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How Ineffective Supervisors Hinder Employee Benefits Under Conditions of Organizational Cynicism

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ABSTRACT

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory explains that, over time, the positive/negative actions of a supervisor affect the reciprocating behaviors/attitudes of employees. Regular poor supervision creates organizational cynicism. Two studies investigated the moderating effects of organizational cynicism on employee outcomes. In study one, respondents randomly viewed either a poor benefits/excellent supervisor or excellent benefits/poor supervisor stimulus. Moderated path analysis showed that the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition was associated with a lower likelihood of asking for a raise than the other condition. Participants in the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition with high organizational cynicism reversed this effect. Study two assessed the moderating effects of organizational cynicism on the relationship between pay satisfaction and job satisfaction. Pay satisfaction was associated with higher job satisfaction. High pay satisfaction and high organizational cynicism were associated with greater job satisfaction. Better pay absolves a degree of organizational distrust. Managerial implications discuss how appropriate wages/salaries influence employee attitudes and perspectives.

Keywords: Poor supervisor, Organizational cynicism, Asking for pay raises, Pay satisfaction, Job satisfaction, Leader-member exchang.

Introduction

Of 7,272 Gallup-surveyed U.S. adults, one in two had left their job to separate from their supervisor to improve their well-being at some time in their career (Harter & Adkins, 2015). This indicates how common poor-quality supervisor relationships are across industries. It also illustrates the large influence a supervisor can have on employees' job satisfaction. For example, researchers found supervisors' poor communication and low competency increase the likelihood of employees quitting (Kuroda & Yamamoto, 2018). Negative workplace leader-member exchange (LMX) relationships relate to negative affect, lower job satisfaction, and lower personal initiative (Pan & Lin, 2018). Lower quality LMX relationships have negative consequences on employee trust and motivation. Our purpose is to examine the effects of a poor supervisor relationship and how it hinders employee outcomes even when an organization offers excellent benefits. Given that supervisors have an outsized impact on employees' well-being, can company benefits offset a poor supervisor?

LMX provides a dyadic relationship framework to study supervisor and employee organizational behaviors (Salehzadeh, 2020). LMX explains how positive/negative actions of an organizational actor (e.g., supervisor) affect the reciprocating behaviors/attitudes of the receiver (e.g., employee). These exchanges over time influence perceived organizational support (Epitropaki & Martin, 2013). Employees perceive organizational support when they receive fair compensation and organizational benefits (Deconinck & Bachmann, 2007). Organizations spend large sums of

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money to recruit talent to demonstrate organizational support through benefits (Hongal & Kinange, 2020). However, can costly organizational benefits outweigh the effects of poor LMX relationships? The purpose of the project was to investigate whether excellent benefits employees highly desire will offset poor supervisor relationships.

Literature Review

Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and Poor Supervisor Quality

Based on LMX, beneficial/harmful exchanges from supervisors affect the quality of a relationship with employees. We review literature on abusive managers and organizations, which provides related evidence on the effects of bad management. Abusive organizations are those that operate with callous disregard and minimal concern for their employees' needs (Khan, 2019). Workplace abusive behaviors are typically nonphysical but include behaviors that humiliate (e.g., name-calling), exhaust (e.g., require more work than reasonably possible within a timeframe), or overextend employees (e.g., schedule insufficient staff for a busy timeslot). Employees often stay at abusive organizations because of psychological entrapment and learned helplessness (Buchko *et al*., 2017). Supervisors communicate and behave in accordance with company culture (e.g., treat subordinates as incompetent/lazy) (Culbert, 2017). Frequency of poor workplace experiences creates distrust in organizations and supervisors. For example, a company claiming to be a healthy work environment can be undermined by an overly critical supervisor who pushes employees to exhaustion to keep up with market demands. The need to generate revenue and poor LMX behaviors creates stress. Supervisors react to stressors in different ways (e.g., belittling). Often, they redirect stress to try to influence employees to produce work (e.g., yelling at staff to work faster). Some leadership styles match employees', while other styles can drive employees to quit.

Employees will reciprocate positive or negative behaviors based on what they receive in LMX relationships (Epitropaki & Martin, 2013). A supportive LMX relationship reduces emotional exhaustion (Xu *et al*., 2015). However, in the presence of abusive supervision, a once supportive relationship can foster greater emotional exhaustion and employee silence. Abusive supervision (e.g., berating) has downstream consequences that negatively affect open dialogue. Healthy workplace relationships have honest conversations where employees feel like they can share concerns without repercussions. A series of interactions over time builds trust (or lack of trust) between a supervisor and employee (Kangas, 2021). Affect (i.e., liking), loyalty, organizational contribution, and professional respect are attitudinal beliefs employees develop from interactions with supervisors. Low-quality relationships will sink performance and citizenship behaviors employees exhibit (Lusk & Hayes, 2022).

