

Exploring the reciprocal relationships between job demands, job resources, and workplace misconduct: A meta-analytic panel analysis

Yuxiang Luan¹ | Zixu Zhang² | Jiaxin Xue³  | Danyang Wang⁴

¹Business School, Sichuan University, Chengdu, China

²Eller College of Management, The University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, USA

³School of Labor and Human Resources, Renmin University of China, Beijing, China

⁴Shanxi University of Finance and Economics, Taiyuan, China

Correspondence

Jiaxin Xue, School of Labor and Human Resources, Renmin University of China, 59 Zhongguancun Street, Haidian District, Beijing, China, 100872.
Email: jxxue@ruc.edu.cn

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Abstract

This study examines the reciprocal relationships between job demands, job resources, and workplace misconduct using a meta-analytic cross-lagged analysis ($k = 21$, $N = 14,897$ for demands; $k = 8$, $N = 7,934$ for resources). Drawing on conservation of resources (COR) theory and the job demands–resources (JD–R) theory, we develop hypotheses regarding the reciprocal associations of demands and resources with misconduct. Results support these expectations: job demands and misconduct are reciprocally related, as well as job resources and misconduct. Moderation analyses partially support the moderating roles of demand type (hindrance vs. challenge demands; social vs. organizational demands) and country-level job resources in the associations between job demands and misconduct. Continuous-time analyses further indicate that reciprocal associations between job demands and workplace misconduct change over time. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

KEYWORDS

job demands, job resources, meta-analysis, panel analysis, workplace misconduct

INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, organizations suffer substantial financial and reputational losses each year due to employee misconduct (Umphress et al., 2010). Such misconduct spans a wide spectrum of behaviors, including counterproductive work behavior (CWB), social undermining, incivility, and unethical conduct (Lee et al., 2024; Ogunfowora et al., 2022). Existing research has largely conceptualized workplace misconduct as a downstream consequence of excessive job demands and insufficient job resources (Tice et al., 2001; Zhang et al., 2019). Yet the reality may be more complex than a unidirectional causal chain. While misconduct may indeed arise from high demands and low resources, it may also erode trust and disrupt social relationships (Duong et al., 2025) and create role conflicts (Tiwari et al., 2024), which may in turn shape subsequent job demands and resources. Overlooking this potential reciprocal cycle makes it difficult to explain why misconduct so often persists or even escalates over time.

Prior research has extensively examined the relationship between job demands, job resources, and workplace misconduct. Meta-analyses provide strong evidence for these associations; however, because they rely primarily on cross-sectional designs, they offer limited insight into directionality (e.g., Mackey et al., 2019; Ogunfowora et al., 2022; Steele et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2019). Evidence from cross-lagged panel studies is mixed, with some studies reporting bidirectional associations and others finding unidirectional effects (e.g., Baillien et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2023; Mawritz et al., 2017; Meier & Spector, 2013; Morf et al., 2017). As a result, it remains unclear whether job demands and job resources are reciprocally related to workplace misconduct over time.

Conservation of resources (COR) theory provides a foundational framework for addressing this question by conceptualizing resource dynamics as inherently recursive (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018). At its core, COR theory posits that individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect valued resources, and that threats to these resources trigger stress responses oriented toward resource defense (Hobfoll, 1989). Importantly, initial resource loss increases vulnerability to further loss and sets loss spirals in motion. Within this framework, workplace misconduct can be understood not merely as an outcome of resource depletion, but as a defensive yet self-undermining behavioral response embedded in loss spirals. Although such behavior may temporarily relieve perceived strain, it disrupts task functioning and social relationships, thereby further draining both personal and contextual resources and contributing to the escalation of resource loss over time.

The job demands–resources (JD–R) model complements this perspective by specifying how these recursive processes unfold in concrete work contexts (Bakker et al., 2023; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Whereas COR theory emphasizes the underlying logic of loss spirals, the JD–R model elucidates how strain-related behavioral responses feed back into the work environment, particularly by increasing job demands. Over time, excessive demands intensify future strain and resource depletion, thereby increasing the likelihood of further misconduct (Bakker et al., 2023). Viewed jointly, COR theory and the JD–R model converge in portraying workplace misconduct as embedded in a reciprocal process in which strained work conditions elicit maladaptive behavioral responses that, in turn, reshape demands and resources in ways that perpetuate and amplify strain over time.

