

LMX and recruiter incivility toward job seekers: a self-serving attribution perspective

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Abstract

Purpose – Job seekers frequently experience incivility during interactions with recruiters, which can negatively influence their job search behaviors. However, the underlying causes of such incivility remain underexplored. Based on attribution theory, this study examines how recruiters' attributions about leader–member exchange (LMX) influence their psychological entitlement, which in turn shapes incivility toward job seekers.

Design/methodology/approach – The survey data was collected in three waves from 320 recruiters involved in the recruitment process.

Findings – The results found that when recruiters hold high levels of self-serving attribution, LMX quality is positively related to their psychological entitlement, which, in turn, promotes incivility toward job seekers.

Practical implications – Leaders should pay special attention to recruiters with high self-serving attributions when establishing LMX with them, as high-quality LMX may elicit a sense of psychological entitlement and potentially influence their uncivil behaviors.

Originality/value – Unlike prior studies that have focused on the negative outcomes of incivility experienced by job seekers, this study empirically reveals the potential antecedents of such incivility.

Keywords Incivility, Leader–member exchange, Psychological entitlement, Self-serving attribution

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Andy, a brilliant graduate of Northwestern University, applies for a job as an assistant to Miranda, the editor-in-chief of a fashion magazine. Despite her impressive resumé, Miranda coldly interrupts and rejects her. This opening scene from the classic film *The Devil Wears Prada* mirrors an everyday reality: many job seekers experience incivility. Incivility in the recruitment process occurs when interviewers or recruiters dismiss job seekers' questions or make offensive remarks (Ali *et al.*, 2016). For organizations, such behavior undermines efforts to remain competitive in talent acquisition by creating a positive candidate experience (Dineen *et al.*, 2023; Qu *et al.*, 2023). For job seekers, these behaviors not only undermine their self-esteem (Islam *et al.*, 2023) but also induce negative emotions (Wang *et al.*, 2025), ultimately influencing their job search attitude and behavior. Although incivility's toxic effects are well-documented, its antecedents remain underexplored. Identifying what drives recruiters to engage in such behavior is essential for developing a more respectful and effective hiring process, therefore benefiting both organizations and job seekers.

Our study aims to address this gap by investigating how leader-member exchange (LMX) relationships may promote incivility toward job seekers. LMX refers to the differentiated social exchanges that leaders develop with their subordinates (Dansereau *et al.*, 1975), resulting in varying relationship quality (low to high) between each dyad. LMX was chosen as a focal point because prior studies suggest that high-quality LMX benefits employees in various ways, including improved performance (Duan *et al.*, 2019; Martin *et al.*, 2016), enhanced well-being (Di Milia and Jiang, 2022; Martin *et al.*, 2023) and reduced turnover intention (Wu *et al.*, 2023). As such, LMX is widely embraced by leaders as a positive practice. However, a recent study found that high-quality LMX could also lead to unethical employee behavior (Shi *et al.*, 2024). These findings indicate that even positive relationships, like high-



quality LMX, can have unintended negative consequences. Therefore, this study explores the conditions under which LMX might facilitate incivility.

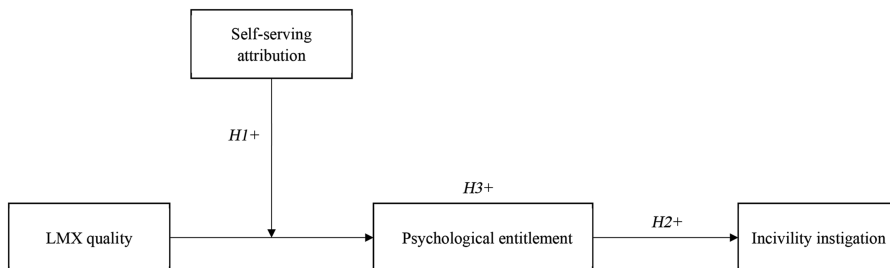
To answer this question, we employ attribution theory (Weiner, 1985) to guide our model. This theory suggests that employees' reactions to situations involve attribution processes, enabling them to make sense of these experiences (Weiner, 1985). Consequently, employees may react differently to identical conditions depending on their attribution of the causes of those situations. In the context of this study, we focus on one specific internal attributional style, self-serving attribution, the tendency for individuals to attribute success to internal factors (themselves) and failure to external factors (Miller and Ross, 1975). Individuals with varying levels of self-serving attributions are likely to develop distinct perceptions and behaviors in social and organizational contexts (Qin *et al.*, 2020).

