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## **An Empirical investigation of the Mediating role of Moral Outrage in the relationship between Perceived Moral Violation and Consumption Withdrawal behavior of young consumers of Pakistan**

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*Keywords:*

Perceived Moral Violation, Moral Outrage, Consumption Withdrawal, Moral Foundation Theory, Moral Consumption Behaviour

*ABSTRACT*

This article examines the moral consumption behaviour of young consumers in Pakistan. Previously little attention is given to the cognitive process through which perceived moral violation (PMV) affects the consumers' moral consumption behaviour in developing countries. In this regard, this study explores the moral consumption behaviour of a young consumer, especially in the context of highlighted scandalous production practices of the Poultry and Dairy sector. The model is based on the association of perceived moral violation and consumption withdrawal behaviour through mediating role of moral outrage. A survey was conducted on a convenience sample of consumers (Generation Z) in Pakistan. Moreover, a time-lagged design has been used to collect the data from consumers to deal with common method bias. A total of 240 questionnaires were considered and analyzed using Hayes' macro PROCESS. The results indicate that the perceived moral violation (PMV) has a positive and significant effect on consumption withdrawal (CW) and there exists a significant mediating role of moral outrage (MO). This research enhanced the understanding regarding moral consumption behaviour and explained how perceived moral violation affects the consumption withdrawal behaviour of young consumers in Pakistan.

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## INTRODUCTION

Consumers are now more vigilant and informed regarding company's hidden realities, than their ancestors. Various platforms have continuously been providing information on the depraved production practices, which have harmful potential on the consumers' health. Therefore, the consciousness in the consumption behaviour of consumers has increased. Over the decades, researchers have been paying attention to getting an explicit understanding of consumer behaviour in a consumption domain. However, little is known about the impact of moral violations on their moral consumption behaviour (Komarova Loureiro et al., 2016). Also, the role of morality has been discussed across various disciplines, but meager attention has been given to its role in the consumers' moral decision-making process in the consumption setting (Cowan & Yazdanparast, 2019). The existing marketing literature has explicitly discussed the role of consumers' ethical beliefs and their effect on their behaviour (Zollo, Yoon, Rialti, & Ciappei, 2018). However, there exists a shred of rare evidence discussing the role of morality in the context of consumer behaviour (Yaprak & Prince, 2019). This has inspired the growing research in this realm to understand the process whereby consumers capture all key aspects of morality which affect their consumption behaviour (Govind, Singh, Garg, & D'Silva, 2019).

As today's consumer is constantly exposed to the wrongdoings of others, therefore facing considerable changes in their consumption behaviour (Sobol, Cleveland, & Laroche, 2018). The changing phenomenon has notably impacted their minds as they have gained insight into the hidden realities of those involved in moral violations through media technology (Clemente & Gabbioneta, 2017). Now, consumers are more conscious of consuming daily routine products. Moral violation of production has led to many questions and doubts in the minds of consumers. They are now more aware of the fact that companies are involved in wrongful conduct having harmful consequences (Chipulu, Marshall, Ojiako, & Mota, 2018). In the past few years, news has been surfaced regarding the unethical practices to increase chicken and milk production to meet the consumer needs in Pakistan (Pasha, 2019; Cheema & Sheikh, 2018). The same issue was observed in various parts of the world as well (Rabin, 2018). The matter has been highlighted through various reports regarding the alarming dose of hormones in the growth of chicken (Ahmad, 2017) and also the adulteration of milk in Pakistan (Pasha, 2019). These activities have brought incurable diseases and health risks for consumers. The consumption of such products has serious health consequences (Hanford, Campbell, & Elliott, 2016). Therefore, consumers perceive such immoral practices as a violation of moral standards which eventually influences their consumption behaviour.