Even if such relationships exist, COR theory further suggests that loss spirals are contingent on contextual and temporal conditions (Hobfoll et al., 2018).¹ At the micro-level, different types of job demands vary in their propensity to become embedded in escalating reciprocal dynamics with misconduct, a logic that is also echoed in the JD–R model (Bakker et al., 2023). In

particular, challenge demands, which involve effortful yet potentially growth-enhancing aspects of work, may be appraised as opportunities for learning and thus exhibit weaker reciprocal links with misconduct (LePine et al., 2005; Podsakoff et al., 2007; Podsakoff et al., 2023). Hindrance demands, by contrast, more consistently obstruct goal attainment and deplete resources, making them more likely to reinforce misconduct over time (Kim & Beehr, 2020; LePine, 2022; Zhang et al., 2019). Similarly, social demands involving interpersonal interactions—such as interpersonal conflict or abusive supervision—directly threaten social and emotional resources and may sustain stronger reciprocal dynamics. In contrast, organizational demands, which refer to structural requirements, primarily tax task-related resources (Brass et al., 1998; Demerouti & Bakker, 2023; Gino et al., 2009).

Furthermore, macro-level resources, reflecting country-level institutional and economic supports that shape employees' broader resource environments, may also influence the strength of these dynamics. COR emphasizes that resources operate in caravans through specific passageways, such that institutional contexts influence whether loss spirals are amplified or constrained (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018). National-level resources, such as active labor market policies or welfare systems, may weaken the relationship between misconduct and job demands by providing alternative resource pathways, whereas their absence may allow reciprocal cycles to intensify and persist.

Finally, the temporal dimension is another critical boundary condition for understanding the evolution of these processes. COR suggests that resource loss is cumulative and reinforcing, whereas resource gain is slower and weaker (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Thus, reciprocal cycles between demands and misconduct may be weak in the short term but strengthen over time, eventually peaking and, after individual adaptation, showing inflection points or stabilizing patterns. Their full trajectory can only be captured by examining different time lags. Taken together, demand type, the macro-level resource environment, and temporal span represent key boundary conditions that shape the reciprocal relationships.

To examine these issues, we conduct a meta-analytic structural equation modeling (MASEM) analysis of longitudinal studies that assessed job demands or job resources and workplace misconduct across at least two waves (Nohe et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2023). We further test moderators capturing demand type, macro-level resources, and time lag.

This research makes several contributions. First, we advance COR- and JD-R-based accounts by reframing the role of workplace misconduct in resource dynamics. Rather than treating misconduct solely as a downstream outcome of excessive demands or insufficient resources, we conceptualize it as an active component of resource loss processes that feeds back to shape subsequent demands and resources. In doing so, our study moves beyond prior meta-analytic work that has largely assumed unidirectional relationships (e.g., Mackey et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019) and offers a reciprocal account of demands–misconduct relationships. Second, we demonstrate that reciprocal demands–misconduct relationships are contingent, thereby clarifying when and why such dynamics escalate or attenuate. Specifically, we show that demand type and country-level job resources condition the strength of reciprocal loss spirals. This perspective helps reconcile previously mixed evidence regarding the direction and magnitude of demands–misconduct associations and highlights that misconduct is more likely to take hold over time when demands are experienced as hindering or socially threatening and macro-level resource supports are weak. Finally, we contribute to COR theory by specifying the temporal structure of resource loss spirals involving misconduct. Leveraging continuous-time meta-analysis (CoTiMA), we show that the demands–misconduct relationship follows a phase-specific trajectory rather than a static or monotonic pattern. By explicitly incorporating time as

a theory-relevant dimension, this study helps refine COR's loss-spiral proposition by clarifying when resource loss intensifies and when it plateaus.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

This section formulates hypotheses on the relationship between job demands/resources and workplace misconduct and explores potential moderators. We provide more detailed definitions of the key constructs of our paper in Table 1.