We propose that self-serving attributions encourage recruiters to interpret LMX quality as an affirmation of personal importance and superiority. When recruiters attribute their favorable LMX quality to self-serving motives, such as personal merit or indispensable contributions to the organization, they may experience a sense of psychological entitlement. Psychological entitlement refers to the expectation of compensation "as a result of an individual participating in an employment relationship" (Naumann *et al.*, 2002, p. 150). It reflects entitlement-driven expectations and attitudes (Neville and Fisk, 2019). This entitlement can, in turn, influence individuals' interactions with others, leading to interpersonal deviance (e.g. Eissa and Lester, 2022; Gao and Liu, 2023). In this study, psychological entitlement predisposes recruiters to display incivility toward job seekers because it satisfies or compensates for their feeling of deserving preferential treatment. The overall theoretical model is illustrated in Figure 1.

The study makes three contributions to the literature. First, it enriches the existing literature on LMX by examining how and when LMX displays the potential downside of incivility among recruiters. Second, it deepens our understanding of the challenges psychological entitlement poses to organizations (Brant and Castro, 2019) by exploring it as an explanatory mechanism between LMX quality and incivility instigation. Finally, it heeds the call in the incivility literature to shift attention toward perpetrators as they are the ones initiating the uncivil behavior (Cortina *et al.*, 2017; Hershcovis *et al.*, 2020) by focusing on why recruiters engage in incivility.

Theory and hypothesis development

Attribution theory posits that individuals' attribution shapes their psychological response to a particular situation and subsequent behavior (Weiner, 1985). The theory identifies three critical dimensions of attribution: locus (internal vs external causes), stability (stable vs variable causes), and controllability (controllable vs. uncontrollable causes), with locus being the most fundamental (Weiner, 1985, 2019). This framework has been applied to understand how employees' interpretations of workplace events influence their emotions, attitudes, and



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Figure 1. Theoretical model

behaviors (e.g. [Costa and Neves, 2017](#); [Wang et al., 2024](#); [Zhu et al., 2024](#)). Building upon attribution theory, we propose that self-serving attributions help explain how recruiters interpret their high-quality LMX in ways that influence their subsequent behavior toward job seekers.

Self-serving attributions for LMX and recruiters' psychological reaction

Psychological entitlement encompasses a sense of deservingness and privilege in specific social interactions ([Freis and Hansen-Brown, 2021](#)). It can easily emerge when experiencing favorable treatment from authority figures ([Si et al., 2023](#)). For example, leader leniency ([Zitek and Krause, 2019](#)) and leader humility ([Qin et al., 2020](#)) are linked to increased entitlement.

Employees in high-quality LMX relationships often receive great support, resources, and trust from their leaders ([Martin et al., 2023](#)). In addition, high-quality LMX generally promotes positive work performance (for a review, see [Martin et al., 2016](#)). However, its benefits can be distorted when recruiters attribute it to their self-serving motives (i.e. self-serving attribution). Specifically, recruiters with high levels of self-serving attributions are more likely to internalize positive experiences, such as support and trust from leaders, and attribute these to their abilities or efforts ([Allen et al., 2020](#); [Dasborough and Ashkanasy, 2002](#)). As a result, they may interpret LMX quality as a signal of their relatively high value and power, leading to an inflated sense of entitlement to preferential treatment ([Shi et al., 2024](#)).

On the contrary, recruiters with low levels of self-serving attributions are less inclined to attribute LMX to personal qualities or abilities ([Guo et al., 2022](#)). Instead, they may view favorable leader behaviors as external factors, such as leader support or situational context ([Qin et al., 2020](#)). This attribution style makes them less prone to psychological entitlement because they prioritize fairness and reasonableness over an excessive emphasis on personal superiority ([Harvey and Martinko, 2009](#)). Hence, we propose that:

- H1.* Recruiters' self-serving attribution moderates the relationship between LMX quality and their psychological entitlement such that the positive relationship will be stronger when their self-serving attribution is high (vs low).

Self-serving attributions for LMX and recruiters' behavioral reaction

We will now elaborate on how recruiters' psychological entitlement can lead to incivility toward job seekers. When a sense of entitlement is salient, individuals become self-oriented; they view themselves as more deserving but undercompensated in an exchange relationship ([Chen et al., 2023](#)). Thus, they exhibit selfish, antagonistic, and rigid behavior, with a high need for power and dominance ([Whitman et al., 2013](#)), resulting in undesirable interpersonal behaviors ([Harvey and Martinko, 2009](#)). In this study, entitled recruiters become overly self-centered and disregard the needs of others ([Qin et al., 2020](#); [Si et al., 2023](#)), ultimately leading to uncivil behaviors, such as interrupting job seekers.