The consumers show negative responses towards others involved in the moral violation and subsequently indulge in various responsible consumption behaviours (Antonetti & Maklan, 2018; Grauel, 2016). The consumers deliberately show concerns and take actions in response to moral violations (Komarova Loureiro et al., 2016). Consumers perceive actions as moral/immoral based on their moral beliefs that ultimately guide their behaviour. Thus, the consumption behaviour of a consumer must be examined in the light of existing theories based on morality. Therefore, Moral Foundation theory (MFT) by Graham et al., (2013) is employed in this study to examine consumer behaviour. The Moral Foundation Theory (MFT) theory has also been employed in various studies to understand the individual's moral behaviour but marketing still lacks its application to study consumer behaviour. The MFT explains that, in the context of morality, individuals behave according to their concept of right and wrong. Therefore, they behave accordingly when they perceive the action as a moral violation (Van Leeuwen & Park, 2009). The pluralist claim of the theory suggests that an

individual's moral judgment is rooted in related, but different moral foundations such as care and harm, liberty and oppression, authority and subversion, purity and degradation, and loyalty and betrayal (Graham et al., 2018). Therefore, the theory is mainly useful to clarify the actions as a moral violation based on moral beliefs/concerns.

Earlier studies have identified that moral concerns have different triggers that elicit a number of emotions (Gray, Schein, & Cameron, 2017). As the decision-making process relies on a mechanism involving emotions that influence the behaviour, therefore these moral foundations are connected with emotions that influence individual behaviour. Prior research has also examined the role of emotions in the decision-making of individuals, but the underappreciated role of emotions requires more investigation to study moral behaviour (Singh, Garg, Govind, & Vitell, 2018; Martinez & Jaeger, 2016; Russell & Giner-Sorolla, 2011). However, this phenomenon still requires exploring the effect of emotions to understand the moral decision-making process of consumers (Zollo, Pellegrini, & Ciappei, 2017). Moreover, future recommendations have been framed as well that require studying the role of emotions in decision-making for responsible consumption behaviour (Escadas, Jalali, & Farhangmehr, 2020). Morality is linked with emotions; therefore, individuals experience emotions in response to moral violations, too (Molho, Tybur, Guler, Balliet, & Hoffman, 2017). In line with this inquiry, the current research employed Moral outrage primarily determined by the perception that moral content has been violated (Lindenmeier, Schleer, & Pricl, 2012).

Moral outrage is a powerful emotion that differs from personal anger based on its magnitude and different eliciting conditions (Batson et al., 2007). Recent studies have highlighted that moral violation causes people to experience moral outrage either in the form of shaming, punishment, or gossips based on the nature of the violations. Thus, Moral outrage occurs due to intentional violation of moral standards by others, therefore motivating individuals to restore morality by behaving in a particular manner (Hechler & Kessler, 2018). The role of moral emotions has been discussed by several studies, but little attention has been given to moral outrage (Tepper, Zhong, & Inzlicht, 2015). Therefore, the current study has proposed that consumers experience moral outrage due to immoral production practices of Poultry and Dairy products that have negative consequences on their health. The mechanism by which consumers' decision-making based on moral consumption after witnessing a moral violation, is also required to be understood. The present study adds to the literature of consumers' moral consumption behaviour by investigating the impact of the perceived moral violation (PMV) on consumption withdrawal behaviour through mediating role of moral outrage (MO). Therefore, based on the identified research gaps, the study aims to examine the following research objectives.

- To examine the association of Perceived Moral Violation (PMV) and Consumption Withdrawal (CW).
- To investigate the mediating role of Moral Outrage (MO) in the relationship between Perceived Moral Violation (PMV) and Consumption Withdrawal (CW).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Perceived Moral Violation and Consumption Withdrawal**

Initially, the pioneers of moral psychology have conceptualized morality in terms of harm and justice only (Kohlberg, 1969). But later development expanded the area and made an explicit argument that

morality goes beyond these identified domains and varies from culture to culture (Gilligan, 1982). Therefore, morality revolves around loyalty, liberty, authority, and purity as well. This opened a new avenue in this domain that led to the development of Moral Foundation Theory (MFT) (Graham et al., 2013). MFT is based on six identified moral foundations that thoroughly explain how individuals must behave and what is righteous for them. Moreover, theory elucidates that each moral foundation is violated by certain immoral actions (Haidt & Graham, 2007). For instance, the fairness foundation is violated in cases of actions such as deception, cheating, inequality, and injustice. Therefore, an action compromising any of these moral foundations has been considered immoral/wrong. Thus, various studies explained that an individuals' decision revolves around an insightful process that determines that particular action is wrong and has violated moral values (Cowan & Yazdanparast, 2021; Campbell & Winterich, 2018; Rozyman, Landy, & Goodwin, 2014).

However, the theory provides a sound clarification of morally wrong acts breaching these foundations (Graham et al., 2013), but individuals' subjective evaluation varies across individuals, groups, and cultures (Lee, Kwak, & Bagozzi, 2020). So, it can be concluded that individuals perceive actions as immoral as a result of wrongdoings of companies as well (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004). Chan, Van Boven, Andrade, & Ariely (2014) have argued that consumers might encounter moral violations daily in the form of deception, lying, and cheating about the products and services they consume (Cowan & Yazdanparast, 2018). Similarly, consumers perceive an action as a violation when they see a discrepancy between the actual product and its ideal image created by the company (Silver, Newman, & Small, 2021). Therefore, when consumers perceive a company's action as a moral violation, they are likely to respond to the violation (Romani, Grappi, Zarantonello, & Bagozzi, 2015).

This increased exposure has ultimately caused an effect on their consumption behaviour as well (Rodriguez-Rad & Ramos-Hidalgo, 2018). This resulted in various negative consumption behaviours usually in the form of hate, abandonment, boycott, withdrawal, negative word of mouth, and retaliation (Shim et al., 2021; Xie & Bagozzi, 2019; Komarova Loureiro, Haws, & Bearden, 2018; Brenton, 2013; Hogg, Banister, & Stephenson, 2009). However, consumers' withdrawal behaviours are usually embedded in their societal and ethical concerns that guide their behaviour towards consumption (Davidson, Nepomuceno, & Laroche, 2019). Therefore, consumers often distance themselves from the consumption of such products in response to unethical/immoral practices (Jiang, Zhan, & Rucker, 2014; Gregoire, Tripp, & Legoux, 2009). The current study has proposed that consumers perceive immoral action based on moral concerns as a moral violation in line with the Moral Foundation theory (Graham et al., 2013) which ultimately influences their moral consumption behaviour in the form of consumption withdrawal and the following hypothesis is developed.

**Hypothesis 1:** Perceived Moral Violation (PMV) is positively related to Consumption Withdrawal (CW).

### **Perceived Moral Violation and Moral Outrage**

The prior literature has identified that immoral acts lead to a combination of emotions (Heerdink, Koning, Van Doom, & Van Kleef, 2019; Landmann & Hess, 2018). Also, morality has been found to have a link with emotions, therefore individuals experience emotion in case of witnessing an immoral action (Molho et al., 2017). However, the type of emotion is linked to the nature of the violation as well (Kollareth, Kikutani, Shirai, & Russell, 2018). The existing literature in various domains has identified a link between violation and emotions to understand individuals' behaviour (Landmann &

Hess, 2018). Previously, moral emotions have been identified as emotions linked to either well-being of the society or other individuals, therefore quite motivating towards prosocial behaviours (Haidt, 2003). Similarly, prior studies have also revealed that moral emotions provide energy for good acts and to avoid bad deeds (Tangney, Steuwig, & Mashek, 2007). However, studies have supported the argument that moral emotions differ in the extent to which they are associated with the individuals' interests. Thus, moral outrage has been considered as an arousal emotion provoked by a perception of moral violation of others (Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009). Therefore, moral outrage is an archetypal moral emotion that emerged by witnessing others violating moral values.

The term 'outrage' has been linked to anger, therefore moral outrage has been associated exclusively with measures of anger (O'Mara, Jackson, Batson, & Gaertner, 2011). However, this must be noted that moral outrage is different from personal anger not only in terms of its intensity but also due to the different conditions that evoke an emotional response. Therefore, this has been claimed in prior studies that moral outrage is elicited due to the violation of moral standards. The individual perceives morally wrong deeds as moral violations that elicit moral outrage (Hechler & Kessler, 2018). Recent literature has also revealed that individuals experience a stronger magnitude of moral outrage in case of a moral violation (Kubler, Langmaack, Albers, & Hoyer, 2020). Consumers, also exhibit feelings of moral outrage and react against the company's wrongdoing (Escobar-Sierra, Garcia-Cardona, & Vera Acevedo, 2021; Silver, Newman, & Small, 2021). Therefore, it can be argued that moral outrage results in perceived violation of moral standards (Batson et al., 2007). Various situations of moral violations have been discussed previously that seem to elicit moral outrage include perception of injustice, murder, the well-being of others. Therefore, in line with previous arguments, the current study proposed that perceived moral violation (PMV) elicits emotions (moral outrage), consistent with the MFT theory (Graham et al., 2013) and the following hypothesis is developed.

**Hypothesis 2:** Perceived moral violation (PMV) is positively related to Moral outrage (MO).

### **Mediating role of Moral Outrage**

Existing research on emotions has examined several outcomes that show the potential effects of different feelings on individual behaviours. The literature on moral outrage provides a broader perspective in various domains. A line of research focuses on moral communities rejecting violation of moral values, thus eliciting moral outrage which influences their behaviour towards transgression (Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2004). The previous studies have investigated many potential outcomes of moral outrage and constantly reveal that moral outrage leads to specific behavioural outcomes usually in the form of aggressive behaviour. Research on moral outrage has also documented that the feelings of moral outrage are linked with the intention to boycott and spread negative information (Braunsberger & Buckler, 2011; Lindenmeier, Schleer, & Pricl, 2012; Grappi, Romani, & Bagozzi, 2013).

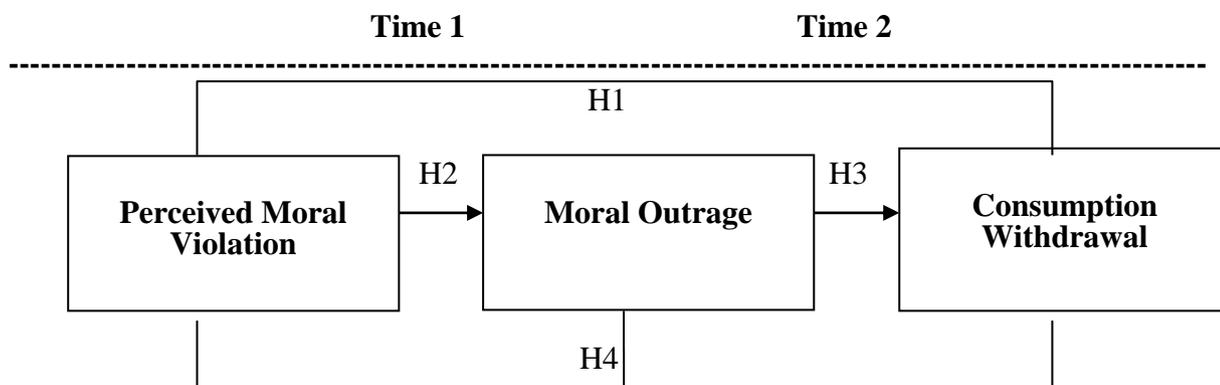
Another promising feature of moral outrage has been associated with prosocial behaviour as well. The perceived moral violation has predicted prosocial as well as protest behaviours through mediating effect of the feelings of moral outrage (Van Zoomenen, Postmes, Spears, & Bettache, 2011; Wakslak, Jost, Tyler, & Chen, 2007). Individuals react to moral violations and show affective responses which in turn influence their behaviour. However, this emotional response varies depending on the nature of the violation. Therefore, when confronted with deception and unfairness, individuals show emotional responses in the form of moral outrage. It has also been observed that moral violation leads to moral

outrage, which in turn, has various outcomes. Moreover, recent literature has revealed that moral outrage affects the behavioural response of people towards wrongdoings (Shah et al., 2020). These violations provoke a strong emotional response of people towards wrongdoers, therefore; they are likely to behave in a certain manner to address the immoral action (Hartsough, Ginther, & Marois, 2020).

Several studies have supported the mediating role of moral outrage between various constructs and behaviours (Lindenmeier et al., 2012; Skitka et al., 2004). The existing literature has revealed the importance of mediating the role of moral outrage between violation and aggressive behaviours (Antonetti & Maklan, 2016). Prior studies have also predicted moral transgression and retributive behaviours through an effective mediating role of moral outrage (Lotz, Okimoto, Schlosser, & Fetchenhauer, 2011). Hence, the present study hypothesized that the perceived moral violation (PMV) elicits moral outrage (MO) which then influences the consumption withdrawal behaviour (CW) of consumers. This proposition is consistent with the MFT Theory (Graham et al., 2013).

**Hypothesis 3:** Moral Outrage (MO) is positively associated with Consumption Withdrawal (CW).

**Hypothesis 4:** Moral Outrage (MO) mediates the relationship between Perceived Moral Violation (PMV) and Consumption Withdrawal (CW).



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Model

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Participants and Procedures

The present study has used a time-lagged design to investigate the causal effects of the proposed research model. The data was collected at two-time intervals with a gap of two weeks. To measure perceived moral violation, moral outrage, and consumption withdrawal behaviour, a survey was

distributed to Poultry and Dairy consumers in twin cities (Islamabad/Rawalpindi) of Pakistan. Non-probability sampling procedures i.e., the convenience sampling technique is applied for sample selection. The respondents were already the consumers of the targeted industries and their products. Moreover, young consumers were targeted because they comprised the largest section (52%) in the country (Jamal, 2020). The consumers have reasonable knowledge about the research and were aware of the scandalous news related to the production activities of these products. Furthermore, the first page of the questionnaire describes the purpose of the study along with a brief description of news about the production activities of Poultry and Dairy products in Pakistan. The next section contains the questions about the demographic profile of the respondents. The respondents were also asked to use a unique ID so that their responses can be matched easily on each time interval.

As Time-lagged design has an advantage over common method bias (CMB) (Podsakoff et al., 2003) therefore, data has been gathered in two-time lags. At time T1, consumers filled the questionnaire about the perceived moral violation and moral Outrage. Next, at time T2, the responses were recorded for consumption withdrawal. Total 260 questionnaires were distributed at time T1, out of which only 253 have been considered for use, making a response rate of 97%. Next, two weeks later, the same 253 respondents were asked to fill the survey again at time T2. The final sample of 240 respondents was considered, making a response rate of 94%. However, it must be noted that the data has been collected from different universities in twin cities; therefore, the availability of respondents was ensured for second-time collection. The data was collected from respondents comprised of 43% males and 57% females. The majority of these respondents were of the young age of 15-20 (51%), whereas (33%) were of age 21-25.

## Measures

The proposed research model of the study was comprised of three constructs; therefore, each variable is measured through multiple items. The adapted questionnaire from previous empirical studies has been used to collect the data from the consumers. The perceived moral violation is measured at time T1 with four items scale developed by Chen (2010). Referring to the industrial activities, sample items included 'The situation is unfair for those affected by the products' and 'I believe the industry products are egregious.' The Cronbach alpha reliability measure for the scale in this study was  $\alpha=0.80$ .

Moral outrage is also tapped at time T1. The scale is comprised of five items and is consistent with previous empirical research on the moral outrage of consumers (Lindenmeier et al., 2012; Batson et al., 2009). The items included in the scale are 'I felt that the actions of the industry are outrageous' and 'I felt that the actions of the industry are scandalous.' The Cronbach alpha reliability for the scale in this study was  $\alpha=0.83$ .

Consumption withdrawal is measured at time T2 with a four items scale developed by Helm et al., (2015). The items included 'I try to live a simple life and not to buy things which are harmful to my health' and 'I prefer buying products which carry a noticeable reputation.' The Cronbach alpha reliability of the scale is  $\alpha=0.81$ . Although, the sample consumers are educated enough to understand the English language, still, the survey is translated into Urdu as well for a better understanding of the measures. The scales were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree.

## Validity of Measures

After the survey, the data was analyzed using SPSS version 22.0 and Hayes' macro PROCESS. As, the scales have been adapted and modified in the Pakistani context, therefore various tests have been applied to ensure the convergent and discriminant validity of the measures. Initially, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is done to check the loading of each item. For Perceived moral violation (PMV), the output shows a KMO value of 0.758 along with Bartlett's test for sphericity having a Chi-square value of 312.470 and  $df=6$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Next, the output from the communality matrix shows a minimum and maximum value of items ranging from 0.578 to 0.712 respectively. Also, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) has extracted one (1) factor only with an Eigenvalue greater than one that accounts for approximately 63% of the total variance explained.

Next, the KMO value for the Moral outrage (MO) scale was .825 along with Bartlett's test of sphericity having a Chi-square value of 411.314 and  $df=10$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Moreover, the result from the communality matrix shows a minimum value of 0.444 and a maximum value of 0.721. The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) has extracted one (1) factor with an Eigenvalue greater than one that accounts for 59% of the total variance. Moreover, EFA is done for Consumption withdrawal (CW) and the output reveals a KMO value of 0.794 with Bartlett's test of sphericity having a Chi-square value of 295.818 and  $df=6$ ,  $p<.001$ . The minimum communalities value was 0.584 and the maximum was 0.661. EFA output shows a single factor with an Eigenvalue greater than 1 that explains a total of 63% of the variance.