Workplace misconduct

Recently, scholars (e.g., Lee et al., 2024; Ogunfowora et al., 2022, 2023) in the field of ethics have researched various forms of misconduct and conceptualized workplace misconduct as a broad concept, reflecting a spectrum of different deviant behaviors, such as CWB, unethical behavior, and incivility. Although these specific forms of misconduct vary in severity and immediacy, they all share a common underlying feature: they involve actions that harm the organization or its members and violate both implicit and explicit workplace norms (Kidder, 2005). In this study, workplace misconduct is defined as any voluntary employee behavior that threatens the well-being of the organization, its members, or both (Kidder, 2005). This umbrella term allows for the integration of diverse empirical findings across literature that might otherwise use slightly different labels (e.g., CWB emphasizing task-related deviance, and incivility emphasizing low-intensity social norm violations). This conceptualization aligns with prior meta-analytic work that has aggregated a wide range of harmful workplace behaviors under broader constructs, such as unethical conduct, CWB, ostracism, and other negative acts (Ogunfowora et al., 2022; Zhang & Wei, 2024).

The reciprocal relationships

COR theory posits that individuals strive to maintain and accumulate resources, and that sustained depletion or threatened loss elicits stress (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Job demands, such as heavy workload, performance pressure, and role conflict, require continuous investment of cognitive and emotional effort to meet organizational requirements (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Balducci et al., 2011; Tice et al., 2001; Zhang et al., 2019). Yet resources are finite, and when job demands exceed employees' resource capacity, they are likely to experience resource scarcity (Song et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2018).

Importantly, COR theory's desperation principle suggests that when individuals' resources are severely strained or exhausted, they are likely to enter a defensive mode aimed at preserving the self (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Under such conditions, employees may struggle to self-regulate and become more vulnerable to impulsive or norm-deviating behaviors (Greenbaum et al., 2014; Li et al., 2024; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). They may also engage in misconduct as a means of conserving or compensating for depleted resources to recover or protect them (Fox et al., 2001; Mitchell et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2022). Consistent with this reasoning, cross-lagged studies have found that job demands are positively related to subsequent misconduct (Baillien et al., 2011; Morf et al., 2017).

TABLE 1 Definitions and categories of variables in our study.

Construct	Definition	Category
<i>Misconduct</i>		
Deviant behavior	Deviant behavior emphasizes employees' voluntary behaviors that violate organizational norms (Robinson & Bennett, 1995).	Misconduct
Bullying perpetration	Workplace bullying reflects the persistent exposure to interpersonal aggression and mistreatment from colleagues, superiors, or subordinates (Einarsen et al., 2009).	Misconduct
Instigated incivility	Incivility involves “acting rudely or discourteously, without regard for others, in violation of norms for respect in social interactions” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 455).	Misconduct
Knowledge hoarding	Knowledge hoarding reflects actions of accumulating knowledge that may or may not be shared in the future (Webster et al., 2008).	Misconduct
Feedback avoidance	Feedback avoidance is defined “as the extent to which employees use strategies that are designed to either totally avoid their supervisors or divert their supervisor's attention so that their poor performance is not acknowledged and they do not receive negative verbal feedback” (Moss et al., 2003, p. 493).	Misconduct
CWB	CWB refers to behavior that lacks compliance with organizational norms and harms other employees or the organization (Bennett & Robinson, 2003).	Misconduct
<i>Demands/ resources</i>		
Skill variety	Skill variety refers to “the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work which involves the use of a number of different skills and talents” (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 256).	Resources
Justice	Organizational justice reflects the perceived fairness of an organization's practices and procedures, including distributive and procedural justice (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2002).	Resources
Autonomy	Autonomy refers to “the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out” (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 256).	Resources
Mastery climate	In a mastery climate, the goal structure upholds and rewards behaviors such as effort, self-improvement, progress, skill development, and cooperation (Ames, 1995).	Resources
Abusive supervision	Abusive supervision is defined as “subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which their supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact” (Tepper, 2000, p. 178).	Demands (hindrance; social)
Conflict	Baillien et al. (2013) described the conflict as “a difference of opinion, disagreement, confrontation, or quarrel between different members (among coworkers as well as between one or more coworkers and the supervisor) of the work unit” (p. 515).	Demands (hindrance; social)

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Construct	Definition	Category
Experienced incivility	Incivility involves acting rudely or discourteously, without regard for others, in violation of norms for respect in social interactions (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 455).	Demands (hindrance; social)
Exposure to negative acts	Exposure to negative acts involves experiencing bullying or harassment, where individuals are subjected to repeated negative actions over time (Einarsen et al., 2009).	Demands (hindrance; social)
Job insecurity	Job insecurity is defined as an individually perceived threat to the continuity of one's job in the future (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984).	Demands (hindrance; organizational)
Organizational change	Perceptions of organizational change capture "individuals' perceptions regarding how often change has occurred in their work environment, as an important characteristic of change that is salient to individuals" (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006, p. 1154).	Demands (challenge; organizational)
Organizational constraints	Organizational constraints represent "situations or things that prevent employees from translating ability and effort into high levels of job performance" (Spector & Jex, 1998, p. 357).	Demands (hindrance; organizational)
Performance climate	Performance climate emphasizes normative comparisons, goal attainment relative to that of others, desire to demonstrate individual abilities, and internal rivalry (Ames, 1995).	Demands (challenge; organizational)
Work overload	Work overload refers to the condition where job demands exceed the individual's capacity to perform the work (i.e., having too much work to do in the time available) (Beehr et al., 1976).	Demands (hindrance; organizational)

Note: Demand constructs were coded along two conceptually distinct dimensions: functional appraisal (challenge vs. hindrance demands) and source (organizational vs. social demands).

In contrast, job resources refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job (e.g., task autonomy, mastery climate, organizational justice) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Hobfoll et al., 2018). These resources are functional in achieving work goals, reducing the effects of job demands on their associated psychological costs, and stimulating personal growth and development (Bakker et al., 2023; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Job resources help replenish depleted personal resources (Bakker et al., 2023), enabling employees to maintain better self-control and reducing the likelihood of misconduct. Moreover, job resources also contribute to the motivational process by enhancing work engagement, where employees invest physical, cognitive, and emotional energy into their roles (Kahn, 1990), thereby redirecting focus toward performance rather than misconduct. Supporting this reasoning, cross-lagged studies have shown that job resources are linked to lower misconduct over time (Holten et al., 2016; Morf et al., 2017).

COR theory also offers insights into how misconduct can shape subsequent demands and resources (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018). A central corollary of COR theory is that resource loss tends to be stronger and more immediate than resource gain (Hobfoll et al., 2018). As a result, once resources are depleted, individuals have fewer means to prevent further loss, allowing negative processes to reinforce themselves over time.

From this perspective, workplace misconduct is not only a consequence of prior resource depletion but also a source of further resource loss. Complementing COR theory, the JD-R

model posits that employees' self-undermining behaviors—such as dysfunctional responses including poor communication and conflict behaviors—can actively generate additional job demands (Bakker et al., 2023). Workplace misconduct may play a similar role, functioning as a self-undermining behavior that increases subsequent job demands. When employees shirk responsibilities, neglect duties, or engage in destructive behaviors, task completion is disrupted, leading to accumulated unfinished work and additional repair tasks that increase workload and performance pressure (Sackett, 2002). Misconduct also tends to trigger interpersonal frictions and conflicts, which demand further social and emotional resources (Quade et al., 2016). Together, these processes may elevate subsequent job demands.

At the same time, misconduct may undermine job resources. By eroding the trust of colleagues and supervisors, it may reduce access to social support and make it more difficult for employees to obtain feedback, guidance, or autonomy opportunities in the future (Schabram et al., 2018). As demands increase while resources diminish, employees become less able to offset further losses, reinforcing a self-sustaining resource loss cycle. Consistent with this reasoning, prior studies show that misconduct predicts higher subsequent demands (Lian et al., 2014) and lower subsequent resources (Morf et al., 2017).

Together, job demands and job resources are introduced as predictors of workplace misconduct, while misconduct is also presented as a driver of demands and resources. Drawing on COR's resource loss cycles corollary (Hobfoll et al., 2018), we argue that the interplay may propel employees further into a resource loss spiral. Therefore, we propose the reciprocal relationships, as shown in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 1a. There exists a reciprocal relationship between job demands and workplace misconduct. Specifically, job demands (T1) are positively related to workplace misconduct (T2) after controlling for the autocorrelation effect of workplace misconduct (T1); and workplace misconduct (T1) is positively related to job demands (T2) after controlling for the autocorrelation effect of job demands (T1).

Hypothesis 1b. There exists a reciprocal relationship between job resources and workplace misconduct. Specifically, job resources (T1) are negatively related to workplace misconduct (T2) after controlling for the autocorrelation effect of workplace misconduct (T1); and workplace misconduct (T1) is negatively related to job resources (T2) after controlling for the autocorrelation effect of job resources (T1).

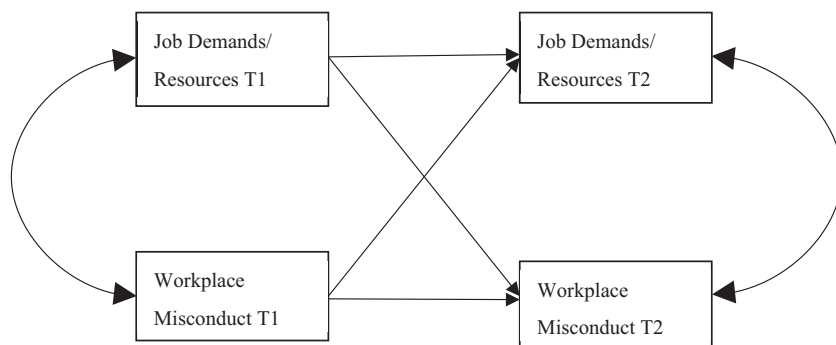


FIGURE 1 The reciprocal model.

The moderating effect of job demands type

Challenge vs. hindrance demands

The challenge–hindrance framework distinguishes between job demands that facilitate the accomplishment of work tasks and personal development (challenge stressors) and those that prevent, interfere with, constrain, or thwart task accomplishment and the pursuit of work goals (hindrance stressors) (LePine et al., 2005; Podsakoff et al., 2007). Challenge stressors typically involve performance pressure, whereas hindrance stressors include conflict, administrative hassles, and organizational constraints (Podsakoff et al., 2023). We contend that challenge and hindrance demands shape the reciprocal effects between job demands and workplace misconduct.

Building on COR theory, we conceptualize job demands and workplace misconduct as a reciprocal process in which resource depletion and behavioral reactions reinforce one another over time. However, COR theory alone does not fully explain why this reciprocal dynamic may differ across demand types. The JD–R model provides a complementary perspective by distinguishing two mechanisms through which demands operate: a health-impairment process and a motivational process (Bakker et al., 2023). Both challenge and hindrance demands may activate the health-impairment process by taxing employees' energy and self-regulatory resources. Yet, challenge demands may additionally evoke a motivational process by offering opportunities for mastery, learning, and goal attainment, whereas hindrance demands largely lack such motivational potential (LePine et al., 2004; Podsakoff et al., 2023).

Consequently, hindrance demands, by providing little developmental value, are more likely to intensify the resource loss cycle linking demands and misconduct (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018). When employees face high hindrance demands, resource depletion and reduced motivation jointly increase the likelihood of misconduct, which in turn generates interpersonal conflict and redundant work, further compounding subsequent demands. In contrast, the reciprocal effect of challenge demands depends on the balance between depletion and motivation: it may be positive when resource loss dominates, weaker or neutral when the two processes counterbalance, or even negative when motivational benefits prevail.

Hypothesis 2. The type of demands (challenge vs. hindrance demands) moderates the reciprocal relationship between job demands and workplace misconduct, such that the reciprocal effect is larger when demands are measured as hindrance demands compared to challenge demands.

Organizational vs. social demands

Drawing on COR theory's crossover perspective, resources can be transmitted between individuals through social interactions (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This crossover perspective further suggests that resource depletion and the strain it engenders may spill over across individuals and manifest in similar maladaptive behavioral responses, thereby providing a theoretical basis for the interpersonal transmission of workplace misconduct. In the misconduct literature, such crossover processes are commonly described as the *one bad apple in the barrel* effect, whereby a single instance of negative behavior can disproportionately affect an entire group or system (Brass et al., 1998; Gino et al., 2009). Through mechanisms such as observational learning and normative tolerance, exposure to others' misconduct may lower behavioral thresholds

and increase the likelihood that additional members engage in similar unethical acts (Gino et al., 2009). Over time, repeated exposure to misconduct within a social context can normalize such behavior, thereby amplifying its spread across individuals.

This crossover logic implies that social demands—such as abusive supervision or persistent interpersonal conflict—may exert particularly strong reciprocal effects on workplace misconduct. Because social demands inherently involve interpersonal interactions and visibility, they create fertile conditions for the diffusion of maladaptive behaviors through observation and social learning. At the same time, misconduct can also serve as a source of heightened social demands. By undermining trust, fairness, and cooperation, misconduct increases the social and emotional effort required to navigate everyday interactions, thereby feeding back into the social environment and intensifying future strain (Lanaj et al., 2018; Luksyte et al., 2015). In contrast, organizational demands, such as role overload or task-related pressures, typically lack the interpersonal exposure and observational pathways that facilitate behavioral crossover. As a result, although organizational demands may contribute to individual strain, they are less likely to propagate misconduct through interpersonal transmission. Accordingly, social demands are expected to exert stronger reciprocal effects with workplace misconduct than organizational demands.

Hypothesis 3. The type of demands (organizational vs. social demands) moderates the reciprocal relationship between job demands and workplace misconduct, such that the reciprocal effect is larger when demands are measured as social demands compared to organizational demands.

The moderating effect of country-level job resources

COR emphasizes that resources do not exist in isolation but travel in resource caravans, the bundles of resources that accumulate and sustain one another for both individuals and organizations (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Whether these caravans are maintained or eroded depends on resource caravan passageways, which are the ecological conditions that either foster and nurture, or limit and block, the creation and sustenance of resources. Complementing this perspective, the JD–R model specifies a buffering mechanism through which job resources weaken the detrimental effects of job demands on strain and maladaptive outcomes (Bakker et al., 2023).

Country-level job resources, such as social security systems, labor protections, and national skill development programs, serve as critical resource caravan passageways (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). In this research, we select Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) to represent a key country-level job resource. ALMPs comprise a set of government interventions designed to promote employment, enhance workers' skills, and reduce the duration of unemployment (Sage, 2015). Although formally targeted at unemployed or potentially unemployed individuals, ALMPs reflect the broader institutional capacity of a country to safeguard employment. In contexts where national systems invest substantial resources to ensure employability and labor market security, employees are likely to perceive greater stability and protection, making such ALMPs a valid indicator of country-level job resources.

When such institutional supports are strong, they provide a fertile environment in which individual and organizational resources can accumulate into more resilient caravans. Under these conditions, employees facing job demands are less likely to spiral into resource loss and resort to misconduct because the broader ecological context replenishes or protects their resource reservoirs (Bakker et al., 2023). Conversely, when country-level job resources are

weak, caravan passageways are blocked, making individual and organizational resources more fragile (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll et al., 2018). In such contexts, job demands are more likely to erode resources and trigger misconduct, and once individuals engage in misconduct, they find it more difficult to restore trust, repair relationships, and compensate for unfinished tasks, thereby generating additional workload and interpersonal strain that further increase job demands. Supporting this view, Guthier et al. (2020) have found that country-level job resources moderate the strain effects of job demands. Therefore, we argue that country-level resources can moderate the reciprocal relationship between job demands and misconduct.

Hypothesis 4. Country-level job resources moderate the reciprocal relationship between job demands and workplace misconduct, such that the reciprocal effect is weaker when country-level job resources are higher (vs. lower).

The moderating effect of time lag

COR is a dynamic theory that conceptualizes resources as fluctuating over time (Hobfoll et al., 2018), making time lag central to understanding processes of resource depletion, recovery, and accumulation. Accordingly, the strength of the relationship between job demands and workplace misconduct is likely to vary across different temporal intervals. Drawing on three core principles of COR theory, we develop lag-specific expectations (Hobfoll et al., 2018). The *resource investment* principle emphasizes that individuals must invest resources to prevent further loss, recover from losses, and acquire new resources. The *primacy of loss* principle suggests that resource loss is more salient than resource gain and may intensify as depletion unfolds. Finally, the *gain paradox* principle posits that resource gains become particularly salient in contexts of ongoing or anticipated resource loss.

Short lags

At short temporal intervals, COR's primacy of loss principle implies that job demands can rapidly trigger initial depletion and strain, increasing the likelihood of misconduct. Longitudinal research indicates that stressor effects on strain-related outcomes unfold gradually rather than instantaneously (e.g., Guthier et al., 2020; Sons & Niessen, 2022). These findings support the view that job demands may require time to translate into meaningful employee reactions. Moreover, resource investment and recovery processes also unfold gradually (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In addition, the downstream consequences of misconduct may take time to materialize, as such behavior often needs to be observed, interpreted, and responded to by supervisors or the organization before it translates into adjustments in monitoring, workload allocation, or other job demands. Thus, although loss processes may begin quickly, the overall reciprocal association between job demands and misconduct is expected to remain relatively modest at short lags.

Medium lags

At intermediate lags, loss processes may have had sufficient time to accumulate, and the downstream consequences of misconduct have had time to feed back into the work environment.

During this phase, the primacy of loss implies that depletion may continue to compound, while the resource investment principle suggests that compensatory gains may be emerging but not yet fully offsetting losses. As a result, reciprocal reinforcement between job demands and misconduct is expected to be most pronounced on average at medium lags. Supporting this reasoning, longitudinal research indicates that the effects of stressors on burnout and turnover intentions tend to intensify across successive waves before stabilizing at later stages (e.g., Guthrie et al., 2020; Park et al., 2025), consistent with the accumulation logic proposed by COR theory.

Long lags

At longer temporal intervals, COR's gain paradox principle implies that resource gains become increasingly consequential under conditions of sustained or prior resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Over extended periods, resource investment by individuals and organizations has a greater opportunity to translate into tangible recovery and accumulation, gradually offsetting earlier depletion. As recovery processes unfold, the reinforcing feedback between job demands and workplace misconduct is less likely to continue intensifying. Accordingly, at long lags, the reciprocal relationship between job demands and misconduct is expected to attenuate over time. Consistent with this dynamic, longitudinal research suggests that stressor-induced health-related behavioral responses often regress toward baseline levels over time rather than intensify indefinitely (e.g., Henderson et al., 2023). Taken together, time lag is expected to moderate the reciprocal relationship between job demands and workplace misconduct, such that the cross-lagged association strengthens from short to intermediate lags and then weakens at longer lags.

Hypothesis 5. Time lag moderates the reciprocal relationship between job demands and workplace misconduct, such that the relationship is stronger at intermediate time lags than at very short or very long lags.

METHOD

Literature search, inclusion, and coding

Based on early studies about workplace misconduct (Lee et al., 2024; Mackey et al., 2019; Ogunfowora et al., 2022), we used the following keywords to identify potentially relevant literature: (deviant* OR counterproductive* OR withdrawal OR unethical behavior OR social undermining OR incivility OR bullying). Additionally, we used the following keywords to locate panel studies (longitudinal OR lagged OR panel) and organizational samples (employ* OR work OR job OR staff). These three groups of keywords were used together in the search process. For published studies, we searched several databases: *WEB OF SCIENCE*, *SCOPUS*, *PsycINFO*, and *PsycARTICLES*. For unpublished dissertations, we utilized the *ProQuest* database. Additionally, for unpublished conference papers, we reviewed the past 10 years of proceedings from the *Academy of Management Annual Meeting*. We also examined references related to misconduct in qualitative or quantitative review papers (e.g., Lee et al., 2024; Mackey et al., 2019; Mishra et al., 2021; Ogunfowora et al., 2022). The search process was conducted in June 2024. The search results were downloaded into Endnote software to remove duplicate studies. We reviewed all titles, keywords, and abstracts, and excluded irrelevant studies (e.g., those claiming to use a cross-sectional design in the abstract).

We applied the following inclusion criteria to locate the potential studies of interest. First, the study should research the relationship between job demands and workplace misconduct or between job resources and workplace misconduct. Second, in line with earlier studies (e.g., Ricketta, 2008; Xu et al., 2023), we collected primary studies using a panel design. Unlike cