

Workplace Aggression and Employee Performance: A Meta-Analytic Investigation of Mediating Mechanisms and Cultural Contingencies

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We present a meta-analytic investigation of the theoretical mechanisms underlying *why* experienced workplace aggression is harmful to the three core performance outcomes (i.e., task performance, citizenship behavior, and deviant behavior). Through a comprehensive literature review of 405 empirical articles, we first extract and identify five prominent theoretical mechanisms: relationship quality, justice perception, psychological strain, negative affect, and state self-evaluation. By synthesizing evidence from these articles, which include 471 unique samples from 36 countries or regions ($N = 149,341$ participants), we reveal the incremental effects of the five mechanisms, compare their relative strengths for each performance outcome, and examine their cultural contingencies. We find that when the five mechanisms are examined simultaneously, only relationship quality and state self-evaluation show incremental effects across all performance outcomes in the predicted direction. Moreover, the comparative strengths of mechanisms vary across performance outcomes: The impact of workplace aggression on task performance is best explained by the negative affect and state self-evaluation mechanisms, its impact on citizenship behavior is best explained by the relationship quality mechanism, and its impact on deviant behavior is best explained by the negative affect mechanism. Finally, the prominence of some mechanisms is contingent on certain cultural dimensions: The relationship quality mechanism is strengthened by individualism and masculinity, while the state self-evaluation mechanism is strengthened by masculinity. We conclude with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of our research.

Keywords: aggression, meta-analysis, mechanisms, performance, culture

Workplace aggression, or harmful interpersonal behaviors that violate norms of interpersonal conduct, has become a prominent research area (Zhong et al., 2023). A recent study estimates that workplace aggression costs organizations anywhere from “\$691.70 billion to \$1.97 trillion annually” (Dhanani et al., 2021, p. 1082). This immense cost mainly arises from its impact on employee performance (Dhanani et al., 2021). Indeed, numerous primary studies conducted on various cultural contexts have consistently shown the harmful effects of workplace aggression on the three core performance outcomes (i.e., task performance, citizenship behavior, and deviant behavior; Manier et al., 2017).

Given the prevalence and substantial costs of workplace aggression (Dhanani et al., 2021), it is crucial to examine the

theoretical mechanisms that explain *why* workplace aggression harms employee performance. Such knowledge is critical for grasping the nomological network of the workplace aggression construct, which requires a deep understanding not only of its impact on employee performance but also of the reasons behind it. Additionally, an in-depth examination of these mechanisms paves the way for future research to explore the boundary conditions of these mechanisms and thereby more accurately identify factors that mitigate the harmful impact of workplace aggression (Zhong et al., 2023). Moreover, a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms offers vital practical insights, enabling organizations and employees to devise effective interventions to counteract the performance declines resulting from workplace aggression.

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Nevertheless, addressing why workplace aggression undermines employee performance is a complex endeavor, as the answer might vary depending on multiple factors, including the theory adopted, the specific performance outcome considered, and the cultural context in which workplace aggression occurs.

Research has employed a wide range of theories to explore the mechanisms underlying the aggression–performance relationship. Early studies, recognizing aggression as a destructive component of social relationships and a violation of justice rules, have often used relationship- (Xu et al., 2012) and justice-related theories (Zellars et al., 2002) to investigate its impact on employee performance. In contrast to these theories focused on social dynamics, other studies have adopted stress-related theories, considering workplace aggression a stressor that impedes employee performance by triggering psychological strains (e.g., Aryee et al., 2008). As the field evolves, new theories and mechanisms continue to emerge. A notable development is the adoption of theories on self-evaluation, which build on the long-standing notion of the “looking-glass self”—individuals form their self-evaluation based on how they think others perceive them (Wallace & Tice, 2012). In this context, workplace aggression, reflecting negative perceptions from others, can undermine employee performance by diminishing one’s state self-evaluation (e.g., Ferris et al., 2015). In addition, affect-based theories have similarly gained growing traction in recent years, highlighting the unique role of negative affect in explaining the impact of workplace aggression on employee performance (e.g., Simon et al., 2015).

Despite the valuable insights offered by disparate theories, theoretical proliferation creates ongoing tension regarding which perspective offers unique predictive value in explaining why workplace aggression harms employee performance. As highlighted by Kawasaki and Shaw (2024), while the array of theories have enriched our understanding of the impact of workplace aggression, it is equally critical to concurrently examine and compare the underlying mechanisms. This simultaneous investigation helps account for the potential interconnections among different mechanisms, offering insights into the incremental effects of these mechanisms above each other and presenting a precise answer to the question of “why.”

The complexity of understanding the “why” is further magnified when considering different performance outcomes, namely, task performance, citizenship behavior, and deviant behavior. All three outcomes have attracted considerable attention in the field of workplace aggression. Some studies have singled out a specific outcome (e.g., Rosen et al., 2016; Tröster & Van Quaquebeke, 2021), while others have examined multiple outcomes simultaneously (e.g., Ferris et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2012). Although the three outcomes all reflect employee performance, they are notably different (Moorman et al., 1998). For instance, withholding citizenship behavior might be less risky than reducing task performance or enacting deviant behavior, both of which directly violate organizational rules. Additionally, task performance tends to rely more heavily on one’s abilities than citizenship and deviant behaviors. Given these unique attributes, it is likely that the impact of workplace aggression on different outcomes is mainly explained by different dominant mechanisms. Existing studies have offered some preliminary evidence in this regard. For example, negative affect (Zhang et al., 2019) and justice perceptions (Liang et al., 2022) have been found to play a dominant mediating role in deviant and citizenship behavior, respectively. Yet, these studies have selectively focused on certain mechanisms and performance outcomes, sometimes yielding inconsistent findings. This selective focus

leaves the issue of the relative strengths of these mechanisms insufficiently addressed. Thus, it is crucial to thoroughly compare the relative strengths of different mechanisms in predicting the effect of workplace aggression on each particular performance outcome.

Moreover, the role of cultural contexts adds another layer of complexity to the question of “why.” Research on workplace aggression has generally overlooked the role of cultural contexts (Li & Lim, 2017), reflecting an implicit assumption of cultural universality, whereby a given theoretical mechanism plays a similar role across different cultural contexts (e.g., Liao et al., 2021; Yu & Duffy, 2021). Nonetheless, research has increasingly challenged this assumption, suggesting that the strengths of theoretical mechanisms are influenced by relevant cultural dimensions. A prominent example is the role of power distance. Specifically, research indicates that justice perception is a stronger mechanism in low power distance cultures, while its explanatory power is limited in high power distance cultures (Lian et al., 2012a; Vogel et al., 2015). These discrepant assumptions and findings highlight the need to consider whether and how the answer to the question of “why” varies across cultural contexts.

Given the multiple factors contributing to the complexity of why workplace aggression impedes employee performance, addressing this question is likely beyond the capacity of individual empirical studies. Instead, meta-analysis represents a well-suited approach because it can synthesize existing evidence on different mechanisms across various performance outcomes and cultural contexts. To date, meta-analytic studies have primarily focused on the antecedents and consequences of workplace aggression rather than the theoretical mechanisms that drive these relationships (e.g., Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Han et al., 2022; Howard et al., 2020; Willness et al., 2007; Yao et al., 2022). For example, a few have focused on individual and contextual factors that predict workplace aggression (e.g., Hershcovis et al., 2007; Zhang & Bednall, 2016), and others have examined personal and work outcomes of experienced workplace aggression (e.g., Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Mackey et al., 2017; Zhang & Liao, 2015; see Appendix A for a summary of meta-analyses on workplace aggression and their findings).

We know of only two meta-analyses that have specifically addressed mediators (Liang et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2019), both focusing exclusively on supervisor aggression. However, given that workplace aggression can come from other sources (e.g., co-workers), this narrow focus may lead to a categorization of theoretical mechanisms specific to the supervisor–employee context while overlooking mechanisms that are relevant in explaining the impact of general workplace aggression. Additionally, these studies did not consider all core performance outcomes: Zhang et al. (2019) focused on citizenship behavior and deviant behavior, while Liang et al. (2022) focused solely on deviant behavior. As noted earlier, it is essential to consider all three outcomes because they reflect different aspects of employee performance and may be primarily explained by different mechanisms. Examining task performance, in particular, holds practical value due to its direct link with organizational functioning, profit, and success. Furthermore, regarding cultural contingencies, Liang et al. (2022) centered solely on power distance, which might be driven by their narrow focus on supervisor aggression. In contrast, our broader topic of general workplace aggression points to the relevance of other cultural dimensions, such as individualism and masculinity, in fully understanding the cultural contingencies of these mechanisms. Recognizing their study’s

limitations, Liang et al. (2022) advocated future work to examine a more complete set of theoretical mechanisms, performance outcomes, and cultural dimensions. Thus, we aim to extend previous research by conducting a more comprehensive meta-analysis that synthesizes evidence across different forms of workplace aggression, prominent mechanisms, three core performance outcomes, and distinct cultural contexts (see Figure 1). We contribute to the literature in the following three ways.

First, we seek to identify higher order mechanisms from the existing literature by integrating the disparate theories and mediators that have mostly been studied in isolation. This aligns with calls for addressing fragmentation and achieving theoretical integration in the field of workplace aggression (Dhanani & LaPalme, 2019). More importantly, by simultaneously examining these mechanisms, we reveal their incremental effects above and beyond one another, identifying the perspectives that truly possess unique predictive value. In doing so, we respond to recent calls for “pruning theoretical perspectives and explanations that lack conceptual veracity and/or corresponding empirical support” (Kawasaki & Shaw, 2024, p. 45).

Second, we aim to compare the relative strengths of different mechanisms in explaining the impact of workplace aggression on each performance outcome. In doing so, we offer nuanced insights into the theoretical mechanisms by providing outcome-specific explanations for why workplace aggression is harmful to employee performance. These insights are crucial for helping organizations more effectively allocate their usually limited resources to manage the adverse impact of workplace aggression based on their primary performance concern.

Third, we endeavor to investigate the cultural contingencies of the mechanisms. Workplace aggression has garnered global attention, resulting in empirical studies from a range of countries with diverse cultures. This presents a ripe opportunity for a meta-analysis to synthesize evidence from different countries and compare the strengths of mechanisms across cultural contexts. Our work responds to the ongoing calls for more cross-cultural research on workplace aggression (Li & Lim, 2017) and offers practical insights into how organizations can better manage the impact of workplace aggression based on their specific cultural contexts.

Conceptual Background of Workplace Aggression and Employee Performance

Workplace aggression is an umbrella term that encompasses various interrelated forms, such as abusive supervision, incivility, ostracism, and bullying. While prior studies have often examined these forms separately, researchers have emphasized their shared focus on a common set of behaviors (Hershcovis, 2011). Given the substantial conceptual overlap among various forms of workplace aggression, it should come as no surprise that qualitative item analysis of various measures revealed “considerable overlap in item content” (Bowling et al., 2015, p. 235; also see Table 1 in Hershcovis, 2011, and Table S1 in Zhong et al., 2023, for the overlapping items). Moreover, research on different forms has routinely examined the same consequences, finding that they exhibit similar relationships with common outcome variables (Hershcovis, 2011).¹ Most importantly, for the purposes of our article, studies on different forms have typically relied on the same theoretical perspectives to understand their impact (Zhong et al., 2023).

Accordingly, following numerous meta-analytic studies (e.g., Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Dhanani et al., 2021; McCord et al., 2018;

Yang et al., 2014), we adopt the broad approach that considers various forms of workplace aggression under the same encompassing construct. As scholars have highlighted, this broad approach is critical for addressing construct proliferation, reducing research redundancy, and facilitating theoretical parsimony, all of which are salient issues in the field of workplace aggression (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Hershcovis, 2011; Tarraf et al., 2017). More importantly, this approach is essential for achieving our overarching objective: to present a holistic understanding of why workplace aggression harms employee performance by synthesizing fragmented findings on the theoretical mechanisms. In offering the integrative insights, the broad approach ultimately lays a solid groundwork for research on any individual form of workplace aggression to better understand the mechanisms underlying its impact on employee performance and incorporate potential nuances based on its unique characteristics.²

In terms of employee performance, we focus on task performance, citizenship behavior, and deviant behavior, which are widely recognized as the core components of employee performance across industries and occupations (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). Task performance refers to work behaviors that fulfill basic job duties (L. J. Williams & Anderson, 1991). Citizenship behavior goes beyond organizational expectations and can improve the social environment in which tasks are carried out (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997; Organ, 1997). Last, deviant behavior (also known as counterproductive work behavior) includes intentional actions that violate organizational norms and have the potential to harm the organization and/or its members (Robinson & Bennett, 1995).