Past research showed that psychological entitlement is positively related to workplace ostracism ([Peng et al., 2023](#)) and interpersonal deviance ([Gao and Liu, 2023](#); [Yam et al., 2022](#)). Integrating the existing theoretical and empirical evidence, we propose that:

- H2.* Recruiters' psychological entitlement is positively related to their incivility instigation.

We further propose that self-serving attribution moderates the indirect relationship between LMX quality and incivility instigation via psychological entitlement. Specifically, recruiters with high levels of self-serving attributions are more likely to credit high-quality LMX to their own contributions or superior qualities ([Qin et al., 2020](#)). This attribution facilitates their sense of psychological entitlement, leading them to believe they deserve special recognition or rewards. As entitlement grows, recruiters may justify uncivil behavior, prioritizing their personal entitlement over organizational norms of respect and fairness ([Lee et al., 2019](#)).

Consequently, when interacting with job seekers, they are prone to behave uncivilly to assert this entitlement.

In contrast, recruiters with low levels of self-serving attributions are less likely to attribute LMX to their own personal superiority (Guo *et al.*, 2022; Qin *et al.*, 2020). Instead, they tend to view it as the outcome of collaborative efforts or leader support (Harvey and Martinko, 2009). This more balanced perspective reduces feelings of psychological entitlement. Without it, recruiters are less prone to engage in uncivil behavior because they prioritize maintaining positive interpersonal relationships and adhering to organizational norms over an excessive emphasis on personal superiority. Hence, we propose that:

- H3. Recruiters' self-serving attribution moderates the indirect relationship between LMX quality and their incivility instigation via psychological entitlement such that the relationship is stronger when their self-serving attribution is high (vs low).

Method

Sample and procedure

We targeted participants working in HR recruitment. Participants were recruited via the premium sample service on www.wjx.cn, a widely used professional platform for data collection in academic research across China (e.g. Gao *et al.*, 2024; Lu *et al.*, 2020). To further ensure the validity of the sample, we incorporated a screening question as a double-check. Specifically, participants were asked, "What is your main responsibility in the company?" Only those who selected "recruitment" were invited to complete the entire survey, others were excluded. After screening, we recruited 352 participants, each assigned a unique identification code to link their responses across three waves, with one week between each wave. At Time 1, LMX quality and self-serving attribution were measured and completed by 352 participants. At Time 2, psychological entitlement was assessed, with 343 participants responding (response rate = 97.44%). At Time 3, incivility instigation and social desirability were measured, with 331 participants responding (response rate = 94.03%). Seven participants were excluded for failing the attention check (i.e. Please select "strongly disagree" for this item (Wang *et al.*, 2024)), and four were excluded for response time below the minimum threshold (i.e. the average response time per item was 10 s). Therefore, 320 participants were deemed valid. Among the final sample, 157 (49.1%) were male, with an average age of 30.55 ($SD = 5.25$). Regarding education level, 3.4% had senior high education or below, 83.8% held a bachelor's degree, and 12.8% had a master's degree or above. Regarding tenure, 42.8% had less than 5 years, 45.6% had between five and 10 years, and 11.6% had more than 10 years.

Measures

Five well-established scales were selected based on a literature review. All measures were translated into Chinese following the translation and back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1980). Afterward, six professionals reviewed and refined the items to ensure clearer expression and better alignment with the study context. Therefore, the scales possess face validity. Unless otherwise specified, all scales were scored on a five-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

LMX quality. It was assessed with seven items developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). An example item is: "Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/her position, what are the chances that your leader would use power to help you solve problems in your work?" Responses were recorded on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (none) to 7 (very high).

Psychological entitlement. It was rated with four items used by Chen *et al.* (2023). An example item is: "I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others."

Self-serving attribution. It was measured with six items by Qin *et al.* (2020). Participants were asked, "What do you think is the reason for your exchange relationship with your leader?"

and they rated six items. An example item is: “Because I know how to do something my leader doesn’t know.”

Incivility instigation. It was measured with twelve items adapted from Cortina et al. (2013). Since the original scale focused on received incivility, we slightly reworded it to reflect the instigation. In this study, participants were asked, “How often have you exhibited the following behaviors in your workplace during the past weeks?” (e.g. “Interrupted a job seeker”). Based on the results of CFA, four items were removed ($\lambda < 0.55$), leaving eight valid items.

Social desirability. It was measured with ten items from the Marlow–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Strahan and Gerbasi, 1972). An example item is: “I’m always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.”

Results

Reliability, validity, and collinearity

As shown in Table 1, we calculated composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) to assess convergent validity. CR values ranged from 0.84 to 0.98, exceeding the 0.60 threshold (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). AVE scores ranged from 0.40 to 0.64, acceptable when CR is above 0.70 (Verhoef et al., 2002). Thus, convergent validity was confirmed. We also assessed the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio and the square root of AVE to confirm discriminant validity. HTMT values ranged from 0.16 to 0.66, below the 0.85 threshold (Henseler et al., 2015). The square root of AVE, shown in italics, exceeded the corresponding cross-correlations (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). These results confirmed satisfactory discriminant validity.

In addition, we conducted multicollinearity by examining the variance inflation factors (VIFs). All VIF values were below 2.00, well under the threshold of 10, indicating no multicollinearity issues (Ryan, 1997).

Confirmatory factor analysis and common method variance. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the distinctiveness of focal variables. Given the relatively large number of items, an item-to-construct balance method (Little et al., 2002) was applied to create three parcels for LMX and four for incivility instigation. The results indicated a good fit for the hypothesized four-factor model ($\chi^2_{[113]} = 250.38$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.06). This model outperformed the alternative models (all $p < 0.001$), including a three-factor model combined psychological entitlement and self-serving attribution into one ($\chi^2_{[116]} = 400.06$, CFI = 0.84, TLI = 0.82, RMSEA = 0.09), a two-factor model combined psychological entitlement, self-serving attribution and incivility instigation into one ($\chi^2_{[118]} = 769.44$, CFI = 0.64, TLI = 0.58, RMSEA = 0.13) and a single-factor model ($\chi^2_{[119]} = 991.85$, CFI = 0.52, TLI = 0.45, RMSEA = 0.15).

Table 1. Convergent and discriminant validity of variables

Variables	CR	AVE	Fornell-Larcker analysis			HTMT analysis			
1. LMX	0.84	0.43	<i>0.65</i>						
2. PE	0.88	0.64	0.26	<i>0.80</i>		0.31			
3. SSA	0.86	0.50	0.34	0.54	0.71	0.44	0.66		
4. IN	0.84	0.40	-0.14	0.20	0.10	0.63	0.21	0.24	0.16

Note(s): PE = Psychological entitlement; SSA = Self-serving attribution; IN = Incivility instigation; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted; HTMT = Heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations; the values in the italics are the square root of AVE

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We applied the CFA marker technique to assess common method bias (Williams *et al.*, 2010) (Table 2). Social desirability was chosen as the marker variable, measured by ten items from Strahan and Gerbasi (1972) ($\alpha = 0.62$). Given the relatively high number of items, the parceling approach was also used (Little *et al.*, 2002), randomly pairing two items to create five parcels for social desirability. The results showed no significant difference between the baseline model and the method-C model ($\Delta\chi^2_{[1]} = 0.15, p = 1.000$). Additionally, method-U performed significantly better than method-C ($\Delta\chi^2_{[24]} = 142.7, p < 0.001$). Comparing method-U with method-R revealed no significant advantage for method-R ($\Delta\chi^2_{[6]} = 0.00, p = 1.000$). Moreover, CMV is less a concern because it can only deflate interactions (Siemsen *et al.*, 2010). Overall, these findings indicated that common method bias was not a serious problem.

Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and Bayesian Information (BIC) were used to assess the model fit of the hypothesized model compared with alternative models. Following Kline's (2016) recommendations, lower AIC and BIC values indicate a better fit. Alternative model 1, which excludes the moderator of self-serving attribution, showed higher AIC and BIC (AIC = 15,167.74, BIC = 15,390.07, $\chi^2_{[150]} = 231.87$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.04) than the hypothesized model (AIC = 15,140.21, BIC = 15,370.07, $\chi^2_{[167]} = 257.48$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.04). Similarly, alternative model 2, which positions the moderator in the second stage, yielded higher AIC and BIC (AIC = 15,169.45, BIC = 15,395.55, $\chi^2_{[168]} = 263.57$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.04). Alternative model 3, which added the direct path from LMX to incivility instigation, likewise showed higher AIC and BIC (AIC = 15,155.59, BIC = 15,385.46, $\chi^2_{[167]} = 270.91$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.04). These results indicated that the hypothesized model offered a relatively better fit.

