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Title: How does leader aggressive humor precipitate addictive behavior among employees? The role of formal and informal interaction between leader and employee

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Page2: Abstract

Title: How does leader aggressive humor precipitate addictive behavior among employees? The role of formal and informal interaction between leader and employee

Summary: Leader aggressive humor has detrimental effects on both individuals and organizations, particularly influencing negative employee behaviors. This study aims to explore the broader question of what additional consequences leader aggressive humor may create on employee well-being, including the potential influence on employee addictive behavior. Drawing from attachment theory, we present the relationship between leaders and employees in two contexts: the work-related Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and the non-work-related Leader-Member Guanxi (LMG), serving as novel mediators to elucidate the link between leader aggressive humor and employee addictive behaviors. This study involved a questionnaire survey of 375 Vietnamese full-time employees, with results indicating a positive correlation between leader aggressive humor and employee cyberloafing and drinking. We also found that LMX acts as a mediator between leader aggressive humor and cyberloafing, while LMG serves as a mediator between leader aggressive humor and drinking. Furthermore, anxious attachment styles moderate these indirect relationships.

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Introduction

Scholarly attention has been directed towards the importance of humor in leadership communication. According to Pundt and Herrmann (2015), leader humor is a communication strategy employed by leaders to amuse subordinates through the sharing of amusing anecdotes. Leaders often utilize humor as a tool to bridge communication gaps between leaders and employees, enhancing employee psychological capital (Wijewardena et al., 2017), promoting employee organizational citizenship behavior (Tremblay, 2017, Yang and Zhang, 2022), and enhancing team performance (Fu and Wen, 2021). Despite existing research on the positive aspects of leader humor, there is limited empirical examination of its potential inefficiencies on employee attitudes and behaviors. One type of humor that may bring harm to the interpersonal relationship is leader aggressive humor. As defined by Pundt and Herrmann (2015), leader aggressive humor involves leaders using humor to mock or ridicule individuals. Past studies have found that leader aggressive humor affects employee negative responses, such as employee silence (Wei et al., 2022) and lower employee job satisfaction (Robert et al., 2016). Many studies have employed the pillar theory to elucidate the consequences of aggressive humor with a focus on employee emotion (Huo et al., 2012, Yang and Yang, 2023, Wei et al., 2022). Majority of the existing literature have adopted reciprocity theory (Goswami et al., 2015, Wei et al., 2022), cognitive-affective personality system theory (Chen et al., 2022) and power dependence theory (Huo et al., 2012) to explain the negative consequences of leader aggressive humor. These theories explained how LAH impacts the cognitive-affective process and the reciprocity rule between leaders and employees, ultimately resulting in negative outcomes for employees. However, they mostly focus on explaining the employee's emotional and affective aspects. Huang (2023) also called for the exploration of negative forms of humor and adopt additional relationship theories. In response, our study employs attachment theory as a framework to comprehend the process from leader behavior to employee behaviors. By using attachment theory, we explain leader aggressive humor as a threat that triggers the employee attachment behavioral system - an innate psychological mechanism for seeking support during times of need. This phenomenon influences the quality of the leader-member relationship, including work tie relationship as Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and non-work tie relationship as Leader-Member Guanxi (LMG). Consequently, when employees confront the risk of losing a relationship with a leader, it induces emotional trauma, grief, feelings of abandonment, and elicits negative responses as coping mechanisms (He et al., 2022, Wu et al., 2018, Song et al., 2017). Our study focuses on examining how leader aggressive humor affects employee addictive behavior, both during work hours as cyberloafing and after work as drinking. Those negative responses are minor of addictive behavior. However, it could exert a notable impact on various work-related behaviors, including job performance, attendance, and workplace safety (Huo et al., 2012). Due to leader aggressive humor, employees are prone to respond with behaviors like cyberloafing, drinking as a form of suitable reciprocity. Furthermore, we also employ attachment theory to clarify the effect of leader aggressive humor under the condition of attachment style. Specifically, employees with an anxious attachment style may internalize blame when facing leader aggressive humor and experiencing low levels of both LMX and LMG. This could lead them to potentially resort to addictive behaviors as a coping mechanism.

Our study provides three significant contributions to the existing literature. Firstly, previous research mostly explains the impact of leader aggressive humor on employee well-being via the role of emotion; we extend the leader humor literature by examining how leader aggressive humor leads to negative employee behavior through interpersonal relationships. We contend that

two specific forms of leader-employee relationships, namely Leader-Member Exchange and Leader-Member Guanxi, exert differential influences on upwardly negative behaviors. Indeed, research on the consistent examination of the impact of both formal and informal leader-member relationships, particularly in the context of leader humor, remains limited. We are among the first to involve both type of leader-member relationships into the framework of leader aggressive humor. Our study contribute to investigate how leader aggressive humor influences employee behavior in both formal and informal relationships. Moreover, the study seeks to clarify the distinct mediation effects of LMX and LMG on the influence of leader aggressive humor on employee addictive behaviors. It contributes in understanding how a negative humor from leader affect both aspects of the leader-employee relationship—both during work and after work.

Secondly, we are among the first to employ attachment theory, proposing that leader aggressive humor activates the employee attachment behavioral system and elicits addictive behavior as a response. Attachment theory offers a clear interpretation of the detrimental effects of leader aggressive humor through the lens of the attachment process. Furthermore, we also base our approach on attachment theory and introduce anxious attachment style as a moderator that influences how leaders' aggressive humor impacts their employees' negative behaviors. By doing so, we answer the call for using alternative theories and research on the boundary conditions that regulate the manner in which leader humor activates employee behaviors (Huang, 2023).

Lastly, we contribute to the literature review on employee well-being by exploring the differential effects of leader aggressive humor on various outcomes: cyberloafing and drinking. We provide valuable insights into the diverse ways in which employees respond to different facets of this leadership behavior. This enhances our comprehension of the interplay between leader behavior and employee well-being.

Theoretical background and Hypothesis development

Leader Aggressive humor

Leader humor is a communication tool employed by leaders, involving verbal or nonverbal activities like sharing humorous stories (Cooper, 2005). Martin et al. (2003) identified four humor styles, based on two dimensions: the target of humor (oneself or others) and the content of humor (positive or potentially harmful). These dimensions yield four styles: self-enhancing, affiliative, aggressive, and self-defeating humors. Positive humor serves as a management tool to ease tension and foster cohesion (Xu et al., 2023, Liu et al., 2020, Neves and Karagonlar, 2020, Tremblay, 2021) while negative humor can be detrimental to both individuals and the organization (Wei et al., 2022). We specifically explore aggressive humor because this type of humor represents the unwanted effect on interpersonal relationship and assert negative impact on employee and organization (Wei et al., 2022). Leaders who use aggressive humor to engage in teasing, belittling, humiliating, or ridiculing employees or team members without considering how these could make other people feel (Huo et al., 2012). Employees experiencing aggressive humor may respond with negative emotions and behaviors, resulting in outcomes such as employee silence, addictive behaviors, and reduced extra-role behaviors (Yang and Yang, 2023, Wei et al., 2022, Huo et al., 2012). Additionally, aggressive humor is linked to lower employee job satisfaction and has a positive correlated with bystander workplace withdrawal behavior through the mechanisms of bystander affective rumination and bystander workplace anxiety (Chen et al., 2022, Robert et al., 2016).

Leader aggressive humor and addictive behavior

Employee addictive behavior refers to behavioral patterns wherein individuals engage excessively and compulsively in certain activities (Widyanto and McMurran, 2004). These

addictive patterns can manifest in substances such as alcohol or tobacco, as well as behaviors like gambling or internet addiction. Such behaviors often result in diminished productivity, impaired job performance, and other adverse outcomes (Young, 2004, Chang and Law, 2008, Kong et al., 2023). This study focuses on examining how leader aggressive humor affects employee addictive behavior, both during work hours as cyberloafing and after work as drinking. Drinking is a pattern of alcohol consumption—common addictive behaviors in daily life (Prokhorov et al., 1996, Lee et al., 2015). On the other hand, cyberloafing refers to employees using the internet for non-work-related purposes during working hours (Lim, 2002). For instance, employees may send personal emails or browse the web to play games or read news on their computers or cellphones (Zhou et al., 2022). We concentrate on cyberloafing and drinking for several reasons. Initially, given the influence of leader aggressive humor, it is plausible that it could impact minor deviant behaviors such as cyberloafing and drinking. Moreover, in the contemporary landscape of information and technology, internet usage is imperative for work, presenting an easy avenue for engaging in non-work activities through mobile phones, such as online shopping and web browsing. Drinking is also a prevalent activity chosen to alleviate sadness. Additionally, with the aim of elucidating the relationship between leaders and employees during both work and after work hours, we aim to scrutinize two types of addictive behaviors occurring in these distinct timeframes.

In the organizational context, a mutually beneficial relationship is established through positive and reciprocal norms between superiors and subordinates (Wei et al., 2022). On the other hand, leader's mistreatment can trigger employee's negative reciprocity as part of the norm of negative reciprocity. Individuals subjected to mistreatment are likely to engage in negative coping behaviors to alleviate their discomfort (Biron, 2010). The utilization of aggressive humor by leaders has been shown to disrupt the positive and mutually beneficial relationships between leaders and subordinates (Pundt and Herrmann, 2015), leading subordinates to exhibit negative attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, researches pointed out that individuals experiencing chronic stress may develop addictive behaviors related to alcohol, tobacco, or excessive internet use (Huo et al., 2012). Furthermore, leaders who exhibit poor communication skills or neglect to address concerns and issues in the workplace may contribute to an environment of tension and anxiety, increasing the likelihood of addictive behaviors (Huo et al., 2012). So, employee addictive behavior may be motivated by leader aggressive humor. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1a: Leader aggressive humor is positively associated with employee cyberloafing at work

Hypothesis 1b: Leader aggressive humor is positively associated with employee drinking

Attachment theory and leader-member relationship

According to Bowlby (1969) "attachment" refers to the human inclination to seek and form affectionate bonds with specific individuals. Recognized as a foundational concept in human relationships, attachment theory stands as one of the most impactful theories in psychology (Finkel et al., 2017). Based on Attachment theory, individuals naturally seek for close interaction with those who fulfill their needs for social and emotional development (Bowlby, 1973). This process forms one's attachment behavioral system—an innate psychological mechanism for seeking support during times of need. Based on the theory, physical and psychological threats or stressful events will activate one's attachment psychological and behaviors system (Bowlby, 1969, Yip et al., 2018). In response, the individual actively looks for an attachment figure and seeks support from this person. The process guides individuals to achieve a sense of security by fulfilling two primary relationship functions: a secure base for autonomy and exploration and a safe haven for

support and comfort in times of psychological or physical stress (Yip et al., 2018, Bowlby, 1973, Hazan, 1994).

In the organizational context, a leader can be regarded as an employee's attachment figure when meeting three conditions: responding to the individual's proximity-seeking attempts in times of need, providing a safe haven, and offering a secure base (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2003). Forming a relationship with a leader creates an attachment system facilitated through Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and Leader-Member Guanxi (LMG). According to He et al. (2022), leader-member relationships fall into two categories: work-related leader-member exchange (LMX) and non-work-related leader-member guanxi (LMG). Employees not only cultivate work-related relationships to fulfill their work roles but also engage in social interactions with supervisors to establish personal, non-work connections. LMX refers to the quality and nature of the relationship between a leader and an individual team member within an organization during working hour. This professional relationship is characterized by mutual obligation, respect, and trust (Pundt and Herrmann, 2015). The cultivation of high-quality LMX involves a leader sharing information about work-related matters, organizing resources, and providing vocational training, with the expectation that employees will exhibit improved performance and heightened commitment. High-quality LMX provides developmental opportunities and autonomy during work hours, it addresses survival needs, fulfilling the secure base aspect. We propose that LMX addresses survival needs and represent the secure base aspect. On the other hand, guanxi is a term used to describe interpersonal relationships that are not related to work (Yang and Zhang, 2022, Yang, 1994). In the context of leadership, the personal relationship between leader and employee originating mainly from nonwork-related social interactions (Boyd and Taylor, 1998, Farh et al., 1998). This concept is shaped by traditional Chinese values and underscores the notion of 'social connections,' implicitly grounded in mutual trust, respect, and obligation in leader-follower relationships (Yang and Zhang, 2022). Within a high-quality LMG dyad, employees are expected to demonstrate strong loyalty to their leaders through activities such as gift-giving or maintaining frequent contact, while the leaders often perceive it as their social duty to furnish support and protection for employees (Law et al., 2000). LMG provides chances to share their thoughts, problems, needs, and feelings with their leaders and thus caters to affective needs, fulfilling the safe haven base aspect (Law et al., 2000). We propose that LMG will cater to affective needs, thus represent the safe haven base aspect. Henceforth, the co-exist of LMX during work hours and LMG during non-work hours allows employees to develop their attachment behavioral system within the organizational context.

Scholars have based attachment theory to enhance the understanding of leadership behavior and leader-employee relationships (Fein et al., 2020, Richards and Hackett, 2012). We argue that, aggressive humor will act as a threat that trigger employee's attachment psychological and behavioral system and drive them to find and rely on their "stronger and wiser" figure that they attached to. Nevertheless, when the leader, who supposed to be the attached figure, acts as the sources of threat and doesn't response to the employee's proximity-seeking attempts, the functioning of the attachment system is disrupted (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2003). Employees will be unable to activate their attachment psychological and behavioral system. Furthermore, Neves and Karagonlar (2020) asserts that aggressive humor signals a lack of benevolence, integrity, and competence, risking LMX and LMG quality. Thus, employees may question the leader's competence, leading to a reduction in resource exchange in the work domain and lacking survival security. Moreover, employees may hesitate to share emotions or seek social support and empathy from a leader perceived as lacking benevolence, resulting in a decline in LMG quality and lacking

of social interaction. This sense of unsafe when employee interact the attached figure (i.e., leader) will subsequently drive them to engage into addictive behavior as a form of relief. According to Albert et al. (2015) the termination of a significant relationship is distressing, often evoking intense emotional responses like anxiety, despair, sadness, and anger (Fraley and Bonanno, 2004, Wortman and Silver, 1989). The risk of losing a relationship with an attached figure (i.e., leader) leads employees to experience emotional trauma, grief, and feelings of abandonment. Furthermore, the unfulfilled need of survival and social connection induce the psychological distress among employee who experience LAH. In the coping response, employees tend to resort to addictive behaviors, including cyberloafing, smoking, and drinking (Huo et al., 2012). Thus, we propose that leader aggressive humor (LAH) positively influences employee addictive behavior through the mediation of LMX and LMG, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 2a: Leader member exchange mediates the relationship of leader aggressive humor and cyberloafing.

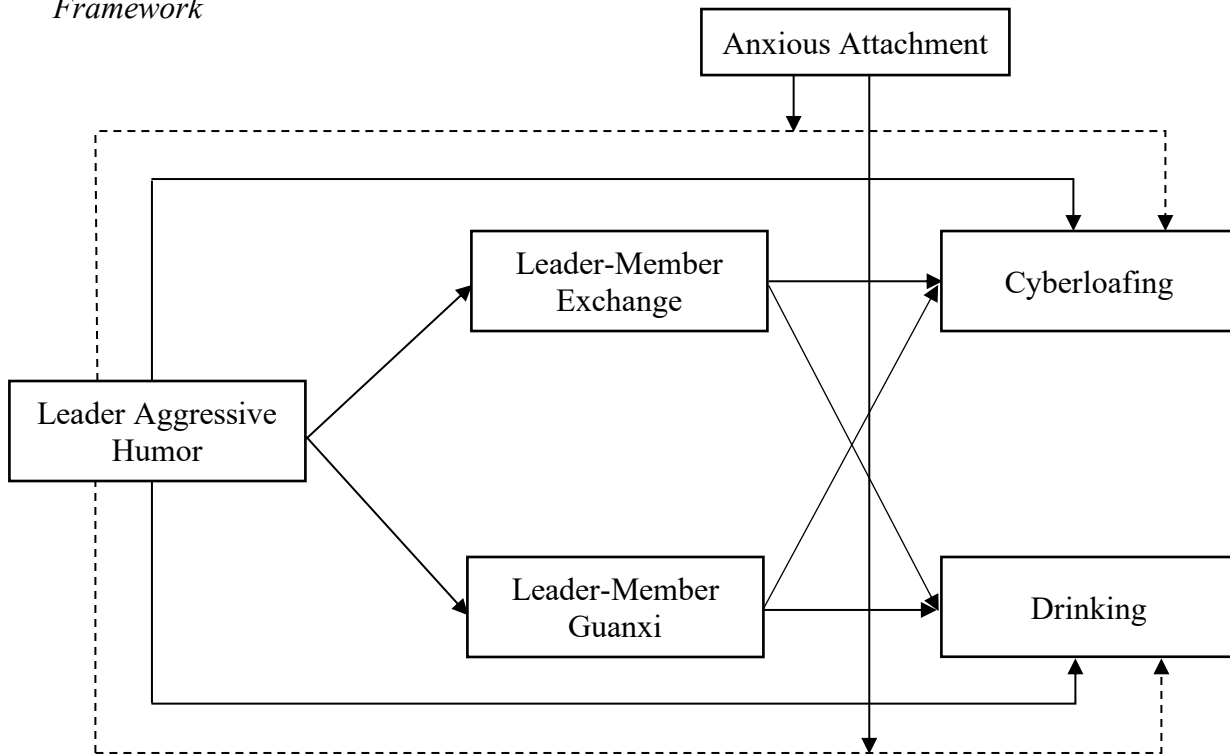
Hypothesis 2b: Leader member exchange mediates the relationship of leader aggressive humor and drinking.

Hypothesis 3a: Leader member guanxi mediates the relationship of leader aggressive humor and cyberloafing.

Hypothesis 3b: Leader member guanxi mediates the relationship of leader aggressive humor and drinking.

Figure 1

Framework



The moderating role of anxious attachment style

Attachment theory posits that individuals tend to mimic dynamics from past relationships with significant figures (Bowlby, 1980). These early interactions with caregivers contribute to individual differences, shaping the development of a dominant attachment style in adulthood,

which tends to endure across one's lifespan (Albert et al., 2015). Historically, the literature categorized attachment into three types: secure, anxious, and avoidant (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). Thereafter, attachment theory has transitioned to a two-dimensional conceptualization involving attachment-related avoidance and attachment-related anxiety, supported by consensus for a more accurate representation of attachment's fundamental structure (Mikulincer, 2007a). Organizational researchers have demonstrated that employees' attachment styles can impact various work-related attitudes and behaviors, leading to distinct responses (Yip et al., 2018). In which anxious attachment is known as the degree to which an individual worries that others won't be there for them in difficult circumstances and cries out for their affection and support (Shulman et al., 2015). Moreover, anxiety signifies a negative self-view, manifesting as a fear of rejection and abandonment. Thus, an employee with an anxious attachment style is prone to experiencing suffering and distress when confronted with a threat and encountering rejection of support.

According to Albert et al. (2015), individuals with an anxious disposition tend to interpret even minor situations as threatening and respond with a "hyperactivating" reaction to perceived threats. As suggested by Mikulincer and Shaver (2003) individuals characterized by anxiety tend to predominantly recall experiences of suffering and pain. Their narratives often express emotions of helplessness, abandonment, and a loss of control, aligning with their hyperactivation of threat-related feelings. Therefore, employees with an anxious attachment style, when confronted with leader aggressive humor and experiencing a diminished quality of the relationship with their leader, may undergo heightened feelings of abandonment. Faced with perceived relationship inadequacy, they might internalize blame, potentially turning to addictive behaviors as a coping mechanism. Furthermore, individuals with an anxious attachment are uncertain about the availability and supportiveness of their partners, harbor doubts about their self-worth, and seek reassurance of acceptance by their partners (Ainsworth, 1978, Bowlby, 1969). Therefore, anxiously attached employees may engage in unhealthy behaviors such as drinking, and cyberloafing as a means of coping with feelings of abandonment when facing with low support from leader. Consequently, we posit that the impact of leader aggressive humor on employee addictive behavior through LMX and LMG will be more pronounced when the employee exhibits a high anxious attachment style. Hence, it is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 4a: Employee attachment style moderates the relationship between leader aggressive humor and employee cyberloafing via LMX, such that, the relationship is stronger when employee with high anxious attachment.

Hypothesis 4b: Employee attachment style moderates the relationship between leader aggressive humor and employee drinking via LMX such that, the relationship is stronger when employee with high anxious attachment.

Hypothesis 5a: Employee attachment style moderates the relationship between leader aggressive humor and employee cyberloafing via LMG such that, the relationship is stronger when employee with high anxious attachment.

Hypothesis 5b: Employee attachment style moderates the relationship between leader aggressive humor and employee drinking via LMG such that, the relationship is stronger when employee with high anxious attachment.

Methodology

Participants and procedure

The current research recruited Vietnamese full-time employees from various industries to enrich the scope of the study. We distributed the questionnaires online, ensuring the anonymity of respondents by excluding personal information such as name, address and company's name. All

items have been translated into Vietnamese and we have forwarded the translations to three Vietnamese scholars in the field of organizational behavior to validate the questionnaire's clarity. Then we also back-translated following Bandura (1986) procedure to make a comparison of the original and back-translated into English version. Data collection transpired at three distinct time intervals, each separated by a two-week gap. At Time 1, measurements were taken for leader aggressive humor and demographic information. Time 2, occurring two weeks subsequent to Time 1, concentrated on evaluating leader-member exchange and leader-member guanxi. Lastly, at Time 3, which was one month after Time 1, data was collected concerning employee addictive behavior and their anxious attachment style.

Measures

In the process of designing the questionnaire, we plan to integrate validated scales from global studies to measure leader aggressive humor, leader-member exchange, leader-member guanxi, cyberloafing, drinking and anxious attachment style. The data for these variables will be scored using a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Leader aggressive humor (LAH): We measured Leader aggressive humor scale using the respective subscales of the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) by Martin et al. (2003), with 8-items in total. A sample item was: "If someone makes a mistake, my leader often teases them about it". The Cronbach's alpha for this eight scale was .94.

Leader member exchange (LMX): We measured LMX with the well-established seven-items measure developed by Graen and Uhlbien (1995). Sample items include "I know how my leader satisfied what I do" and "I have effective working relationship with my leader". The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .83.

Leader member guanxi (LMG): Leader-member guanxi was measured by the six-item scale developed by Law et al. (2000). A sample item was "My supervisor invites me to his/her home for lunch or dinner". The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .88.

Employee addictive behavior:

+ Cyberloafing: We measured cyberloafing using a three-item scale developed by Moody and Siponen (2013). A sample item was "In general, I use the Internet at work for non-work-related purposes". The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .96.

+ Drinking: As per Huo et al. (2012), the measured of "drinking" utilizes Ewing's (1984) CAGE questionnaire, which consists of four brief questions—cut down, annoyed, guilty, and eye-opener. Respondents provide a "yes" or "no" response to each question, such as "Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking?" and "Have other people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?". Each item is assigned a value of 0 if the response is "no" and 1 if "yes." Consequently, the total score ranges from 0 to 4. A higher total score indicates a more significant self-reported drinking according to the respondent.

Anxious attachment style (ANX): We measured ANX with six-items measure developed by (Wei et al., 2007). Sample items include "I do not often worry about being abandoned". The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .83.

Control variables: Employee's gender, age, education, and tenure may affect the individual's response to the leader's humor. For instance, the employee perception of leader aggressive humor is influenced by the time they working with the leader. Therefore, these variables are regarded as control variables.

Results

Common method biases

This study aims to mitigate potential common method bias by implementing measures in program control and statistical control. In the program control phase, modifications were made to enhance the clarity of the scale's language, ensuring that participants could comprehend each question effectively. Questionnaires were administered both online and offline, with efforts made to safeguard the anonymity of respondents. In the realm of statistical control, Harman's single factor score was employed to assess common method biases. The findings revealed that the total variance accounted for by a single factor was 17.98%, which is below the critical threshold of 50%. This result suggests the absence of significant common method bias in the study.

Confirmatory factor analysis

In this study, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using the AMOS software, and the outcomes are presented in Table 1. The six-factor model exhibited the most favorable fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 1.51$, $TLI = 0.96$, $CFI = 0.97$, $RMSEA = 0.04$), with all indicators meeting the predefined standards. This substantiates the robust discriminant validity of the variables.

Table 1

CFA Result

Model	<i>Chi-square/df</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>GFI</i>	<i>NFI</i>	<i>RMR</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>
Six factor (intended model)	1.51	.97	.90	.91	.10	.04
Five factor ^a	2.11	.93	.86	.87	.11	.06
Five factor ^b	2.05	.93	.85	.88	.14	.05

Note. ^aModel with five factors: (1) Leader aggressive humor, (2) LMX, (3) LMG, and (4) Cyberloafing and drink combined, (5) Anxious attachment

^bModel with five factors: (1) Leader aggressive humor, (2) LMX and LMG combined, and (3) Cyberloafing, (4) drink, (5) Anxious attachment

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics findings are presented in Table 2. Leader aggressive humor and cyberloafing ($r = .25$, $p < .01$) and drinking ($r = 0.17$, $p < .01$) exhibited a notably positive correlation. As a result, the initial support for Hypotheses 1 was established.

Table 2

Means, standard deviations and correlations.

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender	.70	.46	-									
2. Education	1.94	.66	-.01	-								
3. Age	28.75	5.71	-.08	.10	-							
4. Tenure with Leader	34.02	41.43	.00	-.06	.56**	-						
5. LAH	2.27	1.37	-.03	.08	.11*	.08	.83					
6. LMX	5.12	.90	-.15**	.04	-.07	-.04	-.26**	.64				
7. LMG	3.99	1.31	-.14**	-.10*	-.08	-.01	-.15**	.54**	.74			
8. Cyberloafing	3.14	1.60	.01	-.01	-.04	.05	.25**	-.20**	-.03	.94		
9. Drink	.46	.87	-.28**	-.03	.06	.06	.17**	.03	.12*	.12*	.62	
10. ANX	3.45	1.28	-.09	-.04	-.23**	-.06	.05	.23**	.30**	.08	.15**	.72

Note. LAH, leader aggressive humor; LMX, leader member exchange; LMG, leader member guanxi; ANX, anxious attachment.

The square root of AVE is shown on the diagonal line in bold face.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, $N=375$.

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Hypothetical test

Direct Testing

The direct effect examination utilized the hierarchical regression technique in SPSS software, with the outcomes displayed in Table 3. Leader aggressive humor exhibited a positive correlation with both cyberloafing ($\beta = .30$, $p < .001$) and drinking ($\beta = .10$, $p < .01$). This substantiates the support for Hypotheses 1a and 1b, indicating a significant positive correlation between leader aggressive humor and both cyberloafing and drinking.

Table 3

Direct effect

	LMX	LMG	Cyberloafing			Drinking		
Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
<i>Control variable</i>								
Gender	-.33	-.17	.04	-.08	.00	-.53	-.54	
Education	.09	-.12	-.03	.03	.01	-.06	-.04	-.03
Age	-.07	.05	-.20	-.19	-.17	.00	.01	.05
Tenure	.02	-.44	.12	.14	.14	.03	.04	.02
<i>Independent variable</i>								
LAH	-.17***	-.14**	.30***			.10**		
LMX				-.27**			-.01	
LMG					-.04			.08*
<i>R square</i>	.10	.06	.07	.04	.01	.11	.09	.02
<i>Adjust R²</i>	.09	.05	.06	.02	-.00	.10	.07	.01
<i>F</i>	8.10	4.66	5.80	2.66	.73	9.22	6.83	1.97
<i>Sig (p)</i>	.00	.01	.00	.00	.50	.00	.78	.02
<i>VIF</i>	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.04	1.04	1.02	1.04	1.02

Note. LAH, leader aggressive humor; LMX, leader member exchange; LMG, leader member guanxi;

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, $N=375$.

Moreover, there is a negative association between LMX and Cyberloafing, indicated by $\beta = -0.27$, $p < 0.01$. Notably, LMG demonstrates a significant correlation with Drinking; however, contrary to our hypothesis, the association is negative with $\beta = 0.081$, $p < 0.05$.

Test of mediation

Bootstrapping was employed in Model 4 to assess the mediating roles of LMX and LMG in the relationship between Leader Aggressive Humor and employees' addictive behaviors, specifically cyberloafing and drinking. As indicated in Table 4, the bootstrap method test results

revealed a significant mediating effect of LMX between leader aggressive humor and employee cyberloafing, with a value of 0.05 and a 95% confidence interval of [.085, .090], excluding 0. This supports Hypothesis 2a. However, for the mediating effect of LMX on leader aggressive humor and employee drinking, the value was -0.01, and the 95% confidence interval was [-.035, .003], suggesting that LMX does not serve as a mediator in this relationship. Thus, Hypothesis 2b was not supported.

Similarly, the bootstrap method test results indicated that LMG did not serve as a mediator between leader aggressive humor and employee cyberloafing, with a mediating effect value of -0.00 and a 95% confidence interval of [-.021, .022]. Hence, Hypothesis 3a was not supported. On the other hand, the mediating effect value of LMG between leader aggressive humor and employee drinking was -0.01, and the 95% confidence interval was [-.029, -.002], excluding 0. This suggests a significant mediating effect of LMG in the relationship, supporting Hypothesis 3b.

Table 4

Mediating effect results

	Cyber			Drink		
	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>LLCL</i>	<i>ULCI</i>	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>LLCL</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Gender	.04	-.31	.38			
Education	-.03	-.27	.22	-.06	-.19	.08
Age	-.20	-.40	.01	.03	-.08	.14
Tenure	.12	-.04	.28	.02	-.07	.11
<i>Direct effect</i>						
Leader Aggressive Humor	.30	.18	.41	.11	.04	.17
<i>Indirect effect</i>						
LAH --> LMX --> Cyberloafing	.05	.01	.09			
LAH--> LMX --> Drink				-.01	-.03	.00
LAH--> LMG --> Cyber	-.00	-.02	.02			
LAH --> LMG--> Drink				-.01	-.03	-.00

Note. LAH, leader aggressive humor; LMX, leader member exchange; LMG, leader member guanxi;

N = 375, bootstrap sample size = 10,000

Mediated moderation test

The mediating moderation effect was assessed using the bootstrap method. This analysis investigated the indirect impacts of leader aggressive humor on cyberloafing and drinking, mediated by leader-member exchange and leader-member guanxi, across three distinct levels of employees' anxious attachment styles (low, mean, high). The outcomes of the tests are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Mediated moderation test Result

	Cyberloafing			Drinking		
	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>LLCL</i>	<i>ULCI</i>	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>LLCL</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Direct effect						
Leader aggressive humor	.23	.114	.352	.11	.049	.176
Conditional effect						
LAH--> LMX -->Cyberloafing						
High Anxious Attachment	.08	.030	.127			
Mean Anxious Attachment	.04	.006	.089			
Low Anxious Attachment	.01	-.047	.068			
Index of moderated mediation						
MEAN Anxious Attachment	-.02	-.053	-.002			
LAH --> LMG -->Drink						
High Anxious Attachment				-.00	-.015	.011
Mean Anxious Attachment				-.01	-.026	-.001
Low Anxious Attachment				-.02	-.043	-.003
Index of moderated mediation						
MEAN Anxious Attachment				-.01	-.017	-.000

Note. LAH, leader aggressive humor; LMX, Leader member exchange; LMG, Leader member guanxi;

N=375; bootstrap sample size = 10,000;

In cases of high anxious attachment, there was a significant indirect effect of leader aggressive humor on cyberloafing through LMX ($\beta = .08$, 95% $CI = [.030, .127]$). Conversely, when anxious attachment was low, LMX did not exhibit a significant mediating effect between leader aggressive humor and cyberloafing ($\beta = .01$, 95% $CI = [-.047, .068]$). This supports Hypothesis 4a.

In situations where anxious attachment was low, LMG showed a significant mediating effect between leader aggressive humor and drinking ($\beta = -.02$, 95% $CI = [-.043, -.003]$). However, when anxious attachment was high, the indirect effect of leader aggressive humor on drinking through LMG was not significant ($\beta = -.00$, 95% $CI = [-.015, .011]$). Hence, Hypothesis 5b received support.

Discussion

Our study examines the impact of leader aggressive humor on employee outcomes through the lens of the interpersonal relationship. Furthermore, we explore the influence of leader aggressive humor under the condition of employee's attachment style. In our investigation, there is a positive association between leader aggressive humor and employees' addictive behavior, mediated by the leader-employee relationship. Moreover, with the mediation of Leader-Member Exchange, the Leader Aggressive Humor is negative impact on cyberloafing and drinking appear to be influenced by leader aggressive humor through Leader-Member Guanxi. However, LMX does not show any significance in relation to drinking, and similarly, LMG does not exhibit

significance in connection with Cyberloafing. As mentioned, Cyberloafing represents addictive behavior during work hours, while drinking signifies addictive behavior after work. This result strengthens the idea of the distinct impacts of leader-member relationships during work (LMX) and after work (LMG). Both LMX and LMG emphasize the vertical relationship between a leader and an employee, albeit highlighting different facets of this relationship. The development of LMX and LMG occurs at different times and locations; LMX mainly takes place during business hours at work, while LMG primarily develops outside of the workplace during non-business hours. Moreover, the roles of the leader and the employee differ in these relationships. As stated by Yang and Zhang (2022), the cultivation of high-quality LMX involves a leader sharing information about work-related matters, organizing resources, and providing vocational training, with the expectation that employees will exhibit improved performance and heightened commitment. Regarding high-quality LMG, employees are expected to demonstrate strong loyalty to their leaders through activities such as gift-giving or maintaining frequent contact (Law et al., 2000). Leaders often perceive it as their social duty to furnish support and protection for employees, reciprocated by the employees. Because of the differences between LMX and LMG, there are differing impacts on Leader aggressive humor concerning employee's addictive behavior. LMX mediates the impact of leader aggressive humor on cyberloafing, while LMG mediates the impact on drinking. Interestingly, LMG shows a positive relationship with drinking. Moreover, our sample is collected in Vietnam—a society characterized by high collectivism and a unique drinking culture after work. Therefore, the close relationship with the leader after work and the high frequency of drinking together are significant. Notably, leader aggressive humor positively associates with drinking, but LMG mediates this relationship, turning it into a negative association. This underscores the complexity of workplace relationships and how cultural factors can influence the nature of these associations.

These findings indicate that not only does the leader's aggressive humor impact employees' addictive behavior, but the attachment style of the employee also significantly influences their reactions to the leader's aggressive humor. With a high level of anxious attachment, the connection between leader aggressive humor and employee drinking becomes more evident, particularly when mediated by both LMX and LMG. In the context of LMX, which is related to the employee survival, those with an anxious attachment style, when confronted with leader aggressive humor, may experience feelings of abandonment, leading to an increase in cyberloafing. However, when the level of anxious attachment is high, these employees, feeling anxious about their attachment with their leader, actively respond to develop LMX, intending to reduce cyberloafing in order to enhance the quality of their work-related exchanges with the leader. In contrast, LMG revolves around social connection and emotional development, mainly occurring outside working hours and unrelated to work dimensions. Employees with anxious attachment may fret about the quality of the "guanxi" (relationship) when faced with leader aggressive humor. The lower the quality of guanxi, the less drinking after work, thus moderating the relationship between leader aggressive humor and drinking. Conversely, when the level of anxious attachment is low, employees may not strongly engage in the relationship, as LMG is not directly related to their survival, unlike LMX. Consequently, it does not moderate the relationship. This result emphasizes the distinction between LMX and LMG roles in influencing the impact of leader aggressive humor on employee addictive behaviors.

Theoretical implications

Our study contributes to theoretical advancements to extent leader humor research. First, , our study broadens the research scope by exploring the influence and effects of leadership

aggressive humor. This contributes to enriching the literature on leadership humor. Majority of prior research has primarily concentrated on elucidating how leader aggressive humor impacts employee outcomes through the emotional lens (Huo et al., 2012, Liu et al., 2020). We, on the other hand, introduce the mediator role of the interpersonal relationship between leaders and employees, including leader-member exchange and leader-member guanxi. This expansion enhances our understanding of the mechanisms through which leadership aggressive humor influences employee outcomes, shedding light on the crucial role played by the quality of the relationship between leaders and employees in this context.

Second, our work stands out as one of the pioneers that interprets leader aggressive humor through the framework of attachment theory. In our study, we conceptualize the leader as an attachment figure for the employee, a unique lens that sheds light on the important role of leader-member relationship. We offer insights into how leader aggressive humor can interrupt an employee's attachment system. It prompts coping mechanism, including addictive behaviors like cyberloafing and drinking. By linking leadership behavior to attachment theory, our study also opens avenues for further exploration into the complex interplay between leadership, attachment, and employee coping mechanisms. Furthermore, our study significantly contributes to the research on the boundary conditions of leadership aggressive humor. The exploration of these boundary conditions is an area that has received relatively little attention in existing scholarship. Previous research has predominantly concentrated on specific factors such as team identification, professional identification, co-worker support, and interactions with peers as potential boundary conditions for leadership aggressive humor, as noted in studies by Yang and Yang (2023), Wei et al. (2022), Huo et al. (2012). What sets our research apart is the application of attachment theory to introduce a novel boundary condition—the anxious attachment style. By doing so, we aim to fill a gap in the literature and provide a more nuanced understanding of the contextual factors that influence the impact of leadership aggressive humor. This not only enriches the current knowledge on the subject but also serves as a foundation for future investigations into the diverse boundary conditions that may modulate the effects of leadership behaviors in the workplace.

Finally, our article contributes to the broader landscape of research on the factors influencing employee well-being, specifically focusing on addictive behaviors. While previous studies have often explored traditional antecedents of well-being (Inceoglu et al., 2018), our research extends this inquiry to encompass a domain that is increasingly relevant in contemporary workplaces. By investigating the antecedent variables associated with addictive behaviors in the context of leadership aggressive humor, we provide a fresh perspective on the factors that can impact employee well-being. This expansion not only adds depth to the understanding of the diverse influences on well-being but also acknowledges the complex interplay between leadership dynamics, employee behaviors, and overall well-being.

Practical implications

The study holds practical importance for several reasons. Firstly, the adverse effects of leader aggressive humor on employees' well-being are evident. Given this, leaders should be attentive to the potential harm caused by aggressive humor and take gradual steps to refine their humorous approach in managerial practices, thereby minimizing the detrimental effects on employees. As an illustration, organizations can enhance supervisor training quality through workshops, particularly focusing on communication skills, and advocate for leaders to incorporate active humor in their interactions with employees.

Second, leaders have the capacity to provide functional attachment with employees through their interpersonal connection. This can effectively diminish employee engagement in addictive

behaviors by providing a secure base and a safe haven. Consequently, leaders should focus not only on minimizing the use of aggressive humor but also on nurturing positive relationships with their employees. A practical approach involves enhancing the overall work environment, fostering a friendly atmosphere within the organization. This ensures that employees perceive leaders as attachment figures from whom they can seek support when needed, ultimately contributing to the prevention of negative employee behaviors.

The final point underscores the significance of organizations paying attention to employees' attachment styles, particularly in the context of the study's findings. According to the research, employees with a high anxious attachment style exhibit a heightened susceptibility to the impact of leader aggressive humor, making them more prone to engaging in addictive behaviors. This recognition of the role of attachment styles in shaping employee reactions to leadership behaviors highlights the need for a nuanced approach to organizational interventions. Notably, the study suggests that attachment styles can be influenced or "primed" through interventions, citing the work of Yip et al. (2018). Considering this, the recommendation is made for organizations to integrate training programs that incorporate secure attachment primes. This proactive measure aims to create a more secure and supportive psychological foundation for employees. By addressing attachment styles through targeted training, organizations may potentially reduce the adverse effects of leader aggressive humor on employee behavior, specifically curbing the tendency toward addictive behaviors. In essence, this approach aligns with the idea that organizational initiatives should not only be reactive but also proactive in understanding and influencing the psychological factors that contribute to employee well-being and behavior in the workplace.

Limitations and future research

Our study, like any research, possesses several limitations that present potential avenues for future investigations. Initially, we conducted the exploration of leader aggressive humor solely from the employees' standpoint, relying on single-source data. However, this approach makes sense because leaders are unlikely to know whether employees are engaging in cyberloafing or drinking. Thus, self-report from employees are crucial to capturing this information. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the potential for bias. To mitigate this, we employed confirmatory factor analysis to establish discriminant validity, ensuring the validity, and reliability of the measures used. While self-reported measures were utilized, they offer valuable insights into potential areas for future research, particularly concerning the alignment between managers' humor perception and employees' perspectives. Collecting multi-source data, especially from the leaders' viewpoint, would be especially worthwhile for a more comprehensive understanding.

Secondly, we lack information on whether employees sufficiently interacted with their leaders to notice aggressive humor. Despite this informational gap, its impact on the study's outcomes may be mitigated. This is attributed to the fact that, during the testing of research hypotheses, we exercised control over the tenure with leader. This control variable is indicative of the frequency of interactions between leaders and employees and could potentially influence employees' ability to perceive leader aggressive humor. Nonetheless, we recommend that future research incorporates measurements and controls for the interaction frequency between employees and leaders. This consideration is crucial as it can influence the frequency with which employees perceive leader aggressive humor.

Thirdly, it's crucial to acknowledge that addictive behavior may not be an isolated event but rather an accumulation over time. Therefore, it would be beneficial to consider a more comprehensive approach by collecting daily data. Past research has highlighted the significance of

daily interactions with supervisors in influencing employee outcomes (Men, 2014, Xu et al., 2015). To delve deeper into the dynamics of addictive behavior, it is recommended that future research adopts a longitudinal approach. This would enable a thorough examination of how the variance in daily addictive behavior is influenced by sustained negative behaviors from leaders over an extended period. Such longitudinal investigations would provide a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between leadership styles and the development of addictive behaviors among employees.

Furthermore, our study, conducted in a collectivist cultural setting in Vietnam, highlights the emphasis on interpersonal relationships. Collectivist cultural not only emphasize mutual respect, social etiquette, and politeness, but people also in tend to pay close attention to "guanxi" (Huo et al., 2012). Consequently, the relational model we put forth, detailing the dynamics of how and when leader aggressive humor impacts employee behavior, might be more commonly applicable in such cultural contexts. We encourage future research to replicate our research design in western organizations to replicate our design in western organizations to generalize findings across various cultural backgrounds.

Lastly, we strongly advocate for future research to expand a more comprehensive theory on employee well being. While our study focused on addictive behaviors like cyberloafing, drinking, there is a crucial need to delve into other constructs such as sleep quality and employee silence.... These additional dimensions can offer a more nuanced understanding of how leader aggressive humor impacts various aspects of employee well-being. By exploring a broader range of indicators, researchers can contribute to the development of a more comprehensive theoretical framework. This approach will not only enhance our comprehension of the intricate dynamics between leader aggressive humor and employee well-being but also provide valuable insights for organizations aiming to foster healthier and more supportive work environments.

Conclusions

In conclusion, our utilization of attachment theory to explore the interplay among leader aggressive humor, leader-member relationships, and employee addictive behaviors has yielded significant findings. The study reveals a notable positive correlation between leader aggressive humor and employee addictive behaviors, encompassing cyberloafing, and drinking. Both LMX and LMG act as mediators in this relationship. Moreover, the study discovers in the impact of leader aggressive humor on specific addictive behaviors. Through LMX, leader aggressive humor exerts a stronger influence on cyberloafing. Besides, with the mediation of LMG, drinking exhibit a susceptibility to the effects of leader aggressive humor. An additional noteworthy finding is the positive regulatory role played by anxious attachment style in moderating the relationship between leader aggressive humor and employee addictive behavior through LMX and LMG. Overall, this study contributes to the literature by deepening our understanding of how leadership humor and leader-member relationships influence employee behavior. It emphasizes the importance of leaders recognizing the impact of their humorous styles and the quality of relationships with their team members, offering valuable insights for organizational leaders seeking to foster positive workplace dynamics.

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