Identification of Major Theoretical Mechanisms and Their Incremental Effects

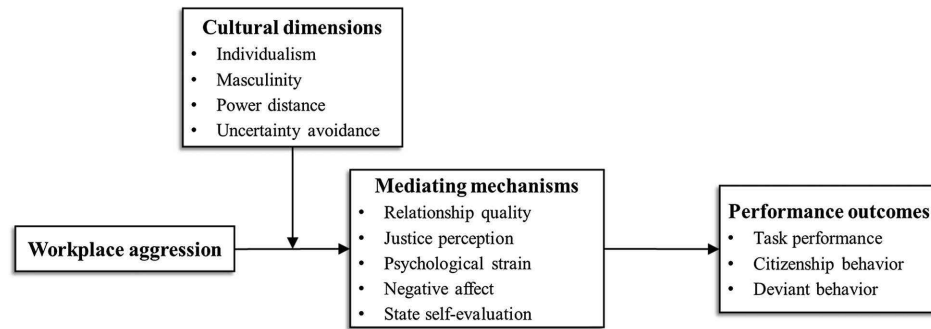
Consistent with prior meta-analytic studies (e.g., Henderson & Horan, 2021), we first extracted and identified theoretical mechanisms used in existing studies for our meta-analytic investigation. Our method was guided by prior research focused on reviewing and synthesizing theories within a specific research domain (e.g., Bonell et al., 2013; Campbell et al., 2014). In the first step, we conducted a comprehensive literature review, encompassing 405 empirical articles (see the Method section) that examined the relationship between workplace aggression and employee performance. Our initial coding captured the specific theory used by each article, its core assumptions, key arguments, and essential mediators. Our coding revealed that prior research has primarily relied on 23 theories to understand why workplace aggression is harmful to employee performance.

In the second step, we categorized these theories and their mediators into higher order mechanisms, aligning with previous meta-analyses that group together similar variables (e.g., Greer et al., 2018). To facilitate this categorization, we first identified major

¹ In line with prior research, our analysis shows that the primary forms of workplace aggression included in our review show strong meta-analytic intercorrelations (from .61 to .98) and display highly overlapping relationships with mediators and performance outcomes (for the detailed results, see additional online material A at https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8).

² While adopting the broad approach, we recognize the value of the nuanced approach, which advocates examining different forms of workplace aggression separately and highlights the potential influence of their conceptual differences (Tepper & Henle, 2011). We present the results using the nuanced approach in additional online material A (https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8).

Figure 1
Conceptual Model



mechanisms based on prior reviews (Robinson et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2019). Each of us then independently assigned these theories to the preidentified mechanisms and gathered to discuss and resolve any discrepancies. We agreed upon the categorization of most theories as their mediators clearly fit with a particular mechanism. In cases where opinions diverged on a few theories, we discussed which mechanism best aligned with them. For theories not fitting into any preidentified mechanism, we developed a new mechanism to categorize them. After reaching a consensus, we examined the sufficiency of data on each mechanism, excluding several lacking adequate data for meta-analysis. These efforts led us to arrive at five mechanisms: relationship quality, justice perception, negative affect, psychological strain, and state self-evaluation. Theories within each of these mechanisms exhibited substantial commonalities in terms of assumptions, arguments, and mediators while being significantly different from those included in other mechanisms. Table 1 provides an overview of these five mechanisms, including their specific theories, core arguments, major mediators, and sample articles.

Although the five mechanisms may be associated with each other, they are sufficiently distinct, with each having its own set of theories and mediators and garnering ample empirical support to warrant its own category. Indeed, research across a wide range of topics has treated these mechanisms as distinct and examined several in a parallel fashion (e.g., Chang et al., 2009; Cooper et al., 2018; Rosen et al., 2014). Thus, we examine them in a parallel manner.³

Relationship Quality

Respectful interactions at work are pivotal for nurturing high-quality social relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Cropanzano et al., 2017). However, workplace aggression elicits interpersonal tension and disrupts the relationship-building processes, leading to low-quality relationships characterized by the lack of belongingness, trust, and commitment. In other words, workplace aggression diminishes the quality of target employees' overall social relationships at work because they are likely to feel diminished belongingness, trust, and commitment toward the organization and its members, perceiving such social relationships as of little value or even detrimental. Indeed, ample evidence shows that workplace aggression impedes various indicators of overall social relationship quality, such as perceived organizational support (Shoss et al., 2013), affective commitment (Tepper et al., 2008), and sense of belonging (O'Reilly et al., 2015). With lowered

trust, commitment, and belongingness, employees are less motivated to invest efforts in sustaining social relationships that offer little value to them, leading to poor task performance, reduced citizenship behavior, and increased deviant behavior.

Hypothesis 1: Through the mediating role of relationship quality, workplace aggression has an incremental negative relationship with (a) task performance and (b) citizenship behavior and an incremental positive relationship with (c) deviant behavior.

Justice Perception

Justice perception mechanism posits that employees expect to be treated fairly and form their overall justice perceptions based on the extent to which the organization and its members uphold justice rules (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001).⁴ Target employees experience lowered overall justice perceptions as workplace aggression reflects the lack of dignity, signals the organization's failure to implement proper procedures, or puts employees at a disadvantage for obtaining desirable outcomes (e.g., promotions; Tepper, 2000). Evidence supports the negative impact of experienced aggression on justice perceptions (e.g., Duffy et al., 2006; Ferris et al., 2008). The resulting lowered overall sense of justice can drive employees to "even the score" and seek retribution with similarly unjust work behaviors. To achieve this, they may punish or harm the organization directly by exhibiting deviant behaviors (e.g., theft) or indirectly by reducing task performance and citizenship behavior (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997).

³ The potential interconnection among the five mechanisms raises the possibility of serial mediation, where some mechanisms precede the others. As our intention is to reveal the incremental effects of the five mechanisms, we focus specifically on the parallel mediation model to maintain a precise study scope. For exploratory purposes, we conducted analyses on serial mediations and presented the results in additional online material B (https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8).

⁴ As we aimed to assess the mediating role of overall relationship quality and overall justice perception, we combined the organization and its members as the targets of the social relationship and justice perception to offer more integrative insights. However, to present a nuanced understanding, we conducted analyses comparing whether relationship quality with the organization versus other members and justice perception toward the organization versus other members exhibit different or similar relationships with other variables. Detailed analyses and results can be found in additional online material C (https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8).

Table 1
An Overview of Theoretical Mechanisms

Theoretical mechanism	Specific theory	Core theoretical argument	Frequently examined mediating variable	Sample article
Relationship quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social exchange theory • Leader–member exchange theory • Belongingness theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees desire positive social relationships with the organization and its members. • Workplace aggression hinders the quality of the social relationship between target employees and the organization and its members. • Employees with lower quality social relationships are likely to feel less motivated or obligated to make positive contributions and withhold harmful behaviors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader–member exchange • Trust • Affective commitment • Sense of belonging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Xu et al. (2012) • Taylor et al. (2012) • Scott et al. (2013) • Peng et al. (2014)
Justice perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group-value model of justice • Equity theory • Organizational justice theory • Fairness theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees desire and expect to receive fair or just treatment. • Workplace aggression violates widely endorsed principles of justice or fairness. • Employees who feel unfairly treated may seek retribution by reducing positive contributions and causing harm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal justice • Procedural justice • Informational justice • Distributive justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duffy et al. (2006) • Vogel et al. (2015) • Lee et al. (2016) • Zellars et al. (2002)
Psychological strain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation of resources theory • Job demand–resource model • Ego depletion theory • Transactional model of stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees experience psychological strain in response to workplace stressors. • Workplace aggression constitutes a significant stressor because it poses a threat to critical resources and demands substantial efforts to manage it. • Psychological strain reduces energy to stay engaged at work, make positive contributions, and regulate behaviors according to social expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhaustion • Depression • Mental distress • Ego depletion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aryee et al. (2008) • Chi and Liang (2013) • Rhee et al. (2017) • Song et al. (2021)
Negative affect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affective events theory • Appraisal theory of emotion • Social functional perspective of emotion • Attribution theory of emotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant events trigger emotional reactions through a cognitive appraisal process. • Workplace aggression is a negative affective event because it is typically appraised as threatening. • Negative affect limits thought–action repertoire toward handling threatening situations, impairing employees’ cognitive ability to perform tasks, and evoking maladaptive action tendencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative affect • Anger • Shame • Anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simon et al. (2015) • Yu and Duffy (2021) • Peng et al. (2019) • Tröster and Van Quaquebeke (2021)
State self-evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociometer theory • Self-enhancement theory • Self-consistency theory • Social cognitive theory (of self-efficacy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees form state self-evaluation based on interpersonal signals about how they are treated. • Workplace aggression diminishes employees’ state self-evaluation by suggesting that they are not deserving of respectful or positive treatment. • Employees with an impaired state self-evaluation tend to exhibit more negative or less positive behaviors that align with their self-evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem threat • Organization-based self-esteem • Self-efficacy • Sense of competence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L. Wu, Birtch, et al. (2018) • Ferris et al. (2015) • Peng and Zeng (2017) • Vogel and Mitchell (2017)

Excluded theory	Reason for exclusion
Social learning theory/social information processing theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While both theories have implied certain mediating variables (e.g., perceived appropriateness of aggressive behaviors), most empirical studies did not explicitly measure these variables. • Both theories are particularly relevant to accounting for the impact of workplace aggression on deviant behavior while less relevant to explaining the impact on citizenship behavior and task performance.

(table continues)

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Table 1 (continued)

Excluded theory	Reason for exclusion
Self-determination theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The two psychological needs—namely, needs for relatedness and competence—substantially overlap with relationship quality and state self-evaluation, respectively. Their mediators (i.e., sense of belongingness and competence) are incorporated into relationship quality and state self-evaluation to achieve parsimony. • We have identified only five articles that have included the mediating variable (i.e., need satisfaction or fulfillment), making it infeasible to examine it as a separate mechanism.
Social identity theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While we have identified 16 articles that include the mediating variable (i.e., identification), these articles do not offer enough correlations to fill all the matrix cells needed for MASEM.

Note. MASEM = meta-analytic structural equation modeling.

Hypothesis 2: Through the mediating role of justice perception, workplace aggression has an incremental negative relationship with (a) task performance and (b) citizenship behavior and an incremental positive relationship with (c) deviant behavior.

Psychological Strain

Psychological strain mechanism views workplace aggression as a stressor because it drains employees' valued resources (e.g., social support; Hobfoll, 1989), hinders their goal pursuits (e.g., work achievements; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and consumes substantial energy (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Moreover, mistreated employees often feel uncertain about how to effectively cope with workplace aggression and whether it will happen again, which may lead to prolonged rumination, exacerbating their psychological strain (Robinson et al., 2013). Research shows that workplace aggression is associated with various symptoms of psychological strain, such as exhaustion (Chi & Liang, 2013; Thompson et al., 2020) and depression (Tepper et al., 2007). With increased psychological strain, employees may lack the resources, such as energy, cognitive attention, and willpower, to stay engaged at work and regulate their behaviors according to organizational rules and social expectations, further leading to poor task performance, withheld citizenship behavior, and instigated deviance.

Hypothesis 3: Through the mediating role of psychological strain, workplace aggression has an incremental negative relationship with (a) task performance and (b) citizenship behavior and an incremental positive relationship with (c) deviant behavior.

Negative Affect

Negative affect mechanism emphasizes that relevant events at work influence one's affective reactions by triggering cognitive appraisals of whether these events are positive or negative (Lazarus, 1991; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Workplace aggression is a negative affective event because mistreated employees typically appraise it as threatening. Indeed, prior research has demonstrated that workplace aggression is associated with increased negative affect (Lim et al., 2018; Peng et al., 2019). Moreover, negative affect, serving as a mechanism that signals individuals to threatening situations like workplace aggression, narrows individuals' thought-action repertoire to facilitate swift reactions to the threat (Fredrickson, 2001). Thus, negative affect restricts employees' cognitive attention to workplace aggression, impairing their cognitive ability to perform tasks effectively (Baas et al., 2008) and driving their attention away

from opportunities for citizenship behavior. It also fosters impulsive or hostile action tendencies toward self-protection, resulting in deviance (Lazarus, 1991).

Hypothesis 4: Through the mediating role of negative affect, workplace aggression has an incremental negative relationship with (a) task performance and (b) citizenship behavior and an incremental positive relationship with (c) deviant behavior.

State Self-Evaluation

State self-evaluation mechanism is rooted in one's desire to achieve and sustain a positive self-view (Pfeffer & Fong, 2005). Unlike trait self-evaluation, state self-evaluation fluctuates and is influenced by external events. Workplace aggression lowers employees' state self-evaluation because it signals that they are not worthy of respectful treatment (Chen et al., 2013). It also often contains negative evaluations of one's core characteristics, such as derogatory comments about competence, directly eroding one's self-confidence (Duffy et al., 2002). Research has shown the adverse impact of workplace aggression on various indicators of state self-evaluation, such as state self-esteem (Farh & Chen, 2014) and state self-efficacy (Ali et al., 2016). This mechanism further posits that individuals tend to act consistently with how they view themselves (Swann, 1997). With diminished self-evaluation, target employees will likely invest less effort into task performance and citizenship behavior because they feel less capable of performing well and positively influencing the organization. Additionally, they are inclined to instigate deviance that aligns with their impaired self-perception (Ferris et al., 2015).