Descriptive statistics. The means, standard deviations, and correlations among all variables were reported in Table 3. Cronbach's alphas for all variables ranged from 0.68–0.81, which were acceptable. LMX quality was positively related to psychological entitlement ($r = 0.24, p < 0.01$), and psychological entitlement was positively related to incivility instigation ($r = 0.19, p < 0.01$). The results were generally in line with our expectations.

Table 2. Model fits of marker variable analysis

Model	χ^2/df	CFI	RMSEA
CFA model	765.67/395	0.88	0.06
Baseline model	846.76/409	0.83	0.06
Method-C model	846.61/408	0.83	0.06
Method-U model	703.91/384	0.88	0.05
Method-R model	703.91/390	0.88	0.05

Note(s): $N = 320$; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation

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Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	α	1	2	3	4
LMX	5.41	0.69	0.78				
PE	3.24	0.81	0.81	0.24**			
SSA	3.30	0.73	0.80	0.33**	0.53**		
IN	1.77	0.52	0.79	-0.13*	0.19**	0.09	
LMX \times SSA	0.16	0.52	0.68	-0.18**	0.10	0.03	-0.06

Note(s): $N = 320$; PE = Psychological entitlement; SSA = Self-serving attribution; IN = Incivility instigation;

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

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Hypotheses testing. We tested hypotheses using path analysis in Mplus 7.4 (Muthén and Muthén, 2012). To examine indirect effects, we ran bootstrap analyses with 5,000 replications (Preacher and Hayes, 2008).

As shown in Table 4, H1 suggested that self-serving attribution moderates the relationship between LMX quality and psychological entitlement, this relationship would be strong when self-serving attribution is high. Results showed that the interaction between LMX quality and self-serving attribution was significantly related to psychological entitlement ($B = 0.12, p < 0.05$) (Table 3). A simple slope test indicated that LMX quality was significantly positively related to psychological entitlement when recruiters' self-serving attribution was high ($B = 0.27, p < 0.01$) but not significant when it was low ($B = -0.04, p = 0.65$) (see Figure 2). Thus, H1 was supported.

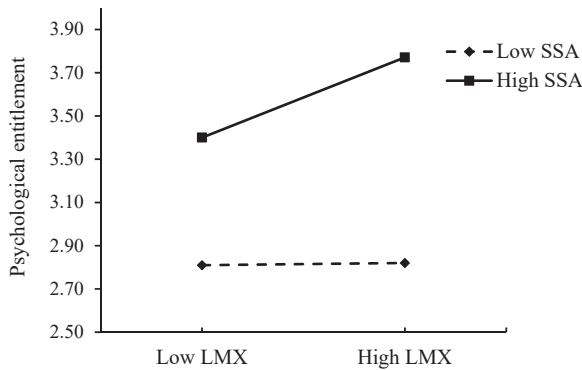
H2 proposed that psychological entitlement was positively linked to incivility instigation, which was also supported ($B = 0.12, p < 0.001$).

Table 4. Regression results of hypothesis testing

Variables	Psychological entitlement		Incivility instigation	
	B	SE	B	SE
<i>Independent variable</i>				
LMX quality	0.12*	0.05		
<i>Moderator</i>				
SSA	0.55***	0.07		
<i>Mediator</i>				
Psychological entitlement			0.12***	0.03
<i>Interaction term</i>				
LMX × SSA	0.16* [0.02, 0.28]	0.07		
Indirect effect (high)	0.03* [0.01, 0.07]			
Indirect effect (low)	-0.00 [-0.03, 0.01]			
R ²	0.29***		0.34*	

Note(s): N = 320; SSA = self-serving attribution. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

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Source(s): Created by authors

Figure 2. Plotted interaction of LMX and self-serving attribution on psychological entitlement

H3 posited that self-serving attribution moderated the indirect effects of LMX quality on incivility instigation via psychological entitlement. Results showed that the indirect effect was significantly positive when recruiters' self-serving attribution was high ($a_1b_1 = 0.03$, 95%CI [0.01, 0.06]) but not significant when it was low ($a_2b_2 = -0.00$, 95%CI [-0.03, 0.01]). Therefore, H3 was supported.