Evaluations of supervisors are subjective based on employee experiences and interactions. A good supervisor may not necessarily be as effective at a different organization (Salehzadeh, 2020). A supervisor is often dependent on the employees they work with. Good supervisors match employees' working styles and develop meaningful interpersonal relationships. Good supervisors validate employees and understand their needs (Biçer, 2020). When employees experience LMX supervisor support, they are more likely to have greater perceived organizational support (Epitropaki & Martin, 2013). Greater perceived organizational support relates to higher performance ratings, higher affective commitment, and lower intentions to quit. Greater supervisor LMX support is related to greater pay satisfaction (March *et al*., 2023). In the presence of high pay communication and high supervisor LMX support, there was greater pay satisfaction. Communication about pay is a form of organizational support. Transparent communication about pay fosters a climate of fairness and trust (Bamberger, 2021). Transparency in pay communication provides the opportunity to show how the organization values an employee (Eisenberger & Cameron, 1996). It can increase employee commitment by offering raises. Many employees are motivated by growth. Pay communication and promotional opportunities are qualities of a more stable working environment.

Poor Quality Supervisors and Employee Impressions

Workplaces are a source of life fulfillment. Abusive experiences from supervisors negatively impact employees' well-being and even life satisfaction (Santos *et al*., 2023). Researchers studied the effects of abusive supervisors who exhibit temper tantrums, public criticisms, and unwarranted blame (Xu *et al*., 2015). Such misconduct is counterproductive and decreases organizational citizenship behaviors. Abusive supervisors negatively affect employee happiness (Fisher, 2010). Bad managers can corrupt a workplace culture because they are a figure of authority and standard-setting in

an organization (Culbert, 2017). For example, excessive criticism and blame-dodging impact employee morale. It suggests employees are impotent and the root of all problems. This creates a cycle of behaviors that establishes the norm. While there are many types of poor supervisors, this study focuses on supervisors who are difficult to satisfy and overly critical. Past literature shows that poor supervision will sink employee attitudes, but what if an organization offered meaningful benefits an employee highly desired? While poor supervisors have been studied for sinking employee outcomes, can excellent benefits offset these effects? To investigate this, we created stimuli to compare effects. One stimulus paired excellent benefits with a poor supervisor. The second stimulus paired poor benefits with an excellent supervisor. Study one was conducted to compare employee outcomes in these two conditions.

H1a: Respondents in the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition will evaluate supervisors as more bad than good compared to those in the poor benefits/excellent supervisor condition.

H1b: Respondents in the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition will evaluate organizations with lower organizational trust compared to those in the poor benefits/excellent supervisor condition.

Organizational workplaces have the implicit responsibility to provide a safe, fair, and equitable environment to do business (otherwise known as a psychological contract between employees and the company) (Abraham, 2000). When organizations breach this psychological contract, employees become disillusioned with the company's values and actions (e.g., enormous salary discrepancies are often perceived as violations of fairness and equity). Employees can feel contempt, bitterness, and frustration for duplicitous organizational behaviors that show poor integrity (Naus, 2007). When employees feel they cannot trust supervisors due to negative experiences, they are less likely to express disagreements (Khan, 2019). Employees are more likely to remain silent because they fear consequences. In some situations, supervisors can undermine employee desires because of dislike or preferential treatment (e.g., deny requested time off or write a negative review to prevent future promotion). Employees evaluate risk and assess previous LMX interactions to inform what to ask from supervisors (e.g., pay raise) (March *et al*., 2023). An employee's likelihood to ask a supervisor for a pay raise is reflective of the LMX relationship quality.

H1c: Respondents in the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition will be less likely to ask for a pay raise compared to those in the poor benefits/excellent supervisor condition.

Organizational Cynicism and Advocating for Higher Pay

Organizational cynicism is distrust and negative attitudes about a company to do what is good for employees (Chiaburu *et al*., 2013). Actions from management can generate organizational cynicism (even when it is to preserve the company that benefits most employees in the long term) (Naus, 2007). For example, companywide layoffs can send fear and uncertainty shockwaves through a company. Employees doubt their job security and grieve the loss of displaced colleagues. Organizational cynicism can form from pessimism about company change and the blaming of employees for failures (Chaudhry *et al*., 2023). When management blames staff as lazy or incompetent, employee motivation, commitment, and satisfaction decrease. Abusive supervision is related to greater cognitive (e.g., dishonesty, unfairness, and insincerity), emotional (e.g., fear, embarrassment, disappointment, and pessimism), and behavioral (e.g., denigration and condescension) cynicism in an organization (Chaudhry *et al*., 2023). Regular experiences of poor supervisor behaviors develops employee organizational cynicism.

LMX relationships are central to organizational behaviors. Employee reactions to their LMX interactions shape organizational cynicism (Davis & Gardner, 2004). Meanwhile, a high-quality LMX relationship will decrease the negative beliefs and distrust formed from a negative event. A supervisor can explain events, so they are not misinterpreted. A track record of transparent communication and working alongside employees with good intent provides counterpoints to pessimism.