Hypothesis 5: Through the mediating role of state self-evaluation, workplace aggression has an incremental negative relationship with (a) task performance and (b) citizenship behavior and an incremental positive relationship with (c) deviant behavior.

Comparative Strengths

We now focus on comparing the relative strengths of the five mechanisms in explaining the influence of workplace aggression on task performance, citizenship behavior, and deviant behavior, respectively. As mediating effects involve the multiplication of first-stage (aggression → mediator) and second-stage (mediator → outcome) relationships, comparing the relative strengths necessitates considering both of them. However, there is a lack of a strong theoretical or empirical foundation for comparing the impact of workplace aggression on the five mechanisms (i.e., the first-stage

relationships). In addition, as we outline below, although the three performance outcomes display distinct characteristics, such as whether they are discretionary or obligatory and beneficial or harmful, there are multiple theoretical possibilities regarding the relative dominance of the five mechanisms in predicting each outcome (i.e., the second-stage relationships). For the above reasons, we propose open research questions regarding the comparative strengths of the five mechanisms. Below, we illustrate several theoretical possibilities regarding the relative dominance of the five mechanisms in predicting each performance outcome based on its unique characteristics.

Task performance possesses several unique characteristics, which indicate the relative dominance of different mediating mechanisms. To begin, as task performance involves fulfilling basic job contract duties (Griffin et al., 2007), reducing it in reaction to workplace aggression violates contractual obligations, potentially resulting in severe career consequences, like termination or demotion. Thus, employees tend to feel compelled to complete their job duties even when they are dissatisfied with the adverse work situations (Organ, 1988), except possibly when they are reacting impulsively without regard to the potential career consequences. This indicates the dominance of negative affect as an emotion- or impulsivity-based mechanism in accounting for the reduced task performance. Moreover, unlike the citizenship behavior and deviant behavior, which are generally unconstrained by one's abilities or skills, effective task performance hinges on possessing the necessary skill sets and capabilities (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). This further indicates the relative dominance of the state self-evaluation mechanism in explaining task performance over other mechanisms, as this mechanism directly encompasses self-perception regarding one's capability to execute assigned tasks.

Research Question 1: Among the five mechanisms, which has the strongest mediating effect on the relationship between workplace aggression and task performance?

Citizenship behavior, too, exhibits unique characteristics that point to the relative dominance of different mechanisms. On one hand, it entails discretionary actions, which play a crucial role in the positive reciprocity process between employees and the organization by allowing employees to make contributions and express their appreciation for positive treatment at work (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994; Organ & Ryan, 1995). As relationship quality and justice perception directly address this reciprocity process (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997), they might play a dominant role in explaining citizenship behavior over other mechanisms. On the other hand, the discretionary nature of citizenship behavior also means that employees need to go beyond their assigned duties, which demand extra resources (Bolino et al., 2013). Employees lacking these resources, such as those who are exhausted, may struggle to engage in such behaviors. This implies that psychological strain plays a more vital role in explaining citizenship behavior than other mechanisms.

Research Question 2: Among the five mechanisms, which has the strongest mediating effect on the relationship between workplace aggression and citizenship behavior?

Deviant behavior also exhibits several distinct characteristics that underscore the relative dominance of different mechanisms.

Due to its harmful nature, instigating deviant behavior in reaction to workplace aggression may provoke adverse social consequences (e.g., retaliation; Liang et al., 2016). As such, employees typically engage in deviant behavior due to an emotional impulse that overrides the inhibition resulting from these adverse consequences (Ferris et al., 2016). This suggests that negative affect may be more relevant in explaining deviant behavior than other mechanisms. However, akin to citizenship behavior, deviant behavior also represents discretionary conduct, which plays a central role in the negative reciprocity between employees and the organization (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Employees opt to violate organizational norms through deviant behavior when they perceive violations of justice norms within the organization or when they have a bad relationship with the organization (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Thus, justice perception and relationship quality may play a more pivotal role in explaining deviant behavior than other mechanisms.

Research Question 3: Among the five mechanisms, which has the strongest mediating effect on the relationship between workplace aggression and deviant behavior?

Cultural Contingencies

Culture refers to "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (G. Hofstede, 2001, p. 9). Given that culture constitutes a broad social context that indicates desirable or appropriate conduct in that context, it may play a key role in shaping employees' reactions to workplace aggression. To categorize cultural values, we use the widely adopted G. Hofstede's (1980) four-dimension framework: individualism, masculinity, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. While examining cultural contingencies entails investigating the moderating effects of relevant cultural dimensions on both first- and second-stage relationships, we specifically focus on the moderating effects on the first-stage relationships between workplace aggression and the mechanisms. This ensures a precise study scope and aligns with our focus on understanding the impact of workplace aggression.

Relationship Quality

Although employees tend to become less attached to social relationships in which they do not feel valued, employees in some cultures feel obligated to maintain such relationships. Thus, relationship quality might be more influenced in cultures where people are less normatively bound to preserve social relationships. In this regard, individualism and masculinity represent two dimensions that directly speak to cultural values regarding relationship maintenance.

Individualism refers to the degree to which people in a society prefer to act independently to further self-interest rather than act as interdependent members of the group to protect collective interests (G. H. Hofstede et al., 1980). Whereas preserving in-group relationships is an essential obligation for promoting collective interests in collectivistic cultures, people in individualistic cultures are more driven to advance their self-interests over relationship maintenance (G. H. Hofstede et al., 1980). Thus, they should be more inclined to withdraw from social relationships as a means of self-protection against workplace aggression (van Knippenberg et al., 2015), exacerbating its influence on relationship quality.

Hypothesis 6: The negative relationship between workplace aggression and relationship quality is stronger (weaker) in individualistic (collectivistic) countries.

Masculinity concerns the degree to which people in a society endorse stereotypically masculine values, such as personal success, versus stereotypically feminine values, such as social relationships (G. H. Hofstede et al., 1980). When employees in masculine cultures face workplace aggression that obstructs their personal goals, they may be less compelled to sustain social relationships and more inclined to withdraw from such relationships. In contrast, as employees in feminine cultures place more value on sustaining social relationships, even if they suffer from others' aggressive behavior, they may still choose to maintain existing relationships, thus weakening the impact of workplace aggression on relationship quality.

Hypothesis 7: The negative relationship between workplace aggression and relationship quality is stronger (weaker) in masculine (feminine) countries.

Justice Perception

While employees tend to view workplace aggression as unfair, employees in some cultures may accept it as permissible, influenced by cultural norms that endorse the submission to perpetrators' superior power (Lian et al., 2012a; Vogel et al., 2015). Even if perpetrators occupy the same hierarchical position as the targets, they implicitly hold greater power over targets because their aggression asserts their dominance while targets often find it difficult to assert themselves (K. D. Williams et al., 1998). Employees are thus less likely to perceive injustice in cultures emphasizing submission and tolerance to the more powerful individuals. Hence, power distance emerges as a relevant cultural dimension, reflecting the extent to which individuals in a society accept unequal power distribution and submit to those in power (G. H. Hofstede et al., 1980).

Employees in high power distance cultures, being more tolerant of unequal power distribution (G. H. Hofstede et al., 1980), should be more inclined to accept power imbalances resulting from workplace aggression. Such cultures emphasize being submissive to authority as a means of maintaining social order. Individuals may believe that those with higher power are entitled to employ unfair, aggressive tactics and feel an obligation to tolerate these unfair actions (Vogel et al., 2015). These cultural influences can make them less likely to question the unfairness of the perpetrators' aggressive behaviors (Shao et al., 2013), making them less likely to perceive it as unjust.

Hypothesis 8: The negative relationship between workplace aggression and justice perception is stronger (weaker) in low (high) power distance countries.

Psychological Strain and Negative Affect

As these mechanisms focus on employees' stressful and affective reactions, they should matter most in cultures where people exhibit a stronger tendency to experience psychological strain and negative affect. Among the four cultural dimensions, uncertainty avoidance stands out as the most relevant. As highlighted by G. H. Hofstede

et al. (1980), people in high uncertainty avoidance cultures exhibit intensified stressful and emotional reactions in their daily lives, as indicated by heightened levels of anxiety, unhappiness, and mental illness within these cultures.

Uncertainty avoidance focuses on how people in a society feel about uncertain or ambiguous situations. People in cultures with high uncertainty avoidance tend to feel more stressed and anxious when faced with uncertain events, whereas those in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance tend to be more relaxed (G. H. Hofstede, 1994). Workplace aggression is a particularly uncertain experience, as employees often struggle to understand the reasons for the aggression, the perpetrator's motives, and the available coping options (Ferris et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2013). Given the role of uncertainty avoidance in determining people's reactivity to uncertain situations, workplace aggression should be more likely to evoke psychological strain and negative affect among employees in high uncertainty avoidance cultures.

Hypothesis 9: The positive relationship between workplace aggression and psychological strain is stronger (weaker) in high (low) uncertainty avoidance countries.

Hypothesis 10: The positive relationship between workplace aggression and negative affect is stronger (weaker) in high (low) uncertainty avoidance countries.

State Self-Evaluation

State self-evaluation mechanism assumes that individuals endeavor to uphold a favorable self-perception (Chen et al., 2013). However, the need for self-enhancement exhibits cultural variations. Certain cultures place a more significant emphasis on achieving a positive self-evaluation, making individuals particularly attuned to cues signaling their self-worth. Thus, this mechanism might be more prominent in cultures where people hold a higher need for self-enhancement. Individualism and masculinity are particularly relevant to characterize such cultures, as both dimensions reflect values associated with self-enhancement.

Individualistic cultures emphasize pursuing personal interests and goals. People in such cultures are inherently motivated to cultivate a positive self-view, as it serves as the foundation of their confidence in pursuing individual aspirations (G. H. Hofstede et al., 1980). Thus, employees in individualistic cultures tend to be particularly attuned to signals that may cast a negative light on their positive self-view, including instances of disrespectful or offensive treatment from others. Consequently, workplace aggression should be more threatening to the state self-evaluation of employees in individualistic cultures as compared with those in collectivistic cultures.

Hypothesis 11: The negative relationship between workplace aggression and state self-evaluation is stronger (weaker) in individualistic (collectivistic) countries.

Compared with those in feminine cultures, people in masculine cultures exhibit a stronger inclination to chase ego-enhancing values, such as personal success, and display ego-enhancing behaviors, such as exaggerating personal accomplishments (G. H. Hofstede et al., 1980). Thus, employees in masculine cultures are especially sensitive to how they are treated by others as a gauge of their self-image. That

is, workplace aggression is more damaging to state self-evaluation in such cultures because it creates a greater discrepancy between how employees are actually treated and how they think they deserve to be treated.

Hypothesis 12: The negative relationship between workplace aggression and state self-evaluation is stronger (weaker) in masculine (feminine) countries.

Method

Literature Search and Inclusion Criteria

We searched for published and unpublished articles on workplace aggression in APA PsycInfo, Web of Science, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global. We generated keywords of workplace aggression based on prior reviews on this topic (e.g., Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Hershcovis & Reich, 2013). We also identified additional articles by consulting the reference lists of prior meta-analytic articles that have addressed the consequences of workplace aggression. The search keywords and meta-analytic articles are listed underneath Figure 2.

We established the following inclusion criteria. First, we only included studies that measured both experienced aggression and at least one of the three performance outcomes. Second, we limited our search to studies that collected data from employees, excluding those that recruited nonworking populations. Third, the aggression studied must have occurred in a work context rather than nonwork contexts. Fourth, to capture naturally occurring workplace aggression, we only included observational studies that used measures to capture workplace aggression, excluding experimental studies that artificially manipulated workplace aggression (for the same approach, see McCord et al., 2018). Fifth, eligible studies needed to report zero-order correlations or effect sizes that could be transformed into correlations. We did not restrict the date of publication and only included articles written in English.

Our initial search yielded 28,409 records, of which 5,251 duplicates were removed. After screening the titles and abstracts, we eliminated 21,359 records that were not relevant to our topic. After the full-text screening based on the above inclusion criteria, we excluded 1,394 records. Our final sample contained 405 articles (see the Reference section for the full list), with 471 unique samples ($N = 149,341$ participants) from 36 distinct countries/regions. Figure 2 presents the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses flow diagram.

Coding Procedure and Operationalization of Variables

Our coding focused on between-person correlations, as the vast majority (95.5%) of studies were at the between-person level. For studies using experience sampling methodology, we exclusively coded between-person correlations for consistency. To ensure coding reliability, the first three authors initially coded a random sample of 30 articles, achieving an 87.9% agreement in conceptual coding and a 98.9% agreement in coding effect sizes. Any discrepancies in coding were discussed and resolved among the authors. In the formal coding process, each article was coded by one of the first three authors and cross-checked by one of three trained research assistants. Any discrepancies found were resolved by the first author.

Based on prior reviews (Hershcovis, 2011; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Zhong et al., 2023), we included variables related to the following constructs as workplace aggression, all of which align with the definition of workplace aggression outlined earlier: aggression, abusive supervision, bullying, incivility, ostracism, mistreatment, harassment, mobbing, negative gossip, social undermining, victimization, and violence.

