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*Examining the effects of tyrannical leadership
on workplace incivility: interplay of employee low
morale and supportive organizational culture*

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Research Background

- *Workplace incivility has become a widespread issue in modern organizations, with research showing that nearly all employees have either experienced or witnessed uncivil behavior. This is problematic because incivility leads to serious consequences such as reduced job satisfaction, lower productivity, higher turnover, and negative psychological outcomes. Despite its importance, most prior studies have focused on the outcomes of incivility rather than its root causes.*
- *In this context, leadership emerges as a critical factor shaping workplace behavior. Leaders influence norms, acceptable conduct, and organizational climate. However, the role of tyrannical leadership—characterized by oppressive, neglectful, or abusive behavior—remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by investigating how tyrannical leadership contributes to workplace incivility and identifying the psychological and organizational mechanisms behind this relationship.*

Research Objectives

- *Examine the impact of tyrannical leadership on workplace incivility*
- *Investigate employee low morale as a mediator*
- *Analyze supportive organizational culture as a moderator*
- *Understand how and when tyrannical leadership leads to incivility*
- *Provide insights into preventing toxic workplace behaviors*

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the **Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory**, which suggests that individuals strive to obtain, retain, and protect their resources (such as energy, emotional stability, and self-esteem). When these resources are threatened or depleted, individuals experience stress and may engage in negative behaviors.

In this framework, **tyrannical leadership** acts as a resource-draining stressor, creating fear, pressure, and emotional exhaustion. This leads to **low employee morale**, which reflects reduced motivation, satisfaction, and engagement. As a result, employees may engage in **workplace incivility** as a coping mechanism or reaction to resource loss. The model also incorporates **supportive organizational culture** as a buffering resource. A positive and supportive environment can help employees cope with stress and reduce the likelihood of incivility. The study therefore proposes a **moderated mediation model** linking all these variables.

Research Methodology

- *Approach: Quantitative, survey-based*
- *Design: Multi-wave, time-lagged (3 waves, 4 weeks apart)*
- *Sample: 456 employees*
- *Corporate sector in China*
- *Sampling method: Convenience sampling*
- *Data analysis tools: Hayes PROCESS macro (mediation & moderation)*
- *AMOS (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)*
- *Measures: Tyrannical leadership (12 items)*
- *Low morale (13 items)*
- *Incivility (7 items)*
- *Supportive culture (5 items)*

Key Findings

- The results provide strong support for all proposed hypotheses. First, **tyrannical leadership was found to significantly increase employee low morale**, confirming that negative leadership depletes employees' psychological resources. Second, tyrannical leadership was also positively associated with **workplace incivility**, meaning that employees exposed to such leadership are more likely to behave rudely or disrespectfully.
- Importantly, the study confirms the **mediating role of low morale**, showing that tyrannical leadership leads to incivility through its negative impact on employee morale. Furthermore, the findings highlight the **moderating role of supportive organizational culture**, which weakens the negative effects of tyrannical leadership.
- Finally, the study demonstrates a **moderated mediation effect**, meaning that the indirect relationship between leadership and incivility becomes weaker when a supportive culture is present.

Academic Contribution

- *Expands literature on dark side of leadership (tyrannical leadership) Provides empirical evidence linking leadership to incivility Introduces employee low morale as a key mechanism Applies COR theory to explain workplace incivility Highlights organizational culture as a buffering factor Offers a moderated mediation model, advancing theory on: Leadership*
- *Workplace behavior*
- *Organizational dynamics*