The study has also examined the convergent validity through factor loading of variables, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) as shown in Table 1. The factor loadings were above 0.50 for all items along with composite reliability of above 0.70 for each construct. The average extracted variance for each construct was above 0.50 which indicates an acceptable convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010). Moreover, to determine the discriminant validity of the constructs, the present study conducted a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The full measurement model of the study was compared with one composite factor and the result indicates a better fit with high values on respective constructs as compared to one connected factor model.

**Table 1:** Factor Loadings, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extract

Variable	Items	Factor Loading	CR	AVE	A
Perceived Moral Violation	PMV1	0.63	0.81	0.51	0.80
	PMV2	0.66			
	PMV3	0.74			
	PMV4	0.83			
Moral Outrage	MO1	0.57	0.83	0.50	0.83
	MO2	0.67			
	MO3	0.82			
	MO4	0.76			
	MO5	0.66			
Consumption Withdrawal	CW1	0.74	0.81	0.51	0.81
	CW2	0.66			
	CW3	0.74			
	CW4	0.73			

## Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

In order to establish discriminant validity, confirmatory factor analysis is conducted for research model. The model fitness is examined through goodness of fit index (GFI) having value > 0.90, comparative fit index (CFI) with values > 0.95, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) with values < 0.60 (Hair et al., 2010). The three-factor model is compared with one factor model. The output for three factor model revealed better model fit indices ( $\chi^2= 133.388$ ,  $df= 62$ ,  $\chi^2/df= 2.15$ , GFI= 0.923, CFI= 0.937, AGFI= 0.888, NFI= 0.891, TLI= 0.921, RMSEA= 0.06) as compared to one factor model having values ( $\chi^2= 555.441$ ,  $df= 65$ ,  $\chi^2/df= 8.54$ , GFI= 0.660, CFI= 0.570, AGFI= 0.524, NFI= 0.544, TLI= 0.484, RMSEA= 0.178). Overall, the obtained results fully supported the research model of the study.

## RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The research model of the study is analyzed through SPSS and Hayes' macro PROCESS approach (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). After measuring and verifying the data validity and reliability, the descriptive analysis is performed. Table 2 represents the means, standard deviation, correlation, and reliabilities of the constructs. The mean value and standard deviation for constructs are perceived moral violation (PMV) (M=, SD=), moral outrage (MO) (M=, SD=), and consumption withdrawal (CW) (M=, SD=). The correlation analysis shows that perceived moral violation is significantly and positively related to consumption withdrawal ( $r= 0.415$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and moral outrage ( $r= 0.293$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Moral outrage is also significantly related to consumption withdrawal ( $r= 0.343$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

**Table 2:** Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard deviation), and Correlation

	Mean	S.D	PMV	MO	CW
PMV	6.19	0.73	<b>(0.81)</b>		
MO	6.03	0.91	0.293**	<b>(0.83)</b>	
CW	5.86	0.78	0.415**	0.343**	<b>(0.81)</b>

Note: Perceived Moral Violation (PMV), Moral Outrage (MO), Consumption Withdrawal (CW)

N=240, Cronbach Alpha Reliabilities (Parentheses)

\*\* Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \* $p < 0.05$ ,  $\square p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

The proposed research model also involves hypotheses based on direct and indirect links. Therefore, Hayes' macro PROCESS for SPSS is used for analysis purposes to examine the indirect effects through bootstrapping technique. The study used Model 4 to apply the mediation analysis. The results of direct effects of perceived moral violation (PMV) on consumption withdrawal (CW) ( $\beta= 0.442$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the moral outrage (MO) ( $\beta= 0.365$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) reveal a positive and significant relationship between the constructs.

Furthermore, moral outrage has a positive and significant effect on consumption withdrawal ( $\beta = 0.208$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These findings supported the hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 of the study. The mediation analysis is performed through Bootstrapping technique. The proposed indirect effect states that moral outrage (MO) mediates the relationship between perceived moral violation (PMV) and consumption withdrawal (CW).

