

# Exploitative Leadership and Intention to Quit: The Mediating Role of Perception and Knowledge Hiding

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**Abstract:** Exploitative leadership represents a subtle yet harmful form of destructive leadership that threatens employee retention and organizational sustainability. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory and Conservation of Resources Theory, this study examines how exploitative leadership influences employees' turnover intention through the sequential mediating roles of perceived exploitation, state suspicion, moral disengagement, and knowledge hiding. Using survey data from 504 employees across diverse industries in Vietnam and analyzing them with partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), the findings show that exploitative leadership significantly increases perceptions of exploitation, which in turn fosters knowledge hiding and ultimately heightens turnover intention. From a practical perspective, the results identify perceived exploitation and knowledge hiding as early warning signals of employee withdrawal, offering managers and human resource practitioners' concrete indicators for diagnosing hidden leadership risks. The study further highlights the importance of leadership monitoring, ethical governance, and targeted leadership development initiatives to mitigate self-serving managerial behaviors and promote transparent knowledge-sharing climates, particularly in high power distance and collectivistic contexts.

**Keywords:** Exploitative Leadership, Knowledge Hiding, Intention to Quit

## Introduction

Recently, there has been an interesting change in the methodology used in the study of management and organizational behavior. In the past, there was an almost exclusive focus in the literature on the positive and idealized aspects of leadership styles, including transformational leadership and servant leadership; however, the unstable business environment has forced both practice and academia to take a more scientific approach to the examination of the negative sides of leadership, especially in terms of the increasing prevalence of destructive negative leadership behaviors (Hussain et al., 2024). Among the range of toxic leadership styles, from the extremes of narcissism to abuse, there has been the emergence of a concept in recent times, with rapid academic interest due to its sophisticated and instrumental characteristics: exploitative leadership. Exploitative leadership is a leadership paradigm characterized by self-interest and the exploitation of others (Akhtar et al., 2022). The defining aspect of this construct is the intentionally self-serving nature. Unlike ineffective or emotional-based abusive leadership, exploitative leaders are goal-oriented in their behavior. They view the employee as expendable and a utilitarian tool to be used in furthering personal gain (Schmid et al., 2019a).

The danger in exploitative leadership is based on the elusive nature of exploitative leadership. Unlike abusive leadership, which is characterized by hostility or direct mistreatment, exploitative leaders are able to maintain a likable public image in order to manipulate employees in the achievement of personal goals (X. Zhang et al., 2025). This "camouflaged" nature renders exploitative leadership difficult to detect through conventional evaluation mechanisms, often until its adverse consequences, such as employee resource depletion and organizational deterioration, become salient.

Recent findings suggest that exploitative leadership has a negative effect on a variety of critical aspects of employees' attitudes and behavioral responses, including perceptions of unfairness, trust, knowledge concealment, and, most notably, turnover intention (Majeed & Fatima, 2020). Through the pursuit of self-interest in the exploitation of subordinates, this leadership style affects the quality of the leader-member relationship and consequently impacts the perceptions of the employees concerning the organization and their future career prospects.

While previous studies have focused on positive leadership styles and how they contribute to positive outcomes, such as work engagement and turnover, relatively less attention has been given to the dark side of leadership, namely exploitative leadership, and how it can lead to negative outcomes, such as

knowledge hiding and turnover intention. Emerging studies indicate that in a negative leadership environment, employees may resort to knowledge hiding as a way to protect themselves from what they feel is unfair treatment and possibly exploitation (Yan et al., 2023). Specifically, knowledge is considered a critical personal and professional resource that enhances employees' value, job security, and bargaining power within the organization (Toth et al., 2020). When employees perceive that their leaders exploit their contributions for self-serving purposes without fair recognition or return, they become more likely to deliberately withhold knowledge as a defensive mechanism to prevent further exploitation and preserve their remaining resources (Khalid & Aftab, 2024). Such behavior not only impairs knowledge exchange within organizations but also intensifies perceptions of exploitation, thereby increasing employees' intention to leave (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016; Masih et al., 2026). This study fills a gap in the literature by investigating the relationship between exploitative leadership and employee turnover intention through a sequential mediation model of perceived exploitation and knowledge hiding in the context of Vietnamese organizations. By shifting the focus from the positive outcomes of leadership to the negative aspects of leadership and organizational behavior, the study aims to shed light on the psychological and behavioral processes through which employee turnover intention is generated and to add to the growing body of negative leadership, knowledge hiding, and human resource management literatures.

## Literature Review

### Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory (SET), originally proposed by Blau (1964), provides a foundational theoretical lens for understanding interpersonal relationships within organizations (Kieserling, 2019). According to SET, social behavior is governed by the norm of reciprocity, whereby individuals engage in exchange relationships with the expectation of receiving commensurate benefits in the future. A core premise of SET is that relationships are sustained over time only when both parties perceive fairness and mutual benefit; conversely, when imbalance or exploitation is perceived, the relationship weakens and becomes prone to dissolution (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

In the context of organizational settings, Social Exchange Theory (SET) suggests that employees constantly evaluate the fairness and balance in their social exchanges with their leaders and colleagues, which in turn affects their attitudes and behaviors. When employees feel their contributions are not being appreciated but are being exploited to enhance the personal gains of their leaders, they are likely to react in a negative manner.

SET has been heavily used to explain various outcomes in the organization, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and withdrawal behaviors. Knowledge hiding could be viewed as a transgression of social exchange norms, given the fact that the intentional hiding of knowledge thwarts the reciprocity principle in effective exchange relationships (Z. Zhang et al., 2025).

### Conservation of Resources Theory (COR)

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, introduced by Hobfoll (1989), represents one of the most influential frameworks in stress and organizational behavior research. COR theory posits that individuals are fundamentally motivated to acquire, maintain, and protect valued resources, including material, personal, social, and energetic resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Psychological stress occurs when these resources are threatened, lost, or insufficiently replenished.

Research has increasingly used the conservation of resources theory to explain the causes of negative employee outcomes. For instance, Fatima and Majeed (2023) used the conservation of resources theory to examine the effects of exploitative leadership, establishing that it leads to the depletion of employees' psychological resources, which in turn makes them adopt maladaptive coping behaviors such as work procrastination and the spreading of rumors (Majeed & Fatima, 2020). Similarly, Takhsha et al. (2020) used the Conservation of Resources Theory to establish that workplace ostracism leads to the depletion of employees' social resources, making them adopt knowledge hiding behaviors (Takhsha et al., 2020).

#### 1. Hypotheses Development and Research Framework

Exploitative leadership is defined as the leader's behavior characterized by having a self-serving orientation, where the exploitative leader takes credit for the subordinates' work, uses too much pressure, and uses subordinates instrumentally for personal benefits (Schmid et al., 2019a).

Exploitative leadership is seen to violate the exchange relations of organizations, which affects trust and the quality of leader-member exchange relations. When employees are exposed to exploitative leadership, it is likely that they will develop negative organization evaluations and will display withdrawal behaviors, with turnover intentions being the major withdrawal behavior. Prior studies have shown that destructive leadership behaviors result in increased psychological strains and stimulate employees' intentions to withdraw from the organization. Thus, it is proposed that:

**H1:** Exploitative leadership is positively related to employees' turnover intention.

Perceived exploitation refers to the degree to which employees perceive that their leaders exploit their time, efforts, and contributions for their own benefit. Besides the behavioral manifestations, exploitative leadership affects the perception and judgment of employees on their work experience. According to Social Exchange Theory, when employees perceive an incongruence between their input and output, they will most likely experience feelings of exploitation and unfair treatment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Behaviors such as credit claiming, overworking employees, or using subordinates for their own benefit significantly increase the perception of exploitation by employees. Therefore, the current study posits that:

**H2:** Exploitative leadership is positively related to employees' perceived exploitation.

Knowledge hiding refers to employees' intentional behaviors of hiding, concealing, and delaying the provision of requested knowledge despite their possession and readiness to share it (Garg et al., 2022). In the exploitative leadership model, perceived exploitation was found to be a crucial factor in influencing employees' defensive behavioral outcomes. According to Social Exchange Theory, when people perceive an imbalance in social exchange relationships, they are likely to perceive that they are being exploited and treated unfairly (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This usually affects their cooperative motivation and forces employees to engage in knowledge hiding as a means of self-protection. Hence, the study proposes that:

**H3:** Perceived exploitation is positively related to employees' knowledge hiding behavior.

Turnover intention is "the level to which employees consciously think about, or intend to, leave their current organization in the near future" (Bothma & Roodt, 2013). Knowledge hiding is a form of psychological withdrawal that affects collaborative relationships, including trust in organizations. Deliberate knowledge hiding leads to disruptions in information sharing processes, which are associated with poor quality of interpersonal interactions and decreased organizational commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). These negative experiences may increase job dissatisfaction, causing employees to re-evaluate their employment relationship, which may strengthen their intention to leave. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H4:** Knowledge hiding is positively related to employees' turnover intention.

The effect of exploitative leadership on turnover intention is not only expected to be direct but also to be mediated through psychological and behavioral mechanisms, according to Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Hobfoll, 1989). From the SET perspective, the imbalance in the exchange relationship between the leader and the employee is likely to foster the perception of exploitation. From the COR perspective, the experience of exploitation is an indication of the depletion of an employee's personal resources, prompting the employee to engage in behaviors such as knowledge hiding to conserve the available personal resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Ultimately, the psychological and behavioral withdrawal is likely to undermine the employee's commitment to the organization, leading to an increased intention to leave the organization. Accordingly, the study is guided by the sequential mediation hypothesis that:

**H5:** Perceived exploitation and knowledge hiding sequentially mediate the relationship between exploitative leadership and employees' turnover intention.

Apart from these mechanisms, exploitative leadership may also cultivate an environment where transparency is low, and uncertainty is high, forcing employees to be highly alert in their daily interactions (Kong et al., 2025). The exploitative leader's drive for self-interest, information-hoarding, and utilization of power may intensify the employees' suspicious nature as they constantly analyze the leader's intentions, motives, and genuineness. This state of mind indicates low trust and security in the leader-employee relationship, which may affect work behaviors. Therefore, this study contributes:

**H6:** Exploitative leadership is positively related to employees' state of suspicion.

Lastly, exploitative leadership could trigger cognitive processes that influence employees' moral self-regulation. Moral disengagement is defined as a psychological process whereby individuals justify or rationalize behaviors that are morally objectionable without feeling guilty or condemning themselves (Kong et al., 2025). In an environment where exploitative leadership is prevalent,

repeated exposure to instances where leaders are more concerned with personal gain, where they take undue credit for team accomplishments, and where they are perceived as being unfair could influence employees' perceptions that such behaviors are morally acceptable. In such an environment, employees could view such behaviors as necessary for personal protection. Therefore, it is proposed that:

**H7:** Exploitative leadership is positively related to employees' moral disengagement.

## Research Methodology

In order to empirically examine the proposed relationships among exploitative leadership (EL), moral disengagement (MD), perceived exploitation (PE), state suspicion (SS), knowledge hiding (KH), and turnover intention (TI), this study employed a cross-sectional quantitative survey design. All constructs were measured using established multi-item scales adapted from prior research, rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), unless otherwise specified. The scales demonstrated satisfactory reliability in this study.

Specifically, exploitative leadership (EL) was measured using variables scale developed by Schmid et al., (2019), reflecting behaviors such as selfishness, manipulation, and exploitation. Moral disengagement (MD) was assessed through variables scale by Moore (2015), including mechanisms such as moral rationalization and responsibility transfer.

In addition, the feeling of perceived exploitation (PE) was measured using variables scale by Livne-Ofer et al., (2019), focusing on the feeling of being treated unfairly. The state suspicion (SS) was measured through variables scale adjusted from Bobko et al., (2014), reflecting temporary distrust of leaders or colleagues. Knowledge-hiding (KH) was measured using Connelly et al., (2012) variables scale, encompassing three aspects: avoidance, feigning ignorance, and rationalizing concealment. Finally, turnover intention (TI) was assessed using Bothma & Roodt (2013) scale, representing the tendency to leave the organization in the near future.

Due to the conceptual complexity of the proposed relationships, which involved multiple latent variables and sequential mediating processes, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed as the primary analytical approach. PLS-SEM is considered an effective approach for conducting exploratory and predictive research, especially when it comes to understanding latent psychological processes through which leadership influences employees' attitudes and behavioral outcomes (Hair et al., 2021).

In order to examine employees' subjective experiences of exploitative leadership and subsequent psychological and behavioral outcomes, including turnover intentions, this study aimed to collect data from individuals who were directly supervised by a manager. As such, it was ensured that all participants of the study had gained experience with regard to exploitative leadership behaviors, knowledge sharing processes, and intentions to continue or terminate the organization-employee relationship.

The sample of employees consisted of 504 employees from diverse industries, including banking, education, manufacturing, technology, and services, located in Vietnam. Vietnam was chosen because of its cultural attributes, which included collectivistic and high power distance cultural values. These values were considered to be favorable for hierarchical leadership styles, which could amplify the negative consequences of exploitative leadership styles on employees' perception, knowledge hiding, and turnover intentions.

A structured self-administered online questionnaire was used to collect data. A snowball sampling strategy was employed by using online networks of professionals to disseminate the online questionnaire. Participants were made aware of the purpose of conducting the study and were assured of anonymity and confidentiality to minimize evaluation apprehension, especially when asked sensitive questions regarding knowledge hiding and turnover intentions. Participants who were directly supervised by someone and had an organizational tenure of at least six months were considered eligible for data collection.

Data collection was analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0 software by employing a two-step analytical strategy. First, the reliability and validity of the measurement model were checked, followed by assessing the structural model to verify hypothesized relationships, including direct effects and sequential mediation effects that led to turnover intentions.

## Research Result

Table 1: Outer Loadings, Composite Reliability, and Convergent Validity

	<b>Outer Loading</b>	<b>Reality</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>
EL1	0.700	0.811	0.865	0.562
EL2	0.786			
EL3	0.704			
EL4	0.794			
EL5	0.758			
KH3	0.720	0.682	0.792	0.563
KH4	0.787			
KH5	0.686			
MD1	0.750	0.716	0.810	0.554
MD2	0.707			
MD5	0.775			
PE1	0.769	0.817	0.872	0.577
PE2	0.755			
PE3	0.786			
PE4	0.711			
PE5	0.774			
SS1	0.726	0.779	0.846	0.525
SS2	0.736			
SS3	0.764			
SS4	0.739			
SS5	0.651			
TI1	0.748	0.775	0.841	0.515
TI2	0.686			
TI3	0.703			
TI4	0.671			
TI5	0.784			

The measurement model was evaluated based on outer loadings, composite reliability, and AVE. This approach was based on the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2021). As shown by the PLS output, overall, the measurement scales were found to have adequate reliability and convergent validity.

For the exploitative leadership scale, the outer loadings of the indicators ranged from 0.700 to 0.794, which were well above the minimum requirement of 0.70. Moreover, the composite reliability was 0.865, while the AVE was 0.562. This suggests that there was adequate internal reliability and that more than 56% of the variance of the latent construct was explained by its indicators.

For the knowledge hiding scale, the original scale contained multiple indicators. However, two indicators were removed due to low outer loadings. After deleting the indicators, the remaining three indicators KH3, KH4, and KH5 had outer loadings ranging from 0.686 to 0.787. Although one loading was slightly below 0.70, the indicators were retained since the composite reliability was 0.792 and the AVE was 0.563, both of which were well above the minimum requirement of 0.70.

For the moral disengagement scale, two indicators were removed since their outer loadings were low. After deleting the indicators, the remaining indicators—MD1, MD2, and MD5—had outer loadings ranging from 0.707 to 0.775. The composite reliability of the scale was 0.810, while the AVE was 0.554.

The perceived exploitation (PE) scale had five indicators with outer loadings ranging from 0.711 to 0.786. The CR value was 0.872, while the AVE value was 0.577. These high values indicate that the internal consistency is high and that the latent construct has high explanatory power.

For the state of suspicion (SS) scale, the range for the outer loading value was 0.651-0.764. Although one indicator had a value lower than 0.70, it was decided that it should be retained because it had a high enough value for CR, which equaled 0.846, while the AVE value equaled 0.525. These are acceptable minimum values.