Discussion

Building upon attribution theory, we aim to elucidate why well-intentioned LMX can lead recruiters to engage in incivility toward job seekers. Findings from a three-wave time-lagged survey revealed that for recruiters with high levels of self-serving attribution, LMX quality positively influences incivility instigation by enhancing their psychological entitlement. These results highlight the importance of considering attributional processes and psychological entitlement in understanding the relationship between LMX and incivility.

Theoretical implications

Our research carries three critical theoretical implications. First, this study adds nuance to the conventional view of LMX as a promoter of positive employee behavior (Martin *et al.*, 2016), revealing that it can also incite incivility. This duality highlights the complex nature of LMX, where its effects are not universally positive or negative but contingent on specific conditions. This complexity aligns with recent studies linking high-quality LMX to increased unethical pro-organizational behavior (Bryant and Merritt, 2021) and reduced promotive voice (Carnevale *et al.*, 2020). Collectively, these insights call into question traditional assumptions, suggesting that the benefits of high-quality LMX relationships may not be as straightforward as previously believed, and may sometimes even backfire.

Second, drawing from attribution theory (Miller and Ross, 1975; Weiner, 1985), this study provides a novel insight into the mechanisms underlying recruiters' incivility. Specifically, recruiters with high levels of self-serving attributions are more likely to develop psychological entitlement, which subsequently influences their incivility toward job seekers. This finding highlights the importance of self-serving attributions in the interpersonal dynamics of recruitment interactions, and it deepens our understanding of the mechanisms behind incivility in recruitment.

Finally, this study enriches the study of incivility in the recruitment process by identifying its antecedent. As highlighted by a meta-analysis, prior studies primarily focused on outcomes, neglecting the antecedents of incivility, which has resulted in an incomplete understanding of its network (Yao *et al.*, 2021). Inspired by this perspective, our study found that well-intentioned LMX may inadvertently trigger recruiters' incivility toward job seekers. Consistent with previous research, which links experienced incivility to negative job search behaviors (Ali *et al.*, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2025), we paint a more complete picture of incivility.

Practical implications

Our research has implications for management practice. First, we found that as LMX increases, recruiters with high levels of self-serving attributions are more likely to experience psychological entitlement. From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that organizations should carefully manage the dynamics of LMX to mitigate the risk of fostering psychological entitlement among recruiters prone to self-serving attributions.

Second, while entitlement can bring certain benefits, it also poses significant challenges in organizations. Our findings indicated that psychological entitlement is a proximate factor in recruiter incivility. Therefore, it is important for organizations to carefully consider whether their employees exhibit entitlement tendencies and take proactive measures to prevent those involved in recruitment.

Finally, we revealed that the undesirable effects of LMX, such as increased psychological entitlement and incivility, were more likely to occur when recruiters attributed high LMX interactions to their own uniqueness and contribution. To mitigate the instigation of incivility, leaders should take proactive measures to address recruiters' self-serving attributions (Qin *et al.*, 2020). For instance, implementing training programs can help them recognize attribution biases and understand the potential damage these cognitive tendencies may cause.

Limitations and future directions

There are several limitations to our study that require discussion. First, we relied on a single-source self-reporting method for data collection, doing so allowed us to gather more data, but it also introduced issues like CMV. We attempted to mitigate it by measuring variables across three time periods (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003) and performing marker variable analysis. However, the risk of CMV may still be underestimated. Future studies can benefit from incorporating multi-source data collection methods for more objective assessments.

Second, our study employed attribution theory to highlight the key role of self-serving attributions in the relationship between LMX and recruiters' psychological entitlement. It should be noted that other mechanisms may also be at play. Investigating alternative explanations and theoretical frameworks, such as affective events theory (AET; Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996), which elucidates the affective mechanism, could provide valuable insights for future research.

Finally, the construct validity of the LMX measure is a potential limitation. Although our analyses indicated acceptable validity, conceptual and measurement ambiguity of the LMX remains, as noted in previous research (Gottfredson *et al.*, 2020). This could introduce bias into our findings. Future research should carefully consider the potential effect of using LMX as an antecedent for workplace outcomes and explore methods, such as instrumental variables, to reduce the influence of endogeneity threats.

Conclusion

In light of the increasing prevalence of incivility in the recruitment process, research on why recruiters engage in such behavior remains limited. This study develops and tests a model illustrating that after experiencing high LMX quality, recruiters with high self-serving attribution are likely to feel psychological entitlement, which, in turn, promotes incivility toward job seekers. These findings offer valuable implications for theory and practice.

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