Table 3 represents the direct, indirect, and total effect of constructs. The results indicate that bootstrap confidence interval (CI) shows a positive and significant bootstrap indirect effect ( $\beta = 0.076$ , 95%CI [0.0084, 0.1530]). The output shows zero value which means a significant mediating effect of moral outrage (MO) exists in the relationship between perceived moral violation (PMV) and consumption withdrawal (CW). This means that consumers who perceive others' wrong actions as a moral violation usually have high arousal of moral emotion in the form of moral outrage which influences their consumption behaviour. Hence, hypothesis H4 of the study is supported which states the relationship between perceived moral violation (PMV) and consumption withdrawal (CW) is mediated through moral outrage (MO).

**Table 3:** Indirect effects of Perceived Moral Violation (PMV) on Consumption Withdrawal (CW) through Moral Outrage (MO)

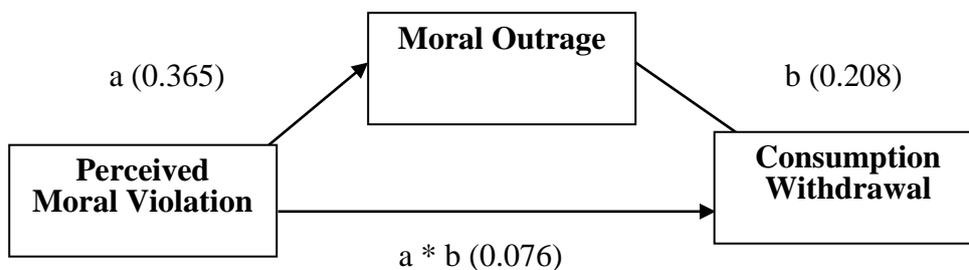
<b>Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects</b>						
	<b>R-sq</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Sig (p)</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
<b>Direct Effects</b>						
<b>H(1): PMV <math>\square</math> CW</b>	.1720	.442	.063	.0000**	.3183	.5661
<b>H(2): PMV <math>\square</math> MO</b>	.0861	.365	.076	.0000**	.2130	.5186
<b>H(3): MO <math>\square</math> CW</b>	.2380	.208	.051	.0001**	.1075	.3092

**Bootstrap Results For Indirect Effects of PMV on CW through MO (95 % Confidence Interval)**

<b>H(4):</b>	<b>Effects</b>	<b>Boot SE</b>	<b>LL95% CI</b>	<b>UL95% CI</b>
	.0762	.037	.0084	.1530
<b>Total Effect of X on Y</b>	<b>Effects</b>	<b>SEP</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
	.4332	.063	.0000	.3092
			.3092	.5573

*Note: N =240, Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size=5000.LL=Lower limit; CI=confidence interval; UL=Upper limit. \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001*  
*Perceived Moral Violation (PMV), Moral Outrage (MO), Consumption Withdrawal (CW)*

The indirect effect (mediation) consists of mainly two single effects where path (a) perceived moral violation (PMV) and moral outrage and path (b) moral outrage (MO) to consumption withdrawal (CW). This indicates that perceived moral violation (PMV) impacts moral outrage (MO) with values (effect: 0.365,  $p < 0.05$ ) which latter effects consumption withdrawal (CW) (effect: 0.365,  $p < 0.05$ ). The estimated point of the indirect effect (mediation)  $ab$  equals the product of  $a * b$ :  $0.076 = 0.365 * 0.208$  as shown in figure 2.



**Figure 2:** Mediation Model (PMV-MO-CW)

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present contributes towards a better understanding of consumers’ moral decision-making process in a consumption domain by considering perceived moral violation as the main construct. This study is conducted with respect to Pakistan’s Poultry and Dairy products to examine the association of perceived moral violation with consumption withdrawal behaviour of young consumers. This study has provided a theoretical foundation associated with the perceived moral violation, moral outrage, and consumption withdrawal tested through advanced statistical techniques. Understanding these relationships contributes towards the practical implications as well. The results of the study indicate a positive and significant association of perceived moral violation with the consumption withdrawal behaviour of young consumers in Pakistan. These findings are in line with the previous studies which suggest that consumers’ perception of moral violation influence their consumption behaviour in the form of hatred, withdrawal, and other protesting behaviours (Shim et al., 2021; Komarova Loureiro, Haws, & Bearden, 2018; Rodriguez-Rad & Ramos-Hidalgo, 2018; Romani, Grappi, Zarantonello, & Bagozzi, 2015).

