, has no relationship with their propensity to gossip motivated by emotional

pleasure). Since there is a significant correlation between the Moral disengagement and the instrumental gossip and, taking into consideration the previously found correlations (Honesty-Humility with Moral disengagement and Honesty-Humility with Gossip Instrumental), it is plausible to state that Moral disengagement partially mediates the relationship between the IV and the DV in this model. This means that the more individuals have the trait of honesty-humility, the less moral disengagement they will have. Therefore, they will behave more ethically, which will lead to a lower propensity to gossip – thus corroborating hypothesis 3a. Finally, a possible justification for the absence of a significant correlation between Moral disengagement and Hedonic Gossip lies in the fact that this type of gossip only has a personal purpose that brings no advantages to anyone other than oneself (people who have this behavior only do so for the pleasure of talking about others and sharing what they hear). In this way, the displacement of responsibility (mechanism of moral disengagement taken into consideration in the entire article) no longer plays a role in producing this type of gossip because it becomes indifferent if the leader is responsible for the damages caused by these behaviors, since – as already mentioned – they are only made for personal pleasure. Accordingly, the absence of a significant correlation between Moral disengagement and Hedonic Gossip means that there is no indirect effect of the IV in the DV through the mediator, concluding that, in this model, the levels of the Hedonic Gossip are only and exclusively due to the level of Honesty-Humility of the follower – which rejects H<sub>3b</sub>.

As mentioned, leadership seems to play a role on conditioning an employee's behavior, because followers tend to behave in a similar way to their leader (Bonner et al., 2016; Mayer, et al., 2012). Thus, the existence of an ethical leader is beneficial to the organization because it will reduce the occurrence of unethical behaviors (Bonner et al., 2016) – where we can include moral disengagement and gossip. This last hypothesis aims to understand if ethical leadership moderates the indirect effect of honesty-humility in gossip (instrumental and hedonic), such that this effect weakens when the level of ethical leadership is higher. Again, since there are two types of gossip, hypothesis 4 is also divided into two sub hypotheses. Considering that H<sub>2</sub> has been corroborated, it is known that ethical leadership moderates the relationship between honesty-humility and moral disengagement. Regarding hypothesis 4a, the results encouraged the existence of a mediation (H<sub>3a</sub>), moderated by ethical leadership. This means that in the presence of an ethical leader, the indirect effect (through the Moral disengagement mediator) between the follower's honesty-humility and the instrumental gossip practiced by the follower is weaker (if a person has a high level of honesty-humility, they will be less likely to gossip about colleagues), weakening as the ethical leadership level is higher (due to the great influence

that the leader has on the followers). On the other hand, since hypothesis 3b was not supported, showing that there is no mediation effect of moral disengagement in the relationship between honesty-humility and hedonic gossip, hypothesis 4b is also rejected because the moderating variable (ethical leadership) is moderating the relationship between honesty-humility and moral disengagement, not affecting the relationship between moral disengagement and gossip and not making it significant, which prevents us from stating that there is moderate mediation.

The present study has some limitations that will be clarified below, along with some suggestions for future studies. In the first place, the data collection method used was a self-report questionnaire. However, despite being the most accessible and easy to apply method, it often comes with distorted data, especially when it comes to questions where people have to answer about their traits, attitudes, and behaviors (Paulhus, 1991). Although the questionnaire was anonymous, we believe that participants' answers to questions related to Moral disengagement and Gossip may have been biased due to social desirability, since people tend to respond in ways that make them look good, attributing attitudes with socially desirable values and rejecting the presence of socially undesirable behaviors (Paulhus, 1991; Marlowe & Crowne, 1961). Therefore, we suggest for future studies that consider this type of variable (which may be subject to social desirability on the part of the participants), the application of a questionnaire where the questions are not about the person who is answering. In other words, instead of asking how the person feels or reacts in a specific situation, ask them to think about a colleague on their team and answer as if they were that colleague. In this way, this issue can be solved without any problems in the data processing.

Second, the fact that only one Moral disengagement mechanism was taken into consideration was crucial to the results. Although we reiterate that this mechanism is the most relevant for follower-leader ethical research, we accept that future studies may benefit from including other types of mechanisms (e.g., Advantageous Comparison or Diffusion of Responsibility) because we believe that the conclusions may differ since each mechanism acts differently on people's behavior and it has heuristic value *per se*.

Still on suggestions for future studies and considering that hypotheses 3b and 4b were rejected, it would be interesting to understand why moral disengagement is only significantly correlated with one type of gossip (instrumental vs. hedonic). It would also be relevant to use a moderating variable in effect b of mediation (from moral disengagement to hedonic gossip)

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trying to make this relationship significant. This way, there would be a possible mediation of moral disengagement in the relationship between honesty-humility and hedonic gossip.