Cynical employees lack trust in organizations to support workers (e.g., increase wages/salary without pressure) (Abraham, 2000). Asking for a raise is self-advocating. It applies pressure because it is expected not to happen. When the organizational trust and supervisory conditions are poor, what does someone have to lose when asking for a pay increase? What's worse than leaving anyway since the working conditions are not tenable? Employees asking for a pay raise in these circumstances is a way of saying, "I will stay if the price is right."

H1d: Respondents in the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition who have greater organizational cynicism will be more likely to ask for a pay increase compared to those in the poor benefits/excellent supervisor condition.

Employees Pay and Job Satisfaction

Communicating about pay raises signals to employees that they are valued individuals with growth potential. Greater pay communication is positively associated with pay satisfaction as a mediator to job satisfaction (March *et al*., 2023). Transparent pay communication improves perceived fairness, which factors into pay satisfaction (Cole *et al*., 2010). For example, discussions about compensation can allay feelings of being underpaid or provide opportunities to take on more responsibilities that are attached to raises. Discussions to reward someone for their added effort can motivate employees. Therefore, study two was conducted to connect asking for a raise with pay and job satisfaction. Asking for a pay raise precedes pay satisfaction when someone feels they are not adequately compensated for the work they do.

Pay satisfaction is tied to standard of living and work-life balance (Szücs *et al*., 2011). When an employee feels adequately paid, they are more likely to experience greater job satisfaction (Bauman & Skitka, 2012). They can perform a job better (than when overextended from burnout). For instance, when companies promote from within to higher-paying jobs, on average, studied companies performed better than those that do not because of employees motivated by growth opportunities (Sirota & Klein, 2013).

H2a: Pay satisfaction will be associated with more job satisfaction.

Organizational trust and organizational cynicism have relatively interconnected importance (Chiaburu *et al*., 2013). Chiaburu *et al*.'s (2013) meta-analysis found organizational cynicism to relate to lower job satisfaction, while organizational trust had the inverse effect. Organizational trust is the belief that the company will perform an expected act that is favorable for employees (Pugh *et al*., 2003). Employees weigh relative perceived risk and trust before taking actions. Organizational trust and cynicism are a pair of positive/negative perceptions that are shaped by experiences (Naus, 2007). It is possible for one employee to form a negative perception (while another forms the opposite) because of interactions with their supervisor (e.g., discovered pay discrepencies for equal work). A basis for LMX relationships is the practice of supervisors to view certain employees as a subset of in-group preferred employees (Salehzadeh, 2020). Therefore, organizational cynicism is an individual difference that each employee can measurably vary in their beliefs.

Researchers have found that when values are espoused by leaders but not congruent with behaviors, employees can experience disenchantment because of perceived hypocrisy (Cha & Edmondson, 2006). Negative sensemaking can form organizational distrust (Abraham, 2000). This can create a disbelief in an organization to follow through with public statements. Working for contradictory companies with incongruent values will harm employees' job satisfaction because their work is intended to support the organization's overall goals. When the organization's values are hollow and inconsistent, it puts into question what employees are supporting. Employees will feel their work is meaningless or counterproductive to their values (e.g., selling a sustainable product that minimally harms the environment).

H2b: Organizational cynicism will be associated with less job satisfaction.

Most employees seek to put effort towards work that aligns with their values (e.g., sharing environmental sustainability values) (Williams, 2002). When unaligned, employees often weigh the cost of forgoing their values for an alternative (e.g., current wages/salary to speak out/quit) (Gardner, 2002). It is comparable to how much someone is willing to be paid to accept/ignore the damage done by the contradictory practices. Researchers found that low authentic integrity and character, with high love of money, relate to higher unethical behavior intentions (Tang & Liu, 2012). Employee behaviors that are rewarded are more likely to recur (Eisenberger & Cameron, 1996). This is employee behavioral learning and conditioning. This implies that higher wages/salaries can absolve some negative feelings associated with conflicting personal values and organizational practices.

Employees perform deviant behaviors based on personal values, organizational expectations, and work culture (Naus, 2007; Chiaburu *et al*., 2013). Employees perform trade-offs to meet consumer demands and support organizational goals (March *et al*., 2023). Employees frequently face ethical dilemmas. Pay and job security drive employees to perform work duties to meet personal needs (e.g., receive a paycheck to pay for a mortgage/rent) (Stum, 2001). Even

when a behavior feels unethical, employees will often perform to preserve job security (Khan, 2019). Higher pay satisfaction can absolve a degree of organizational cynicism that is incongruent with an employee's values. **Figure 1** illustrates the hypothesized moderation models.

H2c: High pay satisfaction and organizational cynicism will be associated with more job satisfaction.

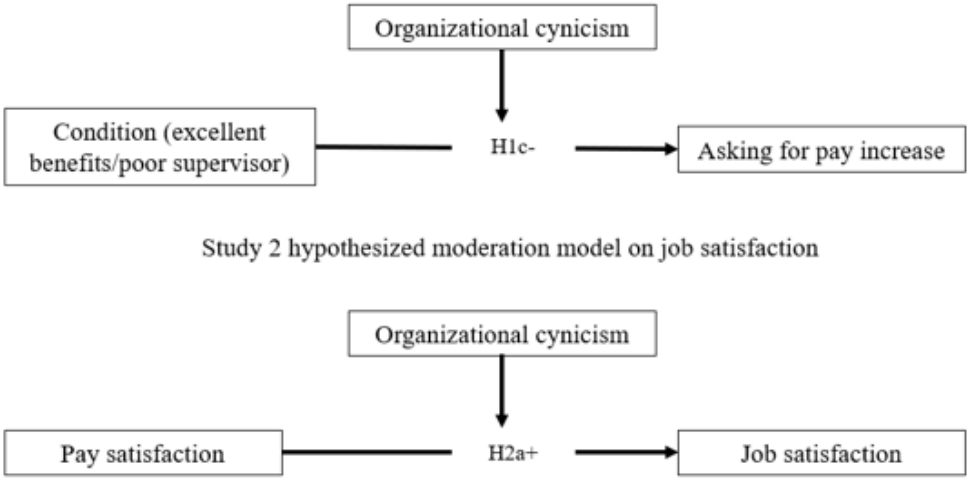


Figure 1. Study 1 and Study 2 hypothesized models.

Materials and Methods

Overview of Study and Respondents

CloudResearch (respondent data collection platform) and Qualtrics were utilized for survey data collection. Appropriate survey reliability, attention, honesty, and comprehension were observed from CloudResearch respondents (Peer *et al*., 2022). Respondents first completed consent and demographic questions. There was random placement in excellent/poor benefits/supervisor conditions to view designated stimuli and stimuli check questions. This was followed by survey questions. A diverse United States convenience sample was collected for generalizability (Coppock & McClellan, 2019). All respondents self-identified as part-time or full-time employees based on CloudResearch filters that allowed for studying specific groups of people by demographics. The project was workplace-related, and studying those currently employed was pertinent. Data quality assessment of the initial eight hundred nine respondents found twenty incomplete surveys and thirteen failed attention checks (Buhrmester *et al*., 2016). Analyses were performed on the remaining respondents for studies 1 and 2 (N=776). Study 1 analyzed H1a-H1d. Study 2 analyzed H2a-H2c. The median age was thirty-five years, ranging from 19 to 76 years old. Male respondents made up 49.2% of the sample. Forty hours was the median number of hours worked each week. Respondents have been at their current workplace a median of four years.

Stimuli and measures

Stimuli for poor/excellent benefits/supervisor conditions are shown in **Table 1**. Respondents ranked the top three organizational benefits from a list (e.g., "Of the following, please rank the top three most important values you want in the workplace. Drag and drop just 1 into each box."). There was then random placement of respondents into the poor benefits/excellent supervisor or excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition.

The excellent benefits/poor supervisor stimuli stated "excellent" followed by the listed three benefits selected and the qualities of a poor supervisor. The excellent benefits/poor supervisor stimulus stated: "A company has excellent [three selected organizational benefits]. Meanwhile, your direct supervisor is very demanding and difficult to satisfy. There are frequent arguments and persistent tension. The supervisor has seniority and will remain a constant point of friction that slows down productivity. Scrutiny and criticism make it feel like walking on eggshells (i.e., cautious about every move)."

The poor benefits/excellent supervisor stimuli stated "poor" followed by the listed three benefits selected and the qualities of an excellent supervisor. The poor supervisor stimulus depicted a difficult to satisfy and overly critical supervisor scenario. The poor benefits/excellent supervisor stimulus stated: "A company has poor [three selected organizational benefits]. Meanwhile, your direct supervisor is very supportive and easy to satisfy. There are frequent praises and ongoing encouragement. The supervisor has seniority and will remain a constant point of harmony that speeds up productivity. Validation and feedback make it feel like cruising through the day (i.e., passes time quickly)." There was random placement into one of the two supervisor conditions. The stimuli each had the equivalent word count aside from piped selected organizational benefits. The stimuli mirrored poor/excellent benefits and supervisor to create contrast. The stimulus illustrates a common situation in the workplace that is within legal boundaries despite ethical concerns. It describes in the scenario that it is an established norm that will persistent because of the seniority of the supervisor. This implied the contention was ongoing and not a one-off situation.

Table 1. List of organizational benefits respondents ranked

Item number	Organizational benefit
1)	coworker relationships
2)	overall positive workplace culture
3)	societal impact and overall mission
4)	closeness to home
5)	flexibility (e.g., work from home option)
6)	autonomy
7)	work life balance (e.g., separation of work and personal life)
8)	supplemental benefits (e.g., childcare support, healthcare, retirement plan, etc.)
9)	variation in work responsibilities
10)	intellectual growth/stimulation
11)	advancement opportunities
12)	job security
13)	union membership
14)	paid time off (e.g., sick leave, vacation time)
15)	safety protocols

Notes: Prompt: "Of the following, please rank the top three most important values you want in the workplace. Drag and drop just 1 into each box." Box 1: "First (most important), box 2: "Second (in importance)", and box 3: "Third (in importance)". There was random presentation of organizational benefits.

Independent variable. Pay satisfaction measures an employee's sense of fulfillment for the work they do with respect to compensation (Memon *et al*., 2017). The 4-item measure used a 5-point scale from 1–Strongly disagree to 5–Strongly agree (e.g., "I am satisfied with my pay for the effort I have to exert") (alpha=.91). There was random presentation of scale items within each section

Moderator variable. Organizational cynicism measures an employee's lack of trust in their company to follow through with what they say they will do (Pugh *et al*., 2003). The 5-item measure used a 5-point scale from 1–Strongly disagree to 5–Strongly agree (e.g., "I am satisfied with my pay for the effort I have to exert") (alpha=.92).

Dependent variables. Asking for a pay raise was a single-item measure on a 7-point scale from 1–Strongly disagree to 7–Strongly agree (e.g., "How likely are you to ask for a pay raise?"). The question was presented in their respective condition, and their likelihood was based on the stimuli. Single-item measures explicitly measure what is stated and have displayed good face validity (Diamantopoulos *et al*., 2012).

Job satisfaction measures an employee's enjoyment of the work they do (Thompson & Phua, 2012). The Brief Index of Affective Job Satisfaction (BIAJS) utilized 4 items on a 5–point scale from 1–Strongly disagree to 5–Strongly agree (e.g., "I find real enjoyment in my job") (alpha=.84).

Control variables. The models included age, gender, and ability to handle stress as control variables. Ability to handle stress was measured using a 1-item scale on a7-point scale (e.g., How would you rate your ability to handle stress?) (weighted kappa test-retest reliability=.77) (Littman *et al*., 2006). Ability to handle stress was included to account for potential effects of stress that is common in the workplace because of interpersonal conflicts (Bhayo *et al*., 2017).

Results and Discussion

Study 1 Supervisor Conditions Results

Independent t-tests compared differences between stimulus conditions. The 395 respondents in the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition (*M*=2.98, *SD*=1.39) compared to the 391 respondents in the poor benefits/excellent supervisor condition (*M*=4.93, *SD*=1.43) evaluated the direct supervisor as worse (than good on a 7-point semantic differential scale, 1-bad to 7-good) [t(774)=19.36, p<.001] (support for H1a). Respondents in the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition (*M*=2.94, *SD*=1.44) compared to the respondents in the poor benefits/excellent supervisor condition (*M*=5.02, *SD*=1.44) rated the organization with lower trust (on a 7-point semantic differential scale, 1-do not trust to 7-trust) [t(774)=20.11, p<.001] (support for H1b). Respondents in the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition (*M*=3.04, *SD*=1.36) compared to the respondents in the poor benefits/excellent supervisor condition (*M*=4.87, *SD*=1.42) rated the supervisor with lower trust [t(774)=18.34, p<.001]. Respondents in the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition (*M*=4.16, *SD*=1.76) compared to the respondents in the poor benefits/excellent supervisor condition (*M*=5.47, *SD*=1.50) displayed a significantly lower likelihood of asking for a pay raise [t(774)=11.20, p<.001] **(Figure 2)**.

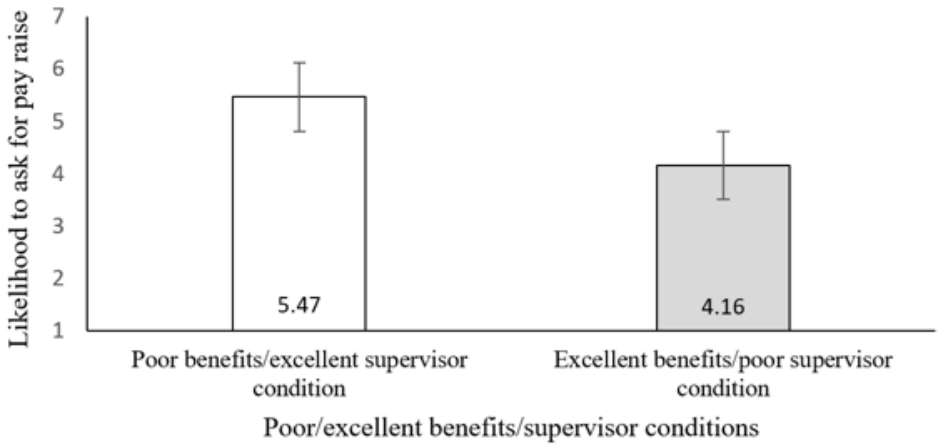


Figure 2. Average scores of the likelihood to ask for a pay raise between poor benefits/excellent supervisor and excellent benefits/poor supervisor conditions.

SPSS AMOS V25 model CFA analysis showed good fit based on recommended indices and threshold points for large sample sizes (<200 respondents) [χ^2/df=1.538, *p*=.202, RMSEA=.026 (<.07), SRMR=.023 (<.08), CFI=.999] (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kenny, 2015). Moderated path analysis was conducted using SPSS PROCESS V3.5 (Model 1; 10,000 bootstrapped sampling procedure) (Hayes, 2017). When the 95% upper and lower bound confidence intervals excluded zero, statistical significance was observed. Respondents in the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition, compared to the other condition, were less likely to ask for a pay raise (*b*=-2.102, *t*=-6.339, *SE*=.332, *p*<.0001 [*LLCI* -2.7528 *ULCI* -1.4510]) (support for H1c). As a direct effect, the moderator, organizational cynicism, did not significantly relate to asking for a pay increase (*b*=-.112, *t*=-1.324, *SE*=.084, *p*=.186 [*LLCI* -.2771 *ULCI* .0539]). This was expected because of random placement into conditions. By itself, organizational cynicism should not significantly influence the outcome measure because conditions should be the driving factor. Meanwhile, as a moderator, organizational cynicism and the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition were significantly related to a higher likelihood to ask for a pay increase (*b*=.290, *t*=2.553, *SE*=.113, *p*<.05 [*LLCI* .0670 *ULCI* .5124]). This can be

attributed to distrust of the supervisor and the organization's ability to follow through with the request. Respondents in the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition with high organizational cynicism related to a lower likelihood to ask for a pay raise compared to those in the other condition (*b*=-.943, *t*=-5.088, *SE*=.185, p<.0001 [*LLCI* -1.3071 to *ULCI* -.5793]) (support for H1d). Poor supervisors in distrusted organizations decreased the likelihood that employees will ask for a pay raise compared to organizations with poor benefits and an excellent supervisor.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and cross-level correlations

	Variables	*M*	*SD*	*Skewness*	*Kurtosis*	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Constructs										
1.	Pay satisfaction	3.19	1.11	-.34	-.84	—					
2.	Organizational cynicism	2.75	1.04	.18	-.78	-.350 **	—				
3.	Job satisfaction	3.48	1.06	-.68	-.18	.476 **	-.434 **	—			
	Control variables										
4.	Age	37.55	10.81	.72	.29	-.023	-.060	.044	—		
5.	Gender (female)	1.51	.50	-.03	-2.00	-.077 *	.046	-.022	.100 **	—	
6.	Ability to handle stress	3.60	1.78	.19	-1.07	-.173 **	.155 **	-.204	-.094 **	.141 **	—

Notes: N=776, *p<.05, **p<.01 level (2-tailed). There was dummy coding of gender (male=0, female=1).

Table 3. Study 1 and Study 2 moderation-modeled effects

	Outcome							
	Study 1				**Study 2**			
	Ask for pay increase				**Job satisfaction**			
Antecedents	*Coeff.*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*Coeff.*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
1) Condition (excellent benefits/poor supervisor)	-2.102	.332	-6.339	<.0001	—	—	—	—
2) Pay satisfaction	—	—	—	—	.174	.077	2.268	<.05
2) Organizational cynicism	-.112	.084	-1.324	.186	-.487	.085	-5.732	<.0001
3) Condition x organizational cynicism	.290	.113	2.553	<.05	—	—	—	—
5) Pay satisfaction x organizational cynicism	—	—	—	—	.059	.025	2.402	<.05
Control variables								
5) Age	-.011	.006	-2.024	<.05	.002	.003	.674	.500
6) Gender (female)	.023	.119	.192	.848	.065	.064	1.013	.311
8) Ability to handle stress	-.030	.034	-.895	.371	-.062	.018	-3.382	<.001
Model Summary	R^2=.151				R^2=.324			
	$F(6,769)$=22.864, p<.0001				$F(6,769)$=61.382, p<.0001			

Notes: There was dummy coding of conditions (poor benefits/excellent supervisor=1, excellent benefits/poor supervisor=2) and gender (male=0, female=1).

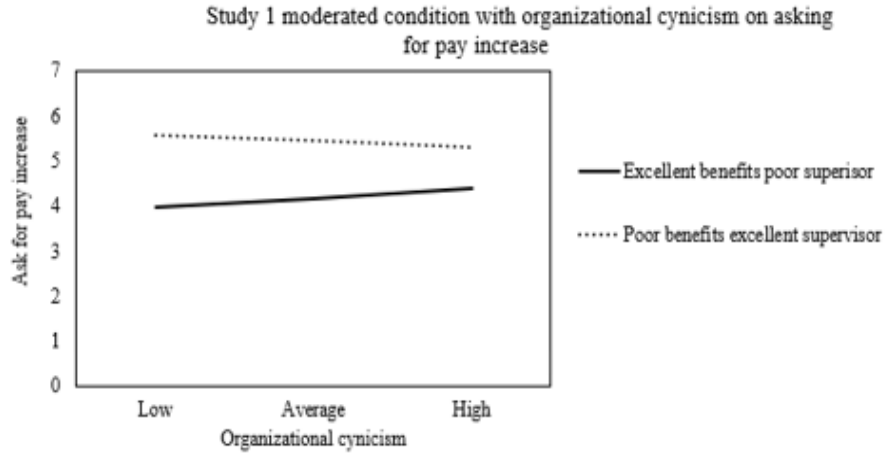
Study 2: Pay Satisfaction on Job Satisfaction Results

Table 2 displays descriptive statistics and correlations. Moderate normality was observed for the variables (skewness within ± 2.0; kurtosis within ± 7.0) (Wong, 2016). The analysis utilized the same moderated path analysis procedures using SPSS PROCESS V3.5 (Model 1; 10,000 bootstrapped sampling procedure) **(Tables 3 and 4; Figure 3)**. Model SPSS AMOS V25 CFA analysis showed adequate fit based on recommended indices and threshold points for large sample sizes (<200 respondents) [χ^2/df=3.345, p<.001, RMSEA=.055 (<.07), SRMR=.015 (<.08), CFI=.985]. Pay satisfaction positively related to job satisfaction (*b*=.174, *t*=2.268, *SE*=.077, *p*<.05 [*LLCI* .0234 *ULCI* .3255]) (support for H2a). As a direct effect, organizational cynicism (moderator) was significantly related to decreased job satisfaction (*b*=-.487, *t*=-5.732, *SE*=.085, *p*<.0001 [*LLCI* -.6542 *ULCI* -.3204]) (support for H2b). Pay satisfaction and

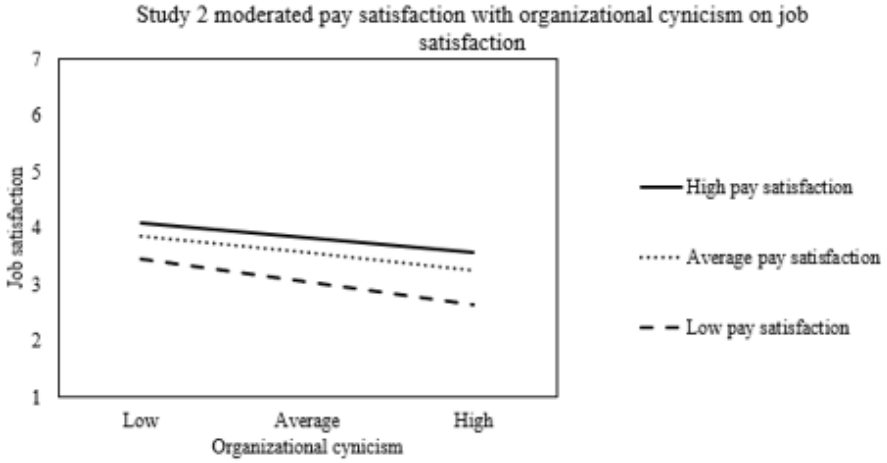
organizational cynicism significantly related to increased job satisfaction (*b*=.059, *t*=2.40, *SE*=.025, *p*<.05 [*LLCI* .0108 *ULCI* .1078]). High pay satisfaction and high organizational cynicism associated with higher job satisfaction compared to those with low pay satisfaction (*b*=.412, *t*=9.887, *SE*=.042, *p*<.0001 [*LLCI* .3300 *ULCI* .4936]) (support for H2c). This showed employees are more willing to overlook organizational distrust with sufficient pay.

Table 4. Conditional direct and indirect effects with moderator organizational cynicism

	Left-leaning	**Average**	**Right-leaning**
	Low (−1 SD)	Mean	High (+1 SD)
Study 1 condition (excellent benefits/poor supervisor) → ask for a pay raise	-1.581 (LLCI -1.8907 ULCI -1.2703)	-1.349 (LLCI -1.5808 ULCI -1.1167)	-.943 (LLCI -1.3071 ULCI -.5793)
Study 2: pay satisfaction → job satisfaction	.281 (LLCI .2023 ULCI .3602)	.329 (LLCI .2674 ULCI .3901)	.412 (LLCI .3300 ULCI .4936)



a)



b)

Figure 3. Study 1 and Study 2 moderation effects with organizational cynicism (moderator).

General Discussion

Results extend LMX theory. When presented with the excellent benefits/poor supervisor stimulus, respondents demonstrated a significantly lower likelihood of asking for a raise compared to those in the other condition. Direct

supervisors play a key role in employee compensation because they shape employee perceptions to justify raises to internal personnel and can ask for such outcomes. Direct supervisors need to have the organizational clout to bring in additional monetary resources and working relationships with those capable of raising wages. Poor supervisors can have poor organizational relationships because of likability. A poor supervisor might influence employees to produce from a place of fear but avoid them because of poor likability and high demands (Lusk & Hayes, 2022). For example, when supervisors are not monitoring, employees can also lack the self-motivation to perform duties (e.g., slack off when the supervisor is on vacation). Over-monitoring and criticizing takes away employee autonomy to make decisions on their own (Manzoni & Barsoux, 2002). Employees doubt their skill sets and fear repercussions. A one-time employee pay raise is not a normal procedure (aside from annual contractual benefits like a percent increase across the organization). Requests for pay raises are an indicator of trust and supervisor's organizational capability.

Implications

Study one expands how to study LMX. The stimuli provide a novel method to contrast the conditional effects of excellent/poor benefits/supervisors. Findings from this study extrapolate how the quality of LMX relationships affects trust between supervisors and employees. Open and honest communication is foundational to working relationships. This sharing of information helps a team work together to reach common goals. Low-quality LMX relationships stifle open communication when supervisors and employees are at odds. Professional respect, trust, contribution, and positive affect are lacking, which are considered fundamental to healthy LMX relationships (Mardanov *et al*., 2008). For many employees, excellent benefits cannot offset the downsides of a poor supervisor. If organizations place greater emphasis on appropriate supervisor recruitment and selection, they can onboard more effective communicators with more attuned emotional intelligence. Supervisors need to be able to juggle their work demands while also inspiring employees to perform their duties well.

The comparative results between conditions demonstrated that even with excellent organizational benefits, a poor supervisor will sink employee impressions of the organization. This evinces that supervisors have a large impact on employee attitudes towards an organization. To employees, supervisors are a connection to the ideals of the organization. Supervisors deliver a sense of worth in employees (e.g., guidance on potential promotions, signals rewarding developing competence and capability). Employees feel like they are part of the in-group with favorable opportunities. By enrolling employees in more opportunities, it can increase employee engagement and citizenship behaviors. This leads to greater ownership in work projects that are fairly rewarded with compensation. This combination of enrolling and compensating employees is a healthy exchange that promotes employee and company growth. This contrasts with organizational cynicism (e.g., company words mismatching actions). Supervisors are the facilitators of these company actions. Empowering and training supervisors to professionally carry out these actions benefits organizations with greater employee engagement.

Limitations and Future Research

There are many qualities of a poor supervisor. For example, managers can be narcissistic, egotistical, micromanaging, pessimistic, unavailable, disorganized, indecisive, and incompetent (Hogan, 1994; Hogan *et al*., 2018). Hogan *et al.* (2018) explained that charisma can help individuals land managerial positions, despite incompetence in performing the job duties well. The stimuli in study one focused on the qualities of a difficult-to-satisfy and overly critical supervisor. Therefore, the findings of study one relates to the loss of trust from a supervisor that exhibits these qualities. Different employees have tolerance for controversial managerial styles (Nguyen *et al*., 2016). In fact, it may work for some employees because they lack these internal traits (e.g., ability to create structure). Micromanaging supervisors may help teams complete detailed tasks in a timely manner because they are heavily involved in the process. This can push unconventional teams to produce. Better financial performance typically coincides with better job security and wages/salaries (Bryson *et al*., 2012). While employees can experience the downsides of poor management styles, they are in practice. Employees are putting up with them and adapting to their work environments even though it affects their well-being (Santos *et al*., 2023). Employees have demonstrated remarkable resilience despite managerial shortcomings (e.g., continuing to work despite supervisor abuse) (Khan, 2019). Future research

can investigate the effects of resilient employees adapting to different poor supervisor scenarios. Arguably, employees who need more structure may benefit from greater supervision and monitoring to stay on track with work activities. Many organizations have a long existence. Many organizations will have mixed (poor/neutral/excellent) LMX quality relationships. Some departments within organizations are stuck with dismal LMX reputations. Our findings draw from cross-sectional results. Organizational culture can change over time. A new leadership team can change the tone and tenor of how a company operates (Peterson *et al*., 2003). Executive teams can create new policies and procedures that lift organizational morale. This project did not study how to change existing poor LMX relationships into positive ones. Organizational trauma can be induced by environmental factors and conflict at work (Williams, 1993; Winter, 2019). Future research can investigate if low departmental quality LMX will linger and affect outcomes despite major changes. For example, would replacing a department manager dispel past animosities. If not, the findings would suggest how turnover could help improve the situation. A combination of transferring employees to different departments and environmental changes can help dispel traumatic past experiences. It is similar to an individual moving to a different city to start anew. With a different mindset, an employee can experience healthier relationships and a more productive life in a new environment (Boverie *et al*., 2013). This implies making intelligent organizational changes. Employees will need to be able to go through a recovery process, implement a new mindset, and feel as if they are in a new location.

Conclusion

Expanding on LMX, findings indicate that supervisor quality and pay satisfaction can shape employee outcomes. Study one showed employees in the excellent benefits/poor supervisor condition were less likely to ask for a raise than those in the poor benefits/excellent supervisor condition. Moderation results showed this pattern reversed among employees high in organizational cynicism. Study two found pay satisfaction associated with higher job satisfaction. This relationship was higher among employees who reported both high pay satisfaction and high organizational cynicism. This suggests pay-related attitudes can maintain a degree of employee satisfaction when there is a high degree of organizational distrust.

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