This study has also identified that when consumers perceived the actions as a moral violation; they simply withdrew themselves from the consumption of such products. The results also pointed out the direct and significant effect of the perceived moral violation on moral outrage which is also in line with the previous empirical studies (Hechler & Kessler, 2018; Batson et al., 2007). This shows that moral violation elicits moral emotion which is also in accordance with the MFT theory (Graham et al., 2013). This study has confirmed that young consumers experience moral outrage in case of moral violation of moral standards. Furthermore, moral outrage has a direct and significant effect on the consumption withdrawal behaviour of young consumers. This means that the effects of perceived moral violation on consumers' withdrawal behaviour are manifested through affective response in the form of moral outrage. The findings of the study are also consistent with the previous studies which have supported the impact of moral outrage on consumer behaviour in case of moral violation (Shah et al., 2020; Lindenmeier et al., 2012; Van Zoomeren et al., 2011). In other words, consumers' affective response was first influenced by the perceived moral violation which in turn positively affected their consumption. The obtained results of the study are consistent with the previous findings which suggest that consumer behaviour has been a result of a decision-making process involving cognitive and affective responses (Rodriguez-Rad & Ramos-Hidalgo, 2018; Gregoire et al., 2009).

Overall, the study has both theoretical and empirical contributions in the perspective field. The findings add to the literature of consumer behaviour of a developing country within the context of morality. Even though a large body of research has discussed morality, the current marketing literature still lacks its application to study the process of moral decision-making of young consumers (Generation Z) in a developing market. Hence, Moral Foundation Theory (MFT) is applied to understand the mechanism by which consumers' decision-making process is reflected in their moral behaviour in a consumption domain. The findings are consistent with the predictions of the Moral Foundation theory. The theory states that moral violation engenders moral emotions, but the role of emotions in this mechanism requires an investigation to entirely understand the individuals' moral behaviour (Martinez & Jaeger, 2017). The theory explains the underlying process to fill the judgment-behaviour gap. Therefore, the current study clarifies the decision-making process of consumers by explaining that how perceived moral violation elicits moral outrage which in turn influences the individual withdrawal behaviour in a consumption domain. However, morality differs among individuals, groups, and cultures, but it has been proved widely that moral violation affects individuals' behaviour (Graham et al., 2016). However, the phenomenon was not entirely investigated previously in a consumption domain, especially in the context of developing markets. Therefore, the current study strives to develop a comprehensive understanding of the entire process by linking perceived moral violation to consumption withdrawal behaviour of consumers through mediating effects of moral outrage. Various studies have already been conducted in a western context that considers Moral Foundation Theory (Graham et al., 2013) to study behaviour within the context of morality. Therefore, this was pertinent to study the theory in other cultures especially in the context of moral consumption behaviour (Yaprank & Prince, 2019).

The study also provides insightful suggestions for practitioners. Consumers are now more aware of the wrongful acts of the companies; therefore, such information affects their cognitive and affective schemas which ultimately influence their behaviour. Therefore, this perception of moral violation could be reduced by practitioners via creating a positive image of the products. The negative reaction of consumers can be harmful to the companies, therefore must be prevented to reduce their negative perception and behaviour. The practitioners need to ensure the formulation of safety policies associated with the production of Poultry and Dairy related products in the country. Moreover, the

understanding of the consumers' emotional response is important because negative and pessimistic emotions can cause havoc and lead to protesting behaviours. Therefore, practitioners are required to take action to prevent such negative events and take measures to improve the quality of the product. In the light of current information, they need to develop better and attractive communicating messages that inculcate the information about the products. Moreover, the evaluation of consumers towards industry behaviours' must be monitored continuously to preserve the reputation of these industries.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study has provided various theoretical and practical implications. However, there are some limitations that provide a scope for future research. First, the study has been conducted in a particular cultural and social setting of Pakistan. Therefore, in order to enhance the generalizability of this study, future research may consider other cultural or cross-cultural settings. This study focuses on young and modern consumers of Pakistan which hinders the generalizability of the research. Future studies could expand the sample size and consider consumers with different age groups as well. The study is limited to Poultry and Dairy products, only. Future studies could also study the consumer decision-making process considering products from other industries with similar issues. Moreover, additional factors could be added into the existing model and future studies could also incorporate other moral emotions (disgust, contempt) as a mediator, thus providing more valuable information on the consumers' moral decision-making in a consumption domain. Overall, this study adds to the knowledge of moral consumption behaviour there is still room for more insightful facts in this domain.

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