The last limitations we denote are related to the chosen target. After the conclusion of the study, we found that some of the results may be related to external variables that were not controlled by us, such as the organization's climate, its values, the type of work team and even the business sector where the company operates. Thus, we believe that the results could have been more conclusive if the questionnaires had been applied to only one organization or set of organizations. On the other hand, it would also be interesting to study this topic in work teams and their respective leaders, instead of having random participants, so that it would be possible to make a direct association between the employees' behaviors (in this case, the Moral disengagement and the Gossip) and the type of leader they have.

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### Conclusion

People are a crucial part of an organization, regardless of its business sector. Therefore, it is important to understand how they behave in order to maximize their potential. It is known that ethical behaviors are increasingly a predictor of organizational success since these behaviors are directly related to productivity. For that reason, it is advantageous to understand how these can be enhanced, reducing unethical conducts and counterproductive behaviors. In this dissertation, we gave relevance to Moral disengagement and Gossip, trying to understand if Ethical Leadership and Honesty-Humility personality have an impact on them. To this purpose, 358 responses from Portuguese workers were analyzed through an online questionnaire.

The results obtained corroborated our initial idea, showing that the fact that an individual has morally disengaged characteristics contributes to his propensity to practice gossip (only in the case of instrumental gossip). Furthermore, they also demonstrated that the Honesty-Humility personality is negatively correlated with Moral disengagement and Gossip, reducing the probability of these behaviors occur. Finally, the analysis allowed us to realize that ethical leadership plays a very important role in reducing the followers' moral disengagement, increasing the correlation described above.

Despite the limitations presented, we believe that we have made a positive contribution to the already-existing literature taking into consideration that this research focused on topics still little studied (e.g., Moral disengagement, Honesty-Humility). On the other hand, it is very important to understand the predictors of unethical behavior of employees in order to be able to combat such behavior. We also believe that the present study may serve as a starting point for future investigations that intend to deepen this subject further.

Overall, it has become current to belief, supported by extant research, that organizations should encourage ethical leadership. Research is also clear about its impact in reducing the occurrence of unethical behaviors (Bonner et al., 2016) and moral disengagement is an important psychological variable one should take into consideration to prevent such behaviors (Detert et al., 2008). We reason that extant research and current belief addresses this issue in a universal manner, i.e., that organizations always benefit from promoting ethical leadership. However, our findings encourage a contingency analysis, as the consideration of dispositional traits such as honesty-humility may show ethical leadership is especially important for those who fail to have such honesty-humility disposition but are not critical for those that have already a propensity to be honest and humble. Our findings do not preclude existing reasoning, but they

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stress the importance of dispositions as well as the mediator role of a central psychological concept: moral disengagement.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A - Questionnaire displayed to the participants



Car@ Profissional,

No âmbito da dissertação de Mestrado em Psicologia Social e das Organizações, no ISCTE-IUL - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, foi criada uma equipa de investigação com o objetivo de compreender a relação líder-liderado dentro das organizações. Deste modo, vimos pedir a sua colaboração, através do preenchimento de um pequeno questionário, que lhe toma, aproximadamente, 10 minutos.

O questionário é anónimo, com o fim de assegurar a confidencialidade e anonimato dos participantes e não lhe trará nenhuma despesa nem riscos. Não existem respostas certas, nem erradas pois é a sua opinião, verdadeira, sincera e espontânea que realmente importa. Realçamos que a sua participação é, totalmente, voluntária.

Os dados recolhidos destinam-se, única e exclusivamente, para fins académicos da presente investigação, tal com os dos restantes participantes.

Caso pretenda informações adicionais e/ou esclarecimentos de dúvidas relativas ao estudo, contacte através do seguinte e-mail: [nelson.ramalho@iscte-iul.pt](mailto:nelson.ramalho@iscte-iul.pt).

Os dados só serão guardados quando, no final, clicar em **submiter**, pelo que é muito importante que não desista antes de chegar a este passo.

Grata pela sua colaboração,  
Catarina Relvas



Para começar, ser-lhe-ão colocadas algumas questões de carácter demográfico. Informamos que estes dados apenas serão utilizados para fins estatísticos.

1. Sexo
  - Masculino
  - Feminino
2. Idade:
3. Há quanto tempo trabalha na atual organização?
  - < de 1 ano
  - 1 a 3 anos
  - 3 a 6 anos
  - > de 6 anos

## ORGANIZATIONAL GOSSIP AND ITS PREDICTORS

4. Em que medida cada uma das seguintes afirmações descreve a sua chefia? Utilize a seguinte escala de resposta, em que 1 = Discordo totalmente e 5 = Concordo totalmente.

A minha chefia direta...

Ouve o que os colaboradores têm para dizer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disciplina os colaboradores que violam princípios éticos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conduz a sua vida pessoal de uma forma ética.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mantém o interesse dos colaboradores sempre em mente.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Toma decisões justas e equilibradas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
É uma pessoa de confiança.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discute valores éticos com os colaboradores.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dá o exemplo de como fazer as coisas da forma mais ética.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Define o sucesso, não apenas pelos resultados em si, mas também pela forma como estes foram obtidos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quando toma decisões, questiona sobre o que é mais correto fazer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Utilizando a escala abaixo, diga em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações.

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo	Não concordo nem discordo	Concordo	Concordo totalmente
Se as pessoas estão a trabalhar em más condições, não podem ser culpadas por se comportarem de forma agressiva.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uma pessoa que apenas sugere a outra que quebre uma regra, não deve ser responsabilizada se esta o fizer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Se as pessoas não forem adequadamente supervisionadas, não podem ser culpadas por se comportarem indevidamente.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## ORGANIZATIONAL GOSSIP AND ITS PREDICTORS

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo	Não concordo nem discordo	Concordo	Concordo totalmente
Ninguém pode ser culpado por utilizar linguagem incorreta, se outros também o fizerem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As pessoas não podem ser culpabilizadas por terem comportamentos indevidos se tiverem sido pressionadas para fazê-lo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. De seguida, encontrará um conjunto de afirmações sobre si. Por favor, leia cada uma e indique em que medida concorda ou discorda da mesma.

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo	Não concordo nem discordo	Concordo	Concordo totalmente
Não usaria a bajulação para conseguir um aumento/promoção no trabalho, mesmo que achasse que seria bem-sucedido.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Não fingiria gostar de alguém só para fazer com que essa pessoa me fizesse favores.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Se soubesse que nunca seria apanhado/a, estaria disposto/a a roubar um milhão de euros.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ficaria tentado/a a usar dinheiro falso, se tivesse a certeza de que escapava impune.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ter muito dinheiro não é especialmente importante para mim.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teria muito prazer em possuir bens de luxo caros.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acho que tenho direito a mais respeito do que a média das pessoas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quero que as pessoas saibam que sou uma pessoa importante e de alto estatuto.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Se eu quiser algo de alguém, vou rir das piores piadas dessa pessoa.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nunca aceitaria um suborno, mesmo que fosse muito grande.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



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7. Utilizando a escala abaixo, diga em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações.

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo	Não concordo nem discordo	Concordo	Concordo totalmente
Dar ouvidos a boatos é uma boa forma de passar o tempo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Os boatos são sempre um bom quebra-gelo.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Não confio em boatos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Não considero que os boatos sejam úteis.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Um boato é habitualmente verdadeiro.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Não devo mencionar rumores mesmo que sejam verdadeiros.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Os rumores dificilmente são verdadeiros.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
É errado falar sobre os outros.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presto atenção ao meu trabalho e não a boatos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gosto de saber o que se passa na vida das pessoas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gosto de partilhar o que oiço	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Divirto-me a falar sobre outras pessoas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Exerce um cargo de chefia/tem pessoas que trabalham a seu cargo?

- Sim
- Não

9. Há quanto tempo trabalha diretamente com a sua chefia? (Responda em anos completos)

10. A sua chefia é...

- Homem
- Mulher

**Carregando na seta abaixo termina o seu questionário. Muito obrigada pela sua preciosa colaboração!**



# ORGANIZATIONAL GOSSIP AND ITS PREDICTORS

## Appendix B – PROCESS Statistical Outputs for Hypothesis Testing

### PROCESS analysis for Moral disengagement and Instrumental Gossip

```
***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.2.01 *****

Model = 7 Sample Size 352
Y = Gossip_i; X = HEXACO_F; M = MDiseng; W = LidEtica Covariates: Q5; Q4

*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE: MDiseng

Model Summary
R          R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
,2137      ,0457      ,5829      3,3105      5,0000      346,0000      ,0062

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant      2,4244      ,2170      11,1722      ,0000      1,9976      2,8512
HEXACO_F      -,1001      ,0426      -2,3479      ,0194      -,1839      -,0162
LidEtica      -,0408      ,0459      -,8897      ,3743      -,1311      ,0494
Int_1          ,0899      ,0416      2,1644      ,0311      ,0082      ,1717
Q5            -,0042      ,0034      -1,2255      ,2212      -,0108      ,0025
Q4            -,0559      ,0868      -,6442      ,5199      -,2267      ,1148

Interactions: int_1      HEXACO_F      x      LidEtica

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):
      R2-chng      F      df1      df2      p
X*W      ,0129      4,6846      1,0000      346,0000      ,0311
-----
Focal predict: HEXACO_F (X)
Mod var: LidEtica (W)

Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator(s):
LidEtica      Effect      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
-,8928      -,1804      ,0544      -3,3128      ,0010      -,2875      -,0733
,0000      -,1001      ,0426      -2,3479      ,0194      -,1839      -,0162
,8928      -,0198      ,0585      -,3382      ,7354      -,1348      ,0953

*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE: Gossip_i

Model Summary
R          R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      p
,2716      ,0738      ,7055      6,9084      4,0000      347,0000      ,0000

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant      1,9939      ,2779      7,1735      ,0000      1,4472      2,5405
HEXACO_F      -,1034      ,0471      -2,1972      ,0287      -,1960      -,0108
```

## ORGANIZATIONAL GOSSIP AND ITS PREDICTORS

MDiseng	,1866	,0587	3,1796	,0016	,0712	,3020
Q5	-,0067	,0037	-1,8019	,0724	-,0141	,0006
Q4	-,1430	,0954	-1,4985	,1349	-,3306	,0447

\*\*\*\*\* DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Direct effect of X on Y					
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-,1034	,0471	-2,1972	,0287	-,1960	-,0108

Conditional indirect effects of X on Y:

INDIRECT EFFECT:

HEXACO\_F -> MDiseng -> Gossip\_i

LidEtica	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
-,8928	-,0337	,0139	-,0637	-,0094
,0000	-,0187	,0109	-,0431	-,0014
,8928	-,0037	,0133	-,0324	,0218

Index of moderated mediation:

	Index	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
LidEtica	,0168	,0091	,0007	,0362

---

### PROCESS analysis for Moral disengagement and Hedonic Gossip

\*\*\*\*\* PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.2.01 \*\*\*\*\*

Model = 7 Sample Size 352

Y = Gossip\_h; X = HEXACO\_F; M = MDiseng; W = LidEtica Covariates: Q5; Q4

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: MDiseng

Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
,2137	,0457	,5829	3,3105	5,0000	346,0000	,0062

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2,4244	,2170	11,1722	,0000	1,9976	2,8512
HEXACO_F	-,1001	,0426	-2,3479	,0194	-,1839	-,0162
LidEtica	-,0408	,0459	-,8897	,3743	-,1311	,0494
Int_1	,0899	,0416	2,1644	,0311	,0082	,1717
Q5	-,0042	,0034	-1,2255	,2212	-,0108	,0025
Q4	-,0559	,0868	-,6442	,5199	-,2267	,1148

Interactions: int\_1 HEXACO\_F x LidEtica

## ORGANIZATIONAL GOSSIP AND ITS PREDICTORS

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):

	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
X*W	,0129	4,6846	1,0000	346,0000	,0311

-----

Focal predict: HEXACO\_F (X)

Mod var: LidEtica (W)

Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator(s):

LidEtica	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-,8928	-,1804	,0544	-3,3128	,0010	-,2875	-,0733
,0000	-,1001	,0426	-2,3479	,0194	-,1839	-,0162
,8928	-,0198	,0585	-,3382	,7354	-,1348	,0953

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: Gossip\_h

Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
,3449	,1189	,6117	11,7090	4,0000	347,0000	,0000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	2,7074	,2588	10,4611	,0000	2,1984	3,2165
HEXACO_F	-,1879	,0438	-4,2854	,0000	-,2741	-,1016
MDiseng	,0666	,0546	1,2193	,2235	-,0408	,1741
Q5	-,0124	,0035	-3,5643	,0004	-,0193	-,0056
Q4	-,0716	,0888	-,8060	,4208	-,2463	,1031

\*\*\*\*\* DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-,1879	,0438	-4,2854	,0000	-,2741	-,1016

Conditional indirect effects of X on Y:

INDIRECT EFFECT:

HEXACO\_F -> MDiseng -> Gossip\_h

LidEtica	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
-,8928	-,0120	,0109	-,0364	,0073
,0000	-,0067	,0070	-,0235	,0042
,8928	-,0013	,0058	-,0154	,0096

Index of moderated mediation:

	Index	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
LidEtica	,0060	,0059	-,0038	,0194