For mediating mechanisms, trust, leader (or team)–member exchange, perceived organizational support, affective commitment, sense of belonging, and organizational social exchange were coded as relationship quality, as each of these variables was considered a key indicator of a high-quality social relationship. Variables were coded as justice perception if they represented the assessment of the overall justice, a specific justice dimension (e.g., interpersonal justice), or fairness. Variables were coded as psychological strain if they represented adverse psychological health-related symptoms associated with stressors (e.g., exhaustion, depression, fatigue). State negative affect and negative discrete emotions (e.g., anger) were coded as negative affect. Finally, we coded state self-esteem and state self-efficacy, as well as their variants (e.g., self-esteem threat, sense of competence) as state self-evaluation.

For performance outcomes, we coded variables as task performance if they reflected behaviors indicating the fulfillment of the job duties (e.g., task proficiency). We coded variables as citizenship behavior if they represented extra-role behaviors that positively contribute to the organization (e.g., helping). Finally, we coded variables as deviant behavior if they captured harmful behaviors that violate organizational norms (e.g., interpersonal deviance).⁵

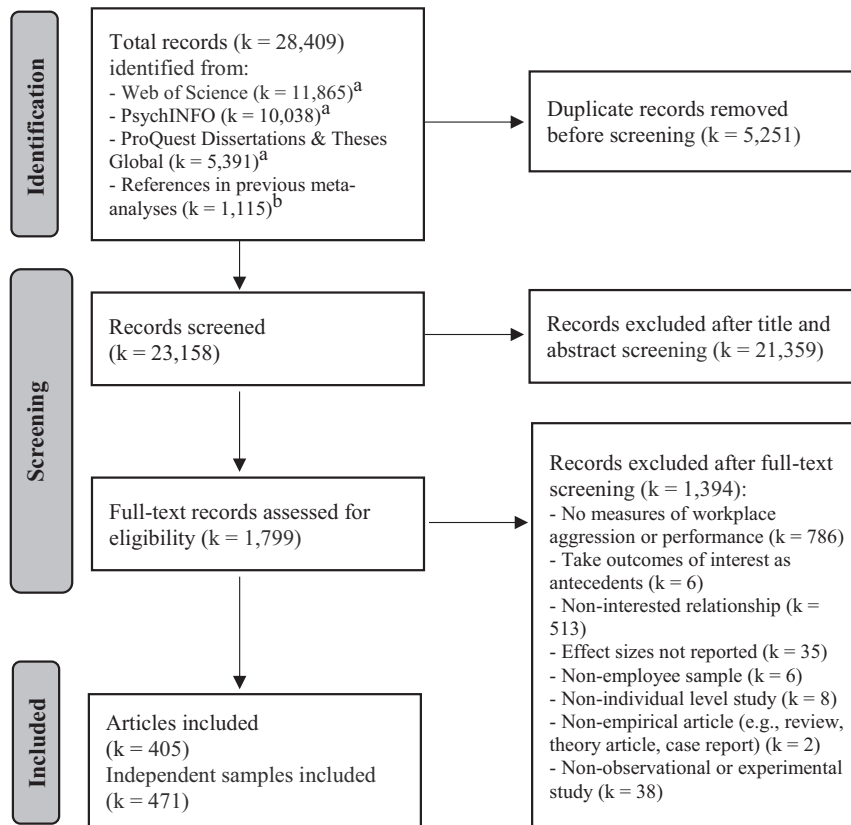
As for the moderators, we categorized the four cultural dimensions of each sample based on the country or region of data collection. Following prior research (e.g., Choi et al., 2015; Jiang et al., 2012), we used the score of 50 in G. H. Hofstede et al.'s (1980) index as the cutoff to categorize a sample as high or low in each dimension for our subgroup analysis (as described in the next section). Samples collected from multiple countries or regions were excluded from the subgroup analysis. Additional online material G (https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8) presents the list of variables coded under workplace aggression, mechanisms, and performance outcomes and the list of countries/regions.

Meta-Analytic Strategies

We first calculated the corrected bivariate correlations among focal variables, following the procedure outlined by Schmidt and Hunter (2015) using the random-effects model. We calculated the estimated mean corrected bivariate correlations ($\hat{\rho}$) after individually correcting the unreliability of the sample size-weighted correlation (\bar{r}). For studies that did not report reliability information for a particular variable, we used the mean reliability from all studies that did report such information for that variable (see Table 2 for the mean reliabilities of all variables; for a similar approach,

⁵ Performance outcomes might vary in terms of rating sources (i.e., self-rating vs. nonself-rating) and construct breadth (i.e., narrow or broad indicators of performance). We performed finer-grained analyses that separated performance outcomes by self-ratings versus nonself-ratings and narrow versus broad indicators. The results, detailed in additional online material F (https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8), suggest that the rating source and construct breadth are unlikely to confound the incremental effects and comparison of the mechanisms.

Figure 2
Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Flow Diagram



^a Search terms: (“aggression” OR “mistreatment” OR “victimization” OR “mobbing” OR “harassment” OR “social undermining” OR “hostility” OR “negative gossip” OR “interpersonal discrimination” OR “petty tyranny” OR “bullying” OR “violence” OR “assault” OR “rudeness” OR “abusive supervision” OR “emotional abuse” OR “social exclusion” OR “ostracism” OR “incivility”) AND (“job” OR “organization” OR “workplace” OR “company” OR “employee”). ^b Meta-analytic articles on consequences of workplace aggression: Bowling and Beehr (2006), Hershcovis and Barling (2010), Howard et al. (2020), Mackey et al. (2017), McCord et al. (2018), Nielsen and Einarsen (2012), Schyns and Schilling (2013), Willness et al. (2007), Yao et al. (2022), and Zhang and Liao (2015).

see Judge et al., 2002, and Lyubkykh et al., 2022). For each correlation, we reported the number of samples (k), the cumulative total sample size (N), standard deviations of \bar{r} and $\hat{\rho}$, and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) and 80% credibility intervals (CVs) around $\hat{\rho}$. For duplicate correlations within the same sample, we calculated the composite score using the function provided by psychmeta (Dahlke & Wiernik, 2019) to ensure the independence of samples.

To test the incremental effects of the five mechanisms, we conducted MASEM using the correlation matrix derived from the above meta-analytic analysis (Viswesvaran & Ones, 1995).⁶ We used the harmonic mean sample size from the correlation matrix (Viswesvaran & Ones, 1995). To reveal the incremental effect of each mechanism, we first tested the five mechanisms independently in separate models and then examined them simultaneously in a parallel mediation model. To calculate the mediating effects, we used Preacher and Selig’s (2012) Monte Carlo method in *R* with 20,000 replications and built the 95% CI around the mediating effects (see Zhang et al., 2019, for the same approach). As

Preacher and Selig (2012) have noted, this Monte Carlo method is particularly useful in calculating mediating effects with summary data (correlation matrix input in our case), while other common methods like bias-corrected bootstrapping cannot handle such data (also see Selig & Preacher, 2008).

To compare the strengths of different mechanisms, following Zhang et al. (2019), we created the nonmodel parameters in Mplus representing the difference in mediating effects between each pair of compared mechanisms. This difference accounted for the sign of the compared mediating effects, revealing which mechanism has a stronger *negative* effect when the outcome was task performance and citizenship behavior and a stronger *positive* effect when the outcome was deviant behavior. Thus, it was appropriate to calculate

⁶ Recent advancements suggest the use of full-information MASEM (Oh, 2020) to complement MASEM (Greer et al., 2018). Accordingly, we present full-information MASEM results in additional online material H (https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8).

the difference in two mediating effects even if they had opposite signs (for research using a similar approach, see Liao et al., 2021, and Priesemuth & Bigelow, 2020). This approach compared the entire mediating effects involving the multiplication of both first- and second-stage effects. Additionally, we employed meta-analytic relative weight analysis (Tonidandel & LeBreton, 2015) to examine the relative importance of the five mechanisms in predicting each outcome. This served as a complementary analysis for estimating the difference specifically in the second-stage effects.

To test the moderating effects of cultural dimensions, we conducted subgroup analyses. After categorizing the sample into two subgroups based on a given moderator, we conducted z tests using the formula provided by Chiaburu et al. (2013) to examine the significance of the difference in $\hat{\rho}$ between the two subgroups (Choi et al., 2015).

Transparency and Openness

We describe below our search strategy, inclusion criteria, coding procedure, and analytic approaches, adhering to the *Journal of Applied Psychology* methodological checklist. We used the Excel spreadsheet for coding, *R* 4.2.2 for calculating bivariate effect sizes (with *psychmeta* package; Dahlke & Wiernik, 2019) and mediation effects, and *Mplus* 8.10 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) for conducting the meta-analytic structural equation modeling (MASEM). The scope, design, and analyses were not preregistered. Additional online material D (https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8) contains the Meta-Analysis Reporting Standards table detailing the study-level codes from these articles (Appelbaum et al., 2018). Additional online material E (https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8) contains the *R* and *Mplus* codes used in our analyses.⁷ As this study is a meta-analysis without the involvement of human subjects, it was exempt from institutional review board approval.

Results

Appendix B reports full meta-analytic results of bivariate correlations. Table 2 shows the full correlation matrix derived from Appendix B. Figure 3 shows the MASEM results for the independent mediating effects of five mechanisms. Figure 4 illustrates the MASEM results for the incremental effects of five mechanisms by testing them simultaneously in the same model.

Incremental Effects

As shown in Figure 3, when examined independently in five separate models, all five mechanisms had significant mediating effects across all three performance outcomes. However, as shown in Figure 4, when examined simultaneously in the same model, several mechanisms became nonsignificant when predicting certain performance outcome(s).

Hypothesis 1 concerns the incremental effect of relationship quality. When modeled separately (Figure 3), relationship quality had a significant mediating effect on the relationship between workplace aggression and task performance ($B = -.072 [-.078, -.065]$), citizenship behavior ($B = -.118 [-.126, -.111]$), and deviant behavior ($B = .055 [.049, .061]$). After accounting for the other mechanisms (Figure 4), the mediating effect on task performance

($B = -.036 [-.049, -.023]$), citizenship behavior ($B = -.073 [-.087, -.059]$), and deviant behavior ($B = .043 [.030, .055]$) remained significant. Thus, Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c were supported.

Hypothesis 2 concerns the incremental effect of justice perception. When tested separately (Figure 3), justice perception significantly mediated the relationship between workplace aggression and task performance ($B = -.048 [-.058, -.037]$), citizenship behavior ($B = -.099 [-.110, -.089]$), and deviant behavior ($B = .032 [.023, .042]$). After considering the other mechanisms (Figure 4), the effect on citizenship behavior remained significant ($B = -.039 [-.053, -.026]$), but the effect on task performance ($B = .005 [-.008, .018]$) and deviant behavior ($B = -.007 [-.020, .007]$) became nonsignificant. Thus, Hypothesis 2b was supported, but Hypotheses 2a and 2c were not.

Hypothesis 3 concerns the incremental effect of psychological strain. When modeled independently (Figure 3), psychological strain significantly mediated the relationship between workplace aggression and task performance ($B = -.086 [-.092, -.079]$), citizenship behavior ($B = -.056 [-.063, -.049]$), and deviant behavior ($B = .075 [.068, .082]$). When modeled with other mechanisms (Figure 4), the mediating effect on citizenship behavior ($B = -.027 [-.043, -.011]$) remained significant, but the effect on deviant behavior ($B = .011 [-.004, .027]$) became nonsignificant. Additionally, the effect on task performance ($B = .034 [.018, .050]$) reversed the sign. Thus, Hypothesis 3b was supported, but Hypotheses 3a and 3c were not.

Hypothesis 4 concerns the incremental effect of negative affect. When modeled separately (Figure 3), negative affect significantly mediated the relationship between workplace aggression and task performance ($B = -.088 [-.099, -.078]$), citizenship behavior ($B = .032 [.023, .042]$), and deviant behavior ($B = .089 [.080, .098]$), although the direction of the effect on citizenship behavior was opposite to our prediction. After including the other mechanisms (Figure 4), the effect on task performance ($B = -.085 [-.102, -.069]$), citizenship behavior ($B = .077 [.061, .093]$), and deviant behavior ($B = .073 [.057, .089]$) remained significant and in the same direction as when modeled independently. Thus, Hypotheses 4a and 4c were supported, but Hypothesis 4b was not.

Hypothesis 5 concerns the incremental mediating effect of state self-evaluation. When tested independently (Figure 3), state self-evaluation significantly mediated the relationships of workplace aggression with task performance ($B = -.098 [-.107, -.091]$), citizenship behavior ($B = -.082 [-.089, -.075]$), and deviant behavior ($B = .035 [.029, .040]$). After considering other mechanisms (Figure 4), the mediating impact on task performance ($B = -.092 [-.104, -.081]$), citizenship behavior ($B = -.056 [-.066, -.046]$), and deviant behavior ($B = .015 [.006, .023]$) remained significant. Thus, Hypotheses 5a, 5b, and 5c were supported.

Comparative Strengths

We used the results shown in Figure 4 to examine the comparative strengths of the five mechanisms. Regarding the influence of workplace aggression on task performance (Research Question 1), state self-evaluation and negative affect exhibited a stronger mediating effect than relationship quality ($\Delta B = -.06, t = -6.10, p = .00$ and $\Delta B = -.05, t = 5.40, p = .00$), justice perception ($\Delta B = -.10, t = -10.35, p = .00$ and $\Delta B = -.09, t = -7.85, p = .00$), and

⁷ All additional online materials can be found in the online repository: https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8.

Table 2
Meta-Analytic Correlation Matrix

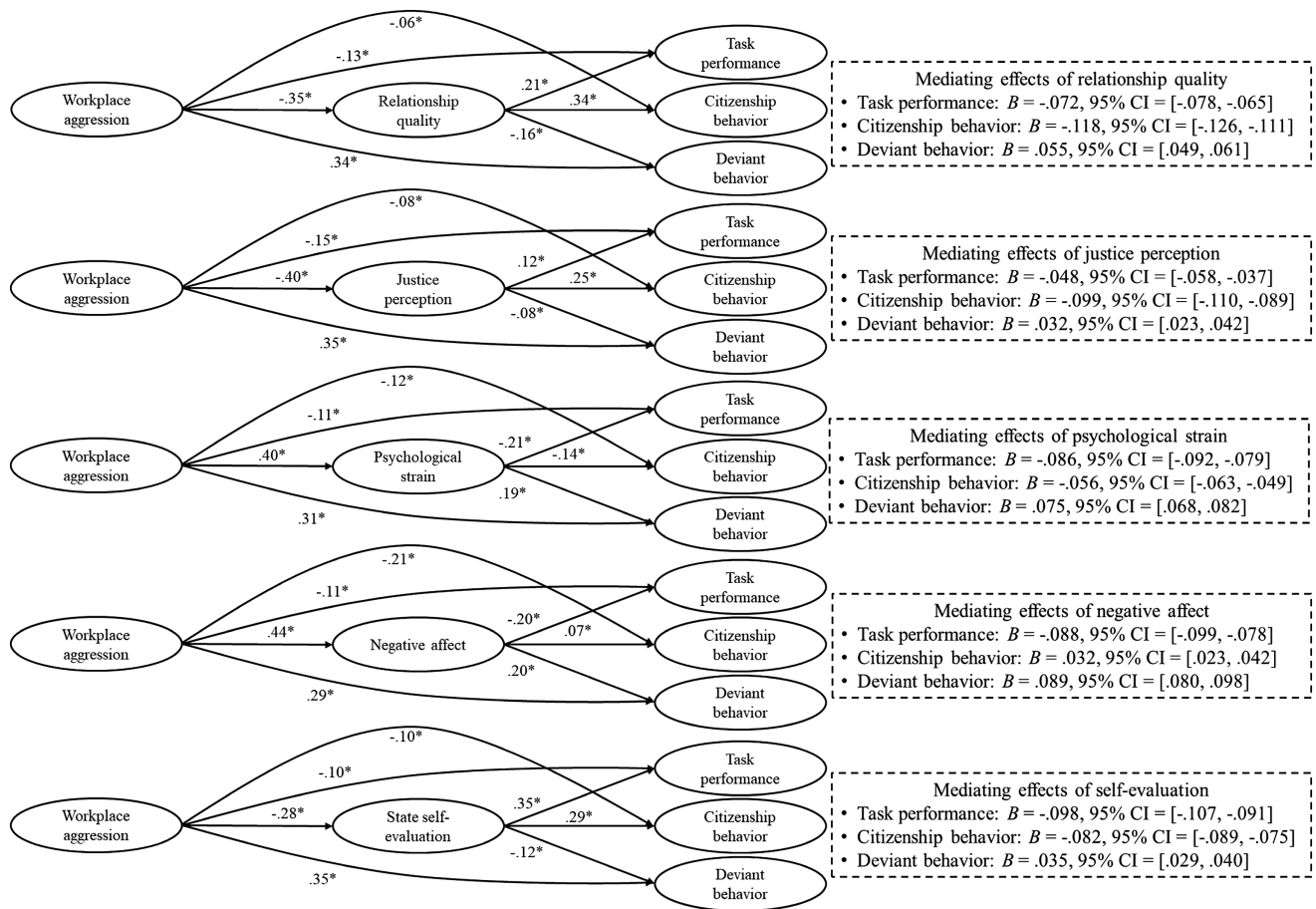
Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Workplace aggression	(.90)	(82, 29866)	(36, 9992)	(123, 44126)	(71, 20125)	(62, 17126)	(135, 42627)	(140, 40035)	(292, 95226)
2. Relationship quality	-.35	(.86)	(10, 3365)	(13, 5521)	(9, 2947)	(12, 4593)	(26, 9204)	(37, 11063)	(43, 16621)
3. Justice perception	-.40	.63	(.91)	(10, 2459)	(8, 2270)	(5, 903)	(6, 1915)	(13, 4155)	(23, 5763)
4. Psychological strain	.40	-.43	-.24	(.88)	(11, 4971)	(10, 3712)	(31, 12556)	(20, 5967)	(83, 30820)
5. Negative affect	.44	-.24	-.25	.66	(.87)	(6, 2082)	(15, 4078)	(17, 3622)	(59, 17078)
6. State self-evaluation	-.28	.41	.27	-.50	-.24	(.87)	(29, 8149)	(23, 5399)	(27, 7451)
7. Task performance	-.20	.25	.18	-.26	-.25	.38	(.87)	(38, 11558)	(26, 7902)
8. Citizenship behavior	-.18	.36	.28	-.19	-.02	.32	.53	(.87)	(44, 12104)
9. Deviant behavior	.38	-.27	-.22	.31	.33	-.22	-.25	-.30	(.86)

Note. Estimated mean corrected correlations ($\hat{\rho}$) are reported below the diagonal. The number of samples (k) and total sample sizes (N) is reported above the diagonal. The mean reliabilities of all studies are reported across the diagonal.

psychological strain ($\Delta B = -.13, t = -10.88, p = .00$ and $\Delta B = -.12, t = -8.12, p = .00$). Further, the results of relative weight analysis in Table 3 show that state self-evaluation was the strongest predictor of task performance, accounting for 52.5% of the total explained

variance, followed by negative affect (16.1%), relationship quality (12.0%), psychological strain (9.2%), and justice perception (4.3%). A combined analysis of the path coefficients (in Figure 4) and the percentage of variance explained reveals that the relative dominance

Figure 3
Meta-Analytic Structural Equation Modeling Results of the Independent Mediating Effects of Five Mechanisms

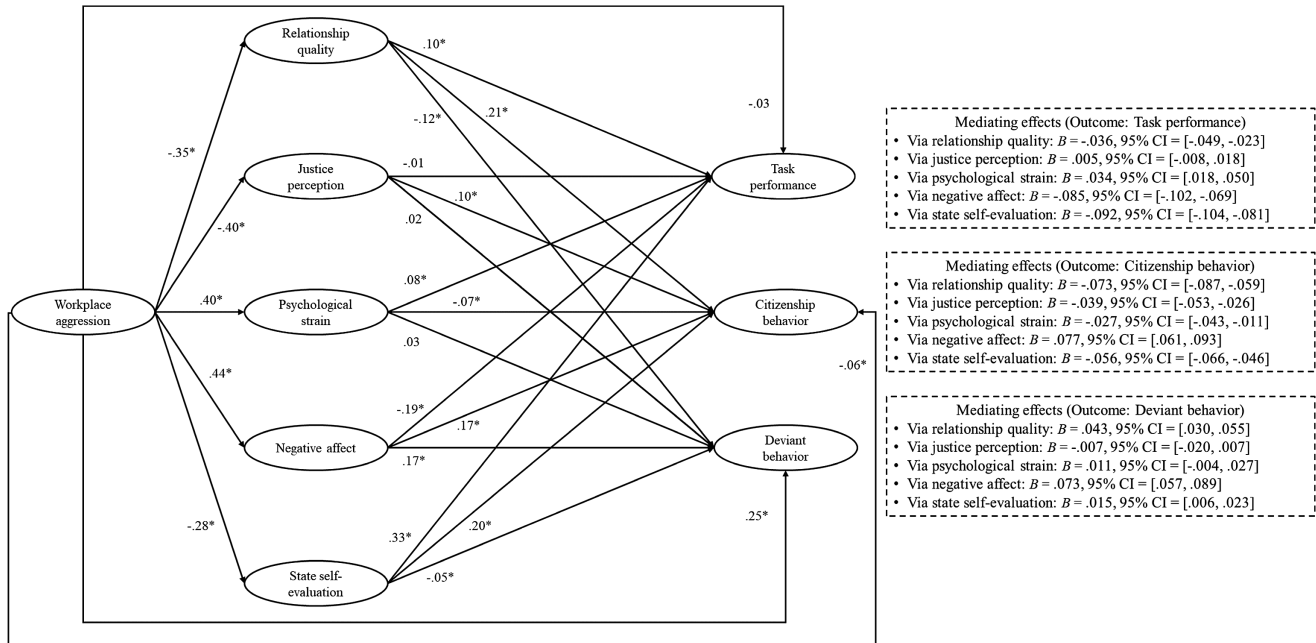


Note. Harmonic mean: $N = 15,448$ (relationship quality), $7,189$ (justice perception), $15,221$ (psychological strain), $10,161$ (negative affect), and $11,694$ (state self-evaluation). The correlations among performance outcomes are not shown here to increase readability. Mediating effects were calculated using Preacher and Selig's (2012) Monte Carlo method. CI = confidence interval.

* $p < .05$.

Figure 4

Meta-Analytic Structural Equation Modeling Results of the Unique, Incremental Mediating Effects of Five Mechanisms After Accounting for Other Mechanisms



Note. Harmonic mean $N = 5,101$. The correlations among mediators and performance outcomes are not shown here to increase readability. Mediating effects were calculated using Preacher and Selig's (2012) Monte Carlo method. CI = confidence interval.

* $p < .05$.

of state self-evaluation primarily stemmed from the second-stage effects, considering that among the five mechanisms, state self-evaluation had the weakest relationship with workplace aggression but the strongest relationship with task performance. In contrast, the relative dominance of negative affect appeared to derive from a mix of both first- and second-stage effects because negative affect had a stronger relationship with both workplace aggression and task performance than the other three mechanisms.

Regarding the influence of workplace aggression on citizenship behavior (Research Question 2), the results show that relationship quality had a stronger mediating effect than justice perception ($\Delta B = -.03$, $t = -2.81$, $p = .01$), psychological strain ($\Delta B = -.05$, $t = -3.84$, $p = .00$), and negative affect ($\Delta B = -.15$, $t = -14.96$, $p = .00$) and had

a marginally significantly stronger effect than state self-evaluation ($\Delta B = -.02$, $t = -1.95$, $p = .05$). In addition, the results of the relative weight analysis in Table 3 show that relationship quality was the strongest predictor of citizenship behavior, accounting for 33.0% of the total explained variance, followed by state self-evaluation (30.1%), justice perception (17.8%), psychological strain (7.9%), and negative affect (4.8%). The results of path coefficients (in Figure 4) and the percentage of variance explained collectively suggest that the relative dominance of relationship quality over justice perception, psychological strain, and negative affect mainly stemmed from the second-stage effects, given that among these mechanisms, relationship quality had the weakest relationship with workplace aggression but the strongest relationship with citizenship behavior. Meanwhile,

Table 3
Results of Meta-Analytic Relative Weight Analysis

Predictor variable	Task performance RW/RW%	Citizenship behavior RW/RW%	Deviance behavior RW/RW%
Workplace aggression	.010/5.9%	.012/6.4%	.075/37.9%
Relationship quality	.022/12.0%	.052/33.0%	.025/12.4%
Justice perception	.008/4.3%	.033/17.8%	.012/6.1%
Psychological strain	.017/9.2%	.015/7.9%	.027/13.4%
Negative affect	.029/16.1%	.009/4.8%	.045/23.0%
State self-evaluation	.095/52.5%	.056/30.1%	.014/7.2%
R^2	.180	.186	.197

Note. RW = raw relative weight; RW% = adjusted relative weight as a percentage of total variance explained.

Table 4
Results of Subgroup Analyses of Cultural Dimensions

Moderator	Subgroup	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{r}	<i>SDr</i>	\hat{p}	<i>SD_p</i>	95% CI	80% CV	<i>z</i>	
Individualism	Individualistic cultures	34	15,067	-.35	0.14	-.40	0.15	[-.45, -.34]	[-.59, -.21]	-3.25*	
	Collectivistic cultures	34	10,069	-.22	0.19	-.25	0.22	[-.33, -.17]	[-.53, .03]		
	Masculine cultures	56	21,940	-.32	0.16	-.37	0.18	[-.42, -.32]	[-.59, -.15]	-2.98*	
Masculinity	Feminine cultures	12	3,196	-.14	0.20	-.16	0.23	[-.31, -.01]	[-.46, .15]		
	Workplace aggression → relationship quality										
	High power distance cultures	11	2,491	-.30	0.16	-.34	0.16	[-.45, -.23]	[-.54, -.14]	0.48	
Power distance	Low power distance cultures	14	4,226	-.34	0.21	-.38	0.23	[-.51, -.24]	[-.67, -.08]		
	Workplace aggression → justice perception										
Uncertainty avoidance	High uncertainty avoidance cultures	43	12,739	.35	0.16	.40	0.19	[.34, .45]	[.16, .63]	0.00	
	Low uncertainty avoidance cultures	61	26,450	.35	0.16	.40	0.18	[.36, .45]	[.18, .63]		
Uncertainty avoidance	Workplace aggression → psychological strain										
	High uncertainty avoidance cultures	11	3,341	.31	0.16	.35	0.18	[.23, .47]	[.12, .58]	-1.80	
Uncertainty avoidance	Low uncertainty avoidance cultures	51	14,275	.40	0.17	.46	0.19	[.41, .51]	[.22, .70]		
	Workplace aggression → negative affect										
Individualism	Individualistic cultures	11	4,720	-.25	0.11	-.29	0.12	[-.37, -.21]	[-.43, -.15]	-0.21	
	Collectivistic cultures	38	9,620	-.25	0.15	-.28	0.17	[-.34, -.23]	[-.49, -.08]		
	Masculine cultures	35	10,173	-.28	0.14	-.32	0.15	[-.37, -.27]	[-.50, -.14]	-2.38*	
Masculinity	Feminine cultures	14	4,167	-.18	0.12	-.21	0.13	[-.28, -.13]	[-.36, -.05]		
	Workplace aggression → state self-evaluation										

Note. *k* = number of samples; *N* = total sample size; \bar{r} = mean sample size-weighted correlation; *SDr* = standard deviation of \bar{r} ; \hat{p} = estimated mean corrected correlation; *SD_p* = standard deviation of \hat{p} ; CI = confidence interval around \hat{p} ; CV = credibility interval around \hat{p} .
* *p* < .05.

the relative dominance of relationship quality over state self-evaluation primarily arose from the first-stage effects, given that relationship quality had a similar relationship with citizenship behavior but a stronger relationship with workplace aggression.

Finally, in terms of the impact of workplace aggression on deviant behavior (Research Question 3), the results show that negative affect had a stronger mediating effect than relationship quality ($\Delta B = .03$, $t = 3.20$, $p = .00$), justice perception ($\Delta B = .08$, $t = 7.07$, $p = .00$), psychological strain ($\Delta B = .06$, $t = 4.34$, $p = .00$), and state self-evaluation ($\Delta B = .06$, $t = 6.81$, $p = .00$). The results of relative weight analysis in Table 3 show that among all mechanisms, negative affect was the strongest predictor of deviant behavior, accounting for 23.0% of the total explained variance, followed by psychological strain (13.4%), relationship quality (12.4%), state self-evaluation (7.2%), and justice perception (6.1%). A collective examination of path coefficients (in Figure 4) and the percentage of variance explained suggests that the relative dominance of negative affect resulted from both first- and second-stage effects because negative affect exhibited a stronger relationship with both workplace aggression and deviant behavior than the other mechanisms.

Cultural Contingencies

Table 4 presents the results of the subgroup analyses. Hypotheses 6 and 7 focus on the moderating effects of individualism and masculinity on the relationship quality mechanism. Workplace aggression was more negatively related to relationship quality in individualistic cultures ($\hat{\beta} = -.40$) than in collectivistic cultures ($\hat{\beta} = -.25$; $z = -3.25$, $p = .00$) and in masculine cultures ($\hat{\beta} = -.37$) than in feminine cultures ($\hat{\beta} = -.16$; $z = -2.98$, $p = .00$), supporting Hypotheses 6 and 7.

Hypothesis 8 concerns the moderating effect of power distance on the justice perception mechanism. Workplace aggression did not exhibit significantly different relationships with justice perception in high power distance cultures ($\hat{\beta} = -.34$) versus in low power distance cultures ($\hat{\beta} = -.38$; $z = .48$, $p = .63$). Thus, Hypothesis 8 was not supported.

Hypotheses 9 and 10 concern the moderating effects of uncertainty avoidance on the psychological strain and negative affect mechanisms. Workplace aggression did not display significantly different relationships with psychological strain in high uncertainty avoidance cultures ($\hat{\beta} = .40$) versus in low uncertainty avoidance ones ($\hat{\beta} = .40$; $z = .00$, $p = 1.00$). Similarly, workplace aggression did not have significantly different relationships with negative affect in high uncertainty avoidance cultures ($\hat{\beta} = .35$) versus in low uncertainty avoidance ones ($\hat{\beta} = .46$; $z = -1.80$, $p = .07$). Therefore, Hypotheses 9 and 10 were not supported.

Hypotheses 11 and 12 concern the moderating effects of individualism and masculinity on the state self-evaluation mechanism. Workplace aggression did not have significantly different relationships with state self-evaluation in individualistic cultures ($\hat{\beta} = -.29$) versus in collectivistic ones ($\hat{\beta} = -.28$; $z = -.21$, $p = .83$). Hence, Hypothesis 11 was not supported. In support of Hypothesis 12, workplace aggression was more negatively related to state self-evaluation in masculine cultures ($\hat{\beta} = -.32$) than in feminine cultures ($\hat{\beta} = -.21$; $z = -2.38$, $p = .02$).

For significant moderating effects of individualism and masculinity, we conducted analyses (see additional online material I at https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8)

on their first-stage moderated mediation effects, addressing whether they can moderate the mediating effects of the mechanism linking aggression and the three performance outcomes. The results supported these moderated mediation effects. The mediating effects of relationship quality were stronger in individualistic cultures than collectivistic ones and in masculine cultures than in feminine ones. Additionally, the mediating effects of state self-evaluation were stronger in masculine cultures than in feminine ones.

General Discussion

By examining the incremental validity, relative strengths, and cultural contingencies of the major mediating mechanisms, our work carries several important implications.

Theoretical Implications

Incremental Effects

We find that when the five mechanisms are examined simultaneously, only the relationship quality and state self-evaluation mechanisms remain significant across all three outcomes. The negative affect mechanism remains significant for task performance and deviant behavior, while the justice perception and psychological strain mechanisms exhibit incremental effects only for citizenship behavior in the predicted direction.

The findings on justice perception and psychological strain mechanisms are particularly noteworthy as they contrast with the robust support they have received in prior research, raising questions about the actual roles these mechanisms play in explaining the impact of workplace aggression on performance outcomes, particularly task performance and deviant behavior. It is plausible that their significant mediating effects observed in prior studies might be artifacts of other co-occurring mechanisms. This seems especially likely for psychological strain, which often accompanies negative affect. Alternatively, justice perception and psychological strain may precede some of the other mechanisms, such that their mediating effects are transmitted through these mechanisms. This is particularly plausible for justice perception, whose effects have been studied through relational and affective perspectives. Indeed, our analysis (see additional online material B at https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8) indicates that the mediating effect of justice perception is largely explained by relationship quality, suggesting that justice perception may precede relationship quality. These results highlight that the detrimental effects of workplace aggression on performance outcomes might be sequentially transmitted for some mechanisms.

Our findings on the incremental role of self-evaluation extend beyond previous meta-analyses on the mechanisms (Liang et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). Unlike these prior studies, which focused narrowly on supervisor aggression, we focus on the broad construct of workplace aggression. This expanded scope allows us to categorize a more comprehensive set of theoretical mechanisms and include state self-evaluation as a critical mechanism previously overlooked. Our results show that state self-evaluation exhibits unique mediating effects not accounted for by other prominent mechanisms, and these effects hold true across all three performance outcomes. In doing so, our research illuminates a crucial yet oftentimes overlooked explanation for why workplace aggression is

harmful to employee performance. This underscores the importance of simultaneously examining a comprehensive set of theoretical mechanisms to accurately address the question of why workplace aggression harms employee performance.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that workplace aggression has direct effects on citizenship behavior and deviant behavior even after accounting for the five studied mechanisms. This points to the possibility that the literature is missing additional mechanism(s) for the two outcomes. There are indeed some mechanisms excluded in our meta-analysis due to insufficient data (e.g., identification, Lee et al., 2016; need fulfillment, Lian et al., 2012b). Our findings indicate potential in these less examined, and other unexplored, mechanisms to explain incremental variance beyond the five mechanisms. At the same time, the direct effect of workplace aggression on task performance becomes nonsignificant with the inclusion of the five mechanisms, suggesting a less pressing need to seek additional mechanisms for this relationship.

Finally, our research yields some unexpected findings that warrant discussion. Contrary to our expectations, we find that workplace aggression increases citizenship behavior by triggering negative affect, regardless of whether negative affect is modeled separately or simultaneously with other mechanisms. While surprising, this finding aligns with recent studies using the affective lens to uncover the positive effect of workplace aggression on citizenship behavior (e.g., Tröster & Van Quaquebeke, 2021; Yu & Duffy, 2021). These findings suggest the potential social functions of negative affect. That is, negative affect can remind mistreated employees that they have failed to meet the expectations, prompting them to engage in citizenship behavior to compensate for their perceived failures and prevent further exposure to workplace aggression. Negative affect can also signal the loss of social acceptance, driving employees to regain social acceptance through citizenship behavior.

Additionally, we find that psychological strain negatively relates to task performance when examined independently but positively relates to task performance when modeled alongside other mechanisms. This might be due to the potential presence of suppression effects. Psychological strain may have both negative and positive effects on task performance, with the negative effect being stronger, leading to an overall negative impact when examined independently. Yet, including certain other mechanisms might diminish its negative effects, changing the overall effect to be positive. For instance, after employees feel strained due to being yelled at by their supervisors, the strain may impede task performance by impairing concentration on work activities, but it can also motivate harder work to avoid future aggression. Because other mechanisms, like state self-evaluation and negative affect, could similarly negatively impact task performance by reducing concentration, the inclusion of these mechanisms might “eat up” the variance explained by the negative effects of psychological strain, allowing its positive effects to emerge. To explore this, we conducted analyses, pairing psychological strain with one, two, or three other mechanisms to predict task performance. This helped identify which mechanism or which combination of mechanisms would drive the suppression effects. The results, detailed in additional online material J (https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8), show that psychological strain has a positive relationship with task performance only when paired with both negative affect and state self-evaluation, regardless of the inclusion of other mechanisms like relationship quality and

justice perception. This indicates that the combination of negative affect and state self-evaluation underlies the suppression effect.

Comparative Strengths

We find that workplace aggression influences task performance primarily through negative affect and state self-evaluation, citizenship behavior through relationship quality, and deviant behavior through negative affect. Additionally, whereas the relative dominance of relationship quality and state self-evaluation mainly stems from the second-stage effects, the relative dominance of negative affect arises from both first- and second-stage effects. These findings provide a precise answer to our focal question of why workplace aggression impedes employee performance: It is mostly due to the dissolution of social relationships, the evocation of negative affect, and the impairment of state self-evaluation.

This answer can guide explorations of how to alleviate the harmful impact of workplace aggression. Rather than addressing all five mechanisms, our work holds particular promise for future research to target the three primary mechanisms: preserving mistreated employees’ social relationships, regulating their negative affect, and maintaining their positive state self-evaluation. Additionally, considering our emphasis on exploring new mechanisms underlying the impact of workplace aggression on citizenship and deviant behavior, our findings suggest that future studies in this direction should, at the very least, account for the mechanisms of relationship quality and negative affect to accurately assess the incremental effects of novel mechanisms.

Our findings concerning negative affect align with Liang et al. (2022), showing its predominant role in explaining the impact of workplace aggression on deviant behavior. However, while we identify relationship quality as the dominant factor in predicting citizenship behavior, Zhang et al. (2019) emphasized justice perception. This divergence may stem from the broader range of mechanisms included in our meta-analysis than Zhang et al. (2019). Without accounting for an expanded set of mechanisms, especially those that exhibit strong explanatory effects such as relationship quality and self-evaluation, justice perception might emerge as the dominant factor. Moreover, our research advances these studies by identifying negative affect and state self-evaluation as the dominant mechanisms predicting the impact of workplace aggression on the performance outcome overlooked by the two studies, namely, task performance. The emergence of different dominant mechanisms for different performance outcomes suggests that findings for one outcome may not be generalizable to others. Without considering all three performance outcomes, we risk providing an incomplete or even inaccurate answer to why workplace aggression harms employee performance.

Finally, our findings carry broader implications for various research domains employing theoretical perspectives underlying the five mechanisms, such as leadership, organizational climate, and human resource practices. Specifically, other domains can benefit from the insight that while all five mechanisms may apply to all three performance outcomes, certain mechanisms are particularly relevant in explaining each outcome. For instance, our findings suggest that in understanding the impact on citizenship behavior, a relational perspective, focusing on the mediating role of relationship quality, may be more prominent compared with other perspectives. Similarly, a state self-evaluation perspective might be more relevant

than other perspectives when examining the impact on task performance.

Cultural Contingencies

We find that the strengths of several mechanisms depend on the cultural context. Workplace aggression has a stronger association with relationship quality in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic ones and in masculine cultures than in feminine ones. Moreover, it exhibits a stronger relationship with state self-evaluation in masculine cultures than in feminine ones. Importantly, these effects extend to first-stage moderated mediating effects, wherein the mediating effect of relationship quality is reinforced by individualism and masculinity and the mediating effect of state self-evaluation is amplified by masculinity.

Importantly, our findings diverge from those of Liang et al. (2022). While their study shows that power distance moderates multiple mechanisms, we find no evidence for this effect. This discrepancy may stem from their narrow focus on supervisor aggression, where power distance might be more salient due to the clear power disparity between supervisors and employees. However, in general interpersonal contexts of workplace aggression without a clear power disparity, power distance may play a much weaker role in shaping target employees' reactions. Additionally, our research goes beyond Liang et al.'s (2022) study by showing that cultural contingencies are not limited to power distance. We demonstrate that individualism and masculinity are important cultural dimensions influencing the strength of certain theoretical mechanisms. These findings highlight the importance of examining multiple cultural dimensions to gain a more precise understanding of cultural contingencies.

Our findings carry broad implications concerning the cultural contingencies of the theoretical perspectives underpinning the examined mechanisms. To begin, our results indicate that the influence of the relationship quality mechanism is more pronounced in individualistic or masculine cultures. The theoretical underpinning of these findings lies in how cultural values shape individuals' motivation to preserve social relationships when facing workplace aggression. More broadly, these findings suggest that the relational perspective and their underlying theories should hold greater explanatory power in cultures where employees are less normatively obligated to maintain social relationships and have greater discretion in navigating relationships. Furthermore, our results show that the state self-evaluation mechanism is amplified in masculine cultures. These findings imply that the self-evaluation perspective and its specific theories tend to play a more prominent explanatory role in cultures where people have a heightened need for a positive self-view and are thus more susceptible to ego threats.

Broad Versus Nuanced Approaches of Studying Workplace Aggression

There has been a long-standing debate regarding the two approaches (Hershcovis, 2011; Tepper & Henle, 2011). Although both approaches have their merits, our research seems to support the broad approach. For instance, our findings show that different forms of workplace aggression, including minor and severe ones, display highly overlapping relationships with performance outcomes and operate through similar mechanisms (see additional online material A at https://osf.io/3j72y/?view_only=d311267dc595407d9c592c0690123ed8 for

the detailed analyses and results). These results raise questions about the value of the nuanced approach, which separately studies different forms of workplace aggression and emphasizes their conceptual distinctions. Measures of individual forms of workplace aggression have often failed to adequately distinguish them by capturing their unique attributes. For instance, many measures of severe aggression encompass items of minor aggression and vice versa (see Zhong et al., 2023, for the measures). Thus, echoing Tepper and Henle (2011), we argue that it is crucial to improve the quality of these measures before we can effectively leverage the nuanced approach.

Practical Implications

Our research offers important practical implications. First, our findings indicate that the impact of workplace aggression on the three performance outcomes is primarily driven by different mechanisms. As organizations generally have limited resources to manage workplace aggression, our findings may help organizations optimize their practices based on the primary performance concern. For instance, organizations that are mainly concerned about productivity loss caused by workplace aggression may better achieve their objectives by further focusing on maintaining employees' positive self-evaluation, such as providing training opportunities. In contrast, organizations that are particularly concerned about curtailing employee deviance resulting from workplace aggression may benefit from focusing more on managing the negative affect mechanism, such as providing emotional regulation workshops or well-being programs.

Second, our findings on cultural contingencies suggest that it might be wise for managers to account for the relevant cultural context when managing workplace aggression. For example, when a multinational organization operates in cultures characterized by masculinity, relationship quality and self-evaluation become particularly critical. In this case, managers may want to take preventive actions to preempt the activation of these mechanisms when employees face workplace aggression, such as fostering organizational support to strengthen employee-employer relationships and offering more training to enhance employees' abilities and skills.

Limitations

Our research has several limitations. First, our meta-analysis focuses on the five mechanisms and three performance outcomes that have received sufficient research attention. Yet, there are other emerging mechanisms (e.g., social identification and need fulfillment) that we exclude due to insufficient primary studies. Relatedly, we exclude less examined performance outcomes, such as creative and safety performance, which might be critical for some industries or occupations. Future work can perform meta-analysis on these mechanisms and outcomes as relevant primary studies continue to grow.

Second, given our exclusive focus on field survey studies, our data are correlational in nature. This makes it challenging to establish causality regarding the mediating effects of the five mechanisms. For example, although we assume that workplace aggression elicits negative affect, it is also plausible that employees who experience negative affect are likely to perceive others' behaviors as aggressive. Thus, future work can conduct a meta-analysis that

focuses specifically on prior experimental work on workplace aggression.

Finally, as we aim to provide an integrative understanding of the mechanisms underlying the performance impact of workplace aggression, we develop and test an omnibus model with five higher order theoretical mechanisms. While this approach is appropriate for our specific research question, it may overlook nuanced insights that could be gained from a more focused model. In such a model, a higher order mechanism could be broken down into several specific micromediators, allowing for a comparison of their relative strengths. Due to data inadequacies and the nonmissing data requirement by the MASEM, we were unable to explore this possibility in our study. Nevertheless, we encourage future meta-analytic research to pursue this avenue as sufficient data accumulates for a particular mechanism.

Conclusion

We conducted a meta-analytic investigation of the five major theoretical mechanisms to explain why workplace aggression is harmful to employee performance. By offering insights into the incremental mediating effects, comparative strengths, and cultural contingencies of these mechanisms, our work lays a solid foundation for more research on this critical topic.

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(Appendices follow)

Appendix A
Summary of Previous Meta-Analyses on Workplace Aggression and Their Findings

Citation	Workplace aggression variable	Antecedent	Consequence	Mechanism linking workplace aggression and outcomes	Moderating effect of cultural dimensions
Lapierre et al. (2005) Bowling and Beehr (2006)	Workplace aggression Workplace harassment	Contextual characteristics: role conflict (.44), role ambiguity (.30), role overload (.28), work constraints (.53), autonomy of work environment (-.25) Individual characteristics: victim positive affectivity (-.09), victim negative affectivity (.25), victim gender (-.05), victim age (-.04), victim tenure (.02)	Attitudinal outcomes: job satisfaction (-.31) Justice perception: organizational justice (-.35) Attitudinal outcomes: job satisfaction (-.39), organizational commitment (-.36) Affective outcomes: positive emotions at work (-.09), negative emotions at work (.25) Behavioral outcomes: job performance (-.08), OCB (-.03), CWB (.37), turnover intention (.35), absenteeism (.06) Health and well-being outcomes: generic strain (.35), anxiety (.31), depression (.34), burnout (.39), frustration (.40), self-esteem (-.21), life satisfaction (-.21), physical symptoms (.31)		
Hershcovis et al. (2007)	Workplace aggression	Individual characteristics: negative affectivity (.28), trait anger (.33), gender (-.13) Contextual characteristics: interpersonal conflict (.41), distributive justice (.15), procedure justice (.21), job dissatisfaction (.37), situational constraints (.36)			
Willness et al. (2007)	Workplace sexual harassment	Contextual characteristics: organizational climate (e.g., tolerance for sexual harassment; .364), job gender context (e.g., workgroup composition, proportion of women in occupation; -.192)	Attitudinal outcomes: job satisfaction (-.24), job withdrawal (.16), work withdrawal (.30), organizational commitment (-.25) Behavioral outcomes: productivity (-.22) Health and well-being outcomes: mental health (-.27), physical health (-.25), PTSD (.25), life satisfaction (-.12)		
Hershcovis and Barling (2010)	Workplace aggression (supervisor aggression, coworker aggression, outsider aggression)		Attitudinal outcomes: job satisfaction (supervisor: -.38, coworker: -.25, outsider: -.14), affective commitment (supervisor: -.28, coworker: -.20, outsider: -.08), turnover intention (supervisor: .30, coworker: .23, outsider: .17) Behavioral outcomes: interpersonal deviance (supervisor: .34, coworker: .47, outsider: .28), organizational deviance (supervisor: .39, coworker: .29, outsider: .20), performance (supervisor: -.17, coworker: -.09) Health and well-being outcomes: psychological distress (supervisor: -.28, coworker: -.21, outsider: -.22), emotional exhaustion (supervisor: .35, coworker: .31, outsider: .36), depression (supervisor: .26, coworker: .24, outsider: .36), physical well-being (supervisor: -.20, coworker: -.24, outsider: -.19)		

Appendix A (continued)

Citation	Workplace aggression variable	Antecedent	Consequence	Mechanism linking workplace aggression and outcomes	Moderating effect of cultural dimensions
Schyns and Schilling (2013)	Destructive leadership		<p>Attitudinal outcomes: job satisfaction (-.34), positive job attitudes (-.32), commitment (-.21), turnover intention (.31), positive attitudes toward the leader (-.57), resistance toward the leader (.30)</p> <p>Justice perception: justice (-.32)</p> <p>Affective outcomes: positive affectivity (-.09), negative affectivity (.34)</p> <p>Self-perception: positive self-evaluation (-.17)</p> <p>Health and well-being outcomes: follower stress (.24), follower well-being (-.35)</p> <p>Behavioral outcomes: CWB (.38), individual performance (-.20)</p> <p>Attitudinal outcomes: job satisfaction (-.35), organizational commitments (-.30), organizational identification (-.22), turnover intention (.30), work engagement (-.29)</p> <p>Justice perception: distributive justice (-.31), procedural justice (-.34), interpersonal justice (-.51)</p> <p>Behavioral outcomes: organization-directed deviance (.38), interpersonal-directed deviance (.37), supervisor-directed deviance (.51), direct communication with supervisors (-.22), avoiding contact (.43), OCB (-.24), voice (-.25), job performance (-.16), family undermining (.30), work-family conflict (.37)</p> <p>Health and well-being outcomes: anger (.15), anxiety (.30), depression (.29), distress (.56), emotional exhaustion (.35), psychological health (-.34), organizational-based self-esteem (-.31), unhealthy synonyms (.24)</p>		
Zhang and Liao (2015)	Abusive supervision				<p>Power distance: Abusive supervision—turnover (high power distance: .04; low power distance: .26)</p> <p>Abusive supervision—organization-directed deviance (high power distance: .34; low power distance: .42)</p> <p>Abusive supervision—leader-directed deviance (high power distance: .41; low power distance: .49)</p> <p>Abusive supervision—supervision—OCB (high power distance: -.37; low power distance: -.22)</p>
Zhang and Bednall (2016)	Abusive supervision	<p>Leadership: ethical leadership (-.57), supportive leadership (-.53), transformational leadership (-.45), authoritarian leadership style (.49), unethical leadership (.58), supervisor interactional justice (-.43), supervisor procedural justice (-.21), supervisors' negative experiences (.28), supervisors' negative affect (.33), supervisor stress (.16),</p>			

(Appendices continue)

Appendix A (continued)

Citation	Workplace aggression variable	Antecedent	Consequence	Mechanism linking workplace aggression and outcomes	Moderating effect of cultural dimensions
Mackey et al. (2017)	Abusive supervision	<p>supervisor emotional intelligence (-.43), supervisor power (.03), supervisors' Machiavellianism (.29)</p> <p>Individual characteristics: political skill (.21), stability (-.08), cynical attribution (.13), negative affectivity (.32), power distance (.26), supervisor-directed attribution (.39), traditionality (-.14), narcissism (.32), neuroticism (.10), conscientiousness (-.06), extraversion (-.01), agreeableness (-.16), age (-.04), gender dissimilarity (-.05)</p> <p>Contextual characteristics: organizational sanctions (-.32), aggressive norm (.38)</p> <p>Individual characteristics: gender (-.06), age (-.03), age of supervisor (-.06), organizational tenure (.02), education (-.02), position in organization (.05), agreeableness (-.14), conscientiousness (-.14), extraversion (-.03), neuroticism (.12), openness (-.05), positive affectivity (-.18), negative affectivity (.37)</p> <p>Leadership: authoritarian leadership (.41), ethical leadership (-.50), LMX (-.54)</p>	<p>Justice perception: distributive justice (-.25), interactional justice (-.55), interpersonal justice (-.66), procedural justice (-.36)</p> <p>Attitudinal outcomes: affective organizational commitment (-.26), job satisfaction (-.34)</p> <p>Health and well-being outcomes: depression (.24), emotional exhaustion (.36), job tension (.24)</p> <p>Relational outcomes: perceived organizational support (-.40), work-family conflict (.35)</p> <p>Behavioral outcomes: OCB (-.24), CWB (.41), performance (-.19), interpersonal deviance (.35), supervisor deviance (.53), organizational deviance (.41)</p>	<p>Abusive supervision → organizational justice → OCB/CWB (-.16/.03)</p> <p>Abusive supervision → work stress → OCB/CWB (-.03/.07)</p>	<p>Masculinity: Masculinity was positively related to the magnitude of the relationship between abusive supervision and CWB ($B = .72, p = .00$)</p>
McCord et al. (2018)	Workplace mistreatment	Individual characteristics: gender (.13), race (.14)	Behavioral outcomes: job performance (-.23), OCB (-.24), OCB (-.25), organization-directed deviance (.40), leader-directed deviance (.56)	Abusive supervision → organizational justice → OCB/CWB (-.16/.03)	Masculinity: Masculinity was positively related to the magnitude of the relationship between abusive supervision and CWB ($B = .72, p = .00$)
Mackey, McAllister, et al. (2019)	Destructive leadership	Individual characteristics: gender (.13), race (.14)	Behavioral outcomes: OCB (-.21), OCB (-.17), CWBO (.38), CWBI (.37)	Abusive supervision → organizational justice → OCB/CWB (-.16/.03)	Masculinity: Masculinity was positively related to the magnitude of the relationship between abusive supervision and CWB ($B = .72, p = .00$)
Zhang et al. (2019)	Abusive supervision	Individual characteristics: gender (-.06), age (.01), tenure (.00), education (.04), full- or part-time (-.12), extraversion (-.29), agreeableness (-.30), neuroticism (.30), conscientiousness (-.23), openness (-.12), political skill (-.16), need to belong (-.10), future orientation (.01)	Affective outcomes: negative emotions (.39), positive emotions (-.17)	Abusive supervision → work stress → OCB/CWB (-.03/.07)	Masculinity: Masculinity was positively related to the magnitude of the relationship between abusive supervision and CWB ($B = .72, p = .00$)
Howard et al. (2020)	Workplace ostracism	Contextual characteristics: perceived social support (-.20)	Self-perception: favorable self-perceptions (-.32)	Abusive supervision → work stress → OCB/CWB (-.03/.07)	Masculinity: Masculinity was positively related to the magnitude of the relationship between abusive supervision and CWB ($B = .72, p = .00$)
		Individual characteristics: gender (-.06), age (.01), tenure (.00), education (.04), full- or part-time (-.12), extraversion (-.29), agreeableness (-.30), neuroticism (.30), conscientiousness (-.23), openness (-.12), political skill (-.16), need to belong (-.10), future orientation (.01)	Attitudinal outcomes: turnover (.10), turnover intention (.33), satisfaction (-.40), identification (-.25), commitment (-.27), engagement (-.26)	Abusive supervision → work stress → OCB/CWB (-.03/.07)	Masculinity: Masculinity was positively related to the magnitude of the relationship between abusive supervision and CWB ($B = .72, p = .00$)
		Contextual characteristics: perceived social support (-.20)	Justice perception: justice perceptions (-.37)	Abusive supervision → work stress → OCB/CWB (-.03/.07)	Masculinity: Masculinity was positively related to the magnitude of the relationship between abusive supervision and CWB ($B = .72, p = .00$)

(Appendices continue)

Appendix A (continued)

Citation	Workplace aggression variable	Antecedent	Consequence	Mechanism linking workplace aggression and outcomes	Moderating effect of cultural dimensions
Han et al. (2022)	Workplace incivility	<p>Leadership: LMX (-.45), abusive supervision (.66), supervisor ostracism (.59)</p> <p>Individual characteristics: negative affectivity (.33), positive affectivity (-.18), extraversion (-.10), agreeableness (-.09), neuroticism (.20), conscientiousness (-.19), openness (-.13), gender (.01), race (.04), age (-.04), tenure (-.08)</p> <p>Contextual characteristics: lack of civility norms (.52), incivility climate (.68)</p> <p>Leadership: passive leadership (.34)</p>	<p>Behavioral outcomes: in-role performance (-.25), helping (-.23), voice (-.24), silence (.57), deviance (.45)</p> <p>Health and well-being outcomes: emotional exhaustion (.39), depression (.41), psychological well-being (-.28), job tension (.34), belongingness (-.48)</p> <p>Affective outcomes: negative affect (.48), positive affect (-.14), job satisfaction (-.41)</p> <p>Attitudinal outcomes: turnover intention (.32), organizational commitment (-.37)</p> <p>Relational outcomes: organizational justice (-.55), interpersonal justice (-.56), trust in the organization (-.54), trust in the supervisor (-.54), perceived organizational support (-.31), supervisor satisfaction (-.53), coworker satisfaction (-.42)</p> <p>Behavioral outcomes: job performance (-.25), OCB (-.10), CWB (.47), instigated incivility (.61), work engagement (-.20), withdrawal behavior (.37)</p> <p>Health and well-being outcomes: burnout (.46), emotional exhaustion (.44), stress (.41), depression (.32), anxiety (.34), psychological well-being (-.32), mental health (-.40), physical health (-.32), rumination (.46)</p> <p>Behavioral outcomes: CWB (.51)</p>	<p>Leader mistreatment → social exchange → CWB (.02)</p> <p>Leader mistreatment → negative affect → CWB (.16)</p> <p>Leader mistreatment → self-regulatory impairment → CWB (.02)</p>	<p>Power distance: leader mistreatment → social exchange → CWB (high power distance: .11, low power distance: .01)</p> <p>Leader mistreatment → negative affect → CWB (high power distance: .45, low power distance: .19)</p> <p>Leader mistreatment → self-regulatory impairment → CWB (high power distance: -.14, low power distance: -.03)</p>
Liang et al. (2022)	Leader mistreatment				

(Appendices continue)

Appendix A (*continued*)

Citation	Workplace aggression variable	Antecedent	Consequence	Mechanism linking workplace aggression and outcomes	Moderating effect of cultural dimensions
Park and Martínez (2022)	Workplace incivility	Health and well-being antecedents: burnout (.46), depersonalization (.42), emotional exhaustion (.29), job stress (.30), negative affect state (.50), job-related affective well-being (-.37), mental health (-.14), state positive affect (-.09), psychological capital (-.19), well-being (-.15), physical well-being (-.25) Individual characteristics: trait anger (.40), entitlement (.37), Machiavellianism (.70), narcissism (.38), trait negative affect (.47), neuroticism (.28), psychopathy (.68), agreeableness (-.31), conscientiousness (-.26), emotional intelligence (-.36), trait positive affect (.03), social desirability (-.09), age (-.08), education (.00), gender (-.08), job tenure (-.02), organizational level (.10), race (-.03) Attitudinal antecedents: job insecurity (.23), psychological contract violation (.40), turnover intentions (.23), work/nonwork conflict (.31), job involvement (.03), job satisfaction (-.32), organizational commitment (-.35) Justice perception: fairness perceptions (-.35), distributive justice perceptions (-.13), interactional justice perceptions (-.33), procedural justice perceptions (-.20) Job characteristics: job demand (.05), work hours (.08), workload (.17), job control (-.07) Contextual characteristics: workgroup civility (-.38), coworker support (-.21), leader-member exchange (-.08), supervisor support (-.22), trust in the management (-.29) Individual characteristics: gender (.05), race (-.04), education (.01), rank (-.04), tenure (-.10), agreeableness (-.11), conscientiousness (-.19), extraversion (-.04), neuroticism (.17), negative affectivity (.25), self-esteem (-.26) Contextual characteristics: perceived uncivil climate (.38), perceived socially supportive climate (-.24)	Affective outcomes: negative affect (.43) Justice perception: injustice perceptions (.56) Attitudinal outcomes: job satisfaction (-.43), affective commitment (-.32), turnover intention (.27) Behavioral outcomes: OCB (-.19), CWB (.40), task performance (-.25) Health and well-being outcomes: well-being (-.38)		
Yao et al. (2022)	Workplace incivility				

Note. Variables in bold represent theoretical mechanisms tested in previous meta-analyses. Numbers inside the parenthesis indicate the actual meta-analytic results (i.e., estimated mean meta-analytic corrected correlations for antecedents and consequences; indirect effects for mechanisms) from previous research. For gender, 0 = male, 1 = female; for race, 0 = racial minorities, 1 = racial majorities; OCB = organizational citizenship behavior; CWB = counterproductive work behavior; PTSD = posttraumatic stress disorder; LMX = leader-member exchange; OCBO = organizational citizenship behavior toward organization; OCBI = organizational citizenship behavior toward individual; CWBO = counterproductive work behavior toward organization; CWBI = counterproductive work behavior toward individual.

(*Appendices continue*)

Appendix B
Full Meta-Analytic Results of Bivariate Correlation

Variable X	Variable Y	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{r}	<i>SDr</i>	$\hat{\rho}$	<i>SDρ</i>	95% CI	80% CV
Workplace aggression	Relationship quality	82	29,866	-.31	0.17	-.35	0.19	[-.39, -.31]	[-.59, -.11]
	Justice perception	36	9,992	-.36	0.18	-.40	0.19	[-.46, -.33]	[-.64, -.16]
	Psychological strain	123	44,126	.35	0.16	.40	0.18	[.37, .43]	[.18, .61]
	Negative affect	71	20,125	.39	0.18	.44	0.20	[.40, .49]	[.20, .69]
	State self-evaluation	62	17,126	-.25	0.14	-.28	0.15	[-.32, -.24]	[-.46, -.10]
	Task performance	135	42,627	-.18	0.14	-.20	0.16	[-.23, -.17]	[-.39, -.01]
	Citizenship behavior	140	40,035	-.16	0.17	-.18	0.20	[-.21, -.15]	[-.42, .06]
Relationship quality	Deviant behavior	292	95,226	.33	0.21	.38	0.23	[.36, .41]	[.09, .67]
	Justice perception	10	3,365	.56	0.17	.63	0.18	[.51, .76]	[.39, .88]
	Psychological strain	13	5,521	-.36	0.26	-.43	0.29	[-.60, -.25]	[-.81, -.04]
	Negative affect	9	2,947	-.20	0.17	-.24	0.19	[-.38, -.09]	[-.49, .02]
	State self-evaluation	12	4,593	.35	0.16	.41	0.20	[.29, .54]	[.15, .68]
	Task performance	26	9,204	.22	0.12	.25	0.14	[.19, .30]	[.08, .41]
	Citizenship behavior	37	11,063	.31	0.14	.36	0.16	[.31, .41]	[.16, .56]
Justice perception	Deviant behavior	43	16,621	-.22	0.12	-.27	0.14	[-.31, -.22]	[-.44, -.10]
	Psychological strain	10	2,459	-.21	0.13	-.24	0.14	[-.34, -.14]	[-.41, -.06]
	Negative affect	8	2,270	-.22	0.11	-.25	0.12	[-.35, -.15]	[-.40, -.11]
	State self-evaluation	5	903	.23	0.25	.27	0.27	[-.06, .60]	[-.12, .66]
	Task performance	6	1,915	.15	0.20	.18	0.22	[-.05, .41]	[-.14, .49]
Psychological strain	Citizenship behavior	13	4,155	.24	0.13	.28	0.14	[.19, .36]	[.10, .45]
	Deviant behavior	23	5,763	-.19	0.12	-.22	0.14	[-.28, -.16]	[-.37, -.06]
	Negative affect	11	4,971	.58	0.24	.66	0.29	[.46, .86]	[.26, 1.06]
	State self-evaluation	10	3,712	-.44	0.22	-.50	0.27	[-.70, -.31]	[-.88, -.13]
Negative affect	Task performance	31	12,556	-.23	0.17	-.26	0.19	[-.33, -.19]	[-.50, -.02]
	Citizenship behavior	20	5,967	-.16	0.30	-.19	0.34	[-.35, -.03]	[-.64, .26]
	Deviant behavior	83	30,820	.26	0.16	.31	0.18	[.27, .35]	[.09, .53]
	State self-evaluation	6	2,082	-.21	0.11	-.24	0.13	[-.38, -.10]	[-.41, -.07]
	Task performance	15	4,078	-.21	0.12	-.25	0.13	[-.32, -.18]	[-.40, -.10]
State self-evaluation	Citizenship behavior	17	3,622	-.01	0.21	-.02	0.24	[-.14, .11]	[-.32, .29]
	Deviant behavior	59	17,078	.28	0.17	.33	0.20	[.28, .38]	[.08, .58]
	Task performance	29	8,149	.33	0.16	.38	0.19	[.31, .46]	[.15, .62]
Task performance	Citizenship behavior	23	5,399	.28	0.12	.32	0.13	[.26, .38]	[.17, .47]
	Deviant behavior	27	7,451	-.20	0.13	-.22	0.15	[-.28, -.16]	[-.40, -.04]
	Citizenship behavior	38	11,558	.46	0.21	.53	0.23	[.46, .61]	[.24, .82]
Citizenship behavior	Deviant behavior	26	7,902	-.21	0.17	-.25	0.19	[-.33, -.17]	[-.48, -.02]
	Deviant behavior	44	12,104	-.26	0.20	-.30	0.23	[-.37, -.23]	[-.59, -.02]

Note. *k* = number of samples; *N* = total sample size; \bar{r} = mean sample size-weighted correlation; *SDr* = standard deviation of \bar{r} ; $\hat{\rho}$ = estimated mean corrected correlation; *SD ρ* = standard deviation of $\hat{\rho}$; CI = confidence interval around $\hat{\rho}$; CV = credibility interval around $\hat{\rho}$.

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