The turnover intention (TI) scale had five indicators with outer loading values ranging from 0.671 to 0.784. The CR value equaled 0.841, while the AVE value equaled 0.515. These are acceptable values, so it can be stated that this scale had met acceptable criteria.

The above results indicate that all constructs for the refined model had met acceptable criteria for internal consistency and convergent validity. The removal of two indicators from each KH and MD.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

Relationship	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T-value	p-value	Result
EL $\rightarrow$ MD	0.622	0.621	0.042	14.899	0.000	Supported
EL $\rightarrow$ PE	0.758	0.757	0.026	29.561	0.000	Supported
EL $\rightarrow$ SS	0.699	0.699	0.032	22.057	0.000	Supported
KH $\rightarrow$ TI	0.486	0.491	0.055	8.795	0.000	Supported
PE $\rightarrow$ KH	0.570	0.567	0.048	11.916	0.000	Supported

The structural model was assessed using PLS-SEM with bootstrapping procedures. The results indicate that all hypothesized relationships are statistically significant.

Specifically, exploitative leadership (EL) exhibits a positive and significant effect on moral disengagement (MD) ( $\beta = 0.622, t = 14.899, p < .001$ ). This finding suggests that when employees perceive exploitative behaviors from their leaders, they are more likely to activate moral justification mechanisms to rationalize potential deviant or defensive responses. Accordingly, the corresponding hypothesis is supported.

Furthermore, exploitative leadership demonstrates a strong positive effect on perceived exploitation (PE) ( $\beta = 0.758, t = 29.561, p < .001$ ). The substantial path coefficient and high t-value underscore the central role of exploitative leadership in shaping employees' interpretations of their work experiences. This result provides robust support for the hypothesized relationship between EL and PE.

In addition, exploitative leadership has a positive and statistically significant effect on employees' state of suspicion (SS) ( $\beta = 0.699, t = 22.057, p < .001$ ). This indicates that leaders' self-serving behaviors and lack of transparency heighten employees' vigilance and suspicion regarding their supervisors' motives and intentions. Thus, this hypothesis is also supported.

Regarding behavioral withdrawal outcomes, knowledge hiding (KH) is positively associated with turnover intention (TI) ( $\beta = 0.486, t = 8.795, p < .001$ ). This result suggests that when employees defensively withhold knowledge, they simultaneously increase their consideration of leaving the organization. The corresponding hypothesis is therefore supported.

Finally, perceived exploitation (PE) has a positive and significant effect on knowledge hiding (KH) ( $\beta = 0.570, t = 11.916, p < .001$ ). This finding reinforces the argument that feelings of being exploited play a crucial role in triggering defensive behaviors, including the intentional withholding of knowledge. Hence, the hypothesized relationship between PE and KH is supported.

Overall, the results indicate that exploitative leadership plays a pivotal role in activating employees' psychological responses (moral disengagement, perceived exploitation, and suspicion) and behavioral reactions (knowledge hiding), which in turn contribute to heightened turnover intention. These findings provide strong empirical support for the proposed research model.

Table 3. Total Indirect Effects

Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-value	p-value
EL $\rightarrow$ KH	0.432	0.434	0.044	9.863	0.000
EL $\rightarrow$ TI	0.210	0.216	0.038	5.459	0.000
PE $\rightarrow$ TI	0.277	0.284	0.046	6.021	0.000

The indirect effects were examined using bootstrapping procedures in PLS-SEM. The results indicate that all indirect relationships in the model are statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), thereby providing empirical support for the proposed mediating mechanisms.

Specifically, exploitative leadership (EL) exerts a positive and significant indirect effect on knowledge hiding (KH) through perceived exploitation (PE) ( $\beta = 0.432$ ,  $t = 9.863$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding suggests that when leaders engage in exploitative behaviors, employees are more likely to develop feelings of being exploited, which subsequently encourage knowledge hiding as a defensive response. The result reinforces the mediating role of perceived exploitation in the relationship between exploitative leadership and knowledge hiding.

Furthermore, exploitative leadership demonstrates a significant indirect effect on turnover intention (TI) ( $\beta = 0.210$ ,  $t = 5.459$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This effect reflects the sequential mediation pathway, whereby exploitative leadership increases perceived exploitation and knowledge hiding, which in turn heighten employees' intention to leave the organization. This finding provides empirical support for the proposed sequential mediation hypothesis.

In addition, perceived exploitation (PE) has a positive and significant indirect effect on turnover intention (TI) via knowledge hiding (KH) ( $\beta = 0.277$ ,  $t = 6.021$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This result indicates that feelings of exploitation not only directly shape employees' attitudes but also trigger defensive withdrawal behaviors, which subsequently intensify turnover intention.

Overall, these findings confirm that mediating mechanisms play a crucial role in explaining how exploitative leadership influences turnover intention. In particular, perceived exploitation and knowledge hiding serve as key psychological and behavioral pathways through which the adverse effects of exploitative leadership unfold.

Table 4. Specific Indirect Effects

<b>Indirect Relationship</b>	<b>Original Sample (O)</b>	<b>Sample Mean (M)</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</b>	<b>T-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
EL → PE → KH	0.432	0.434	0.044	9.863	0.000
PE → KH → TI	0.277	0.284	0.046	6.021	0.000
EL → PE → KH → TI	0.210	0.216	0.038	5.459	0.000

The specific indirect effects were examined using bootstrapping procedures in PLS-SEM. The results indicate that all tested mediation paths are statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), providing strong empirical support for the proposed mediating mechanisms in the research model.

First, exploitative leadership (EL) has a positive and significant indirect effect on knowledge hiding (KH) through perceived exploitation (PE) ( $\beta = 0.432$ ,  $t = 9.863$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding suggests that when employees perceive exploitative behaviors from their leaders, heightened feelings of being exploited encourage them to engage in knowledge hiding as a defensive strategy to protect their personal resources.

Second, perceived exploitation (PE) exerts a positive and significant indirect effect on turnover intention (TI) via knowledge hiding (KH) ( $\beta = 0.277$ ,  $t = 6.021$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This result indicates that feelings of exploitation not only shape employees' attitudes but also translate into defensive withdrawal behaviors, which subsequently increase their intention to leave the organization.

More importantly, the sequential mediation analysis reveals that exploitative leadership has a positive and significant indirect effect on turnover intention through the sequential pathway of perceived exploitation and knowledge hiding ( $\beta = 0.210$ ,  $t = 5.459$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding provides clear empirical support for the proposed sequential mediation hypothesis (H5), demonstrating that the effect of exploitative leadership on turnover intention is transmitted through both psychological (perceived exploitation) and behavioral (knowledge hiding) mechanisms.

Overall, these findings underscore the pivotal roles of perceived exploitation and knowledge hiding in explaining the relationship between exploitative leadership and turnover intention. They also highlight the importance of examining sequential mediating processes when investigating the dark side of leadership behaviors.

## Limitations and Further Research

Although this study provides important empirical evidence regarding the impact of exploitative leadership on turnover intention through psychological and behavioral mediating mechanisms, several limitations should be acknowledged.

First, the use of a cross-sectional survey design limits the ability to draw definitive causal inferences among the variables. Although the proposed relationships are theoretically grounded, future research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs to examine the temporal stability of the mediating mechanisms and strengthen causal claims.

Second, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce common method bias and perceptual bias, despite the implementation of procedural remedies to mitigate such concerns. Future studies could enhance the robustness of findings by incorporating multi-source data, such as supervisor or peer evaluations, thereby improving measurement validity and reducing potential response biases.

Third, the research context of Vietnam characterized by high collectivism and large power distance, may influence the magnitude and dynamics of exploitative leadership effects. These cultural characteristics could potentially intensify hierarchical dynamics and employees' tolerance of authority, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings to other cultural settings. Cross-cultural comparative studies are therefore recommended to assess the boundary conditions of the proposed model.

Fourth, the model does not comprehensively account for potential moderating variables, such as ethical climate, perceived organizational support, or individual differences. Future research may benefit from examining these contextual and dispositional factors to better understand when and for whom exploitative leadership exerts stronger or weaker effects.

Finally, this study primarily focuses on the negative consequences of exploitative leadership without examining potential protective mechanisms or managerial interventions that could mitigate its adverse impact. Future investigations should explore buffering factors and practical strategies aimed at reducing the harmful effects of exploitative leadership on employee well-being and organizational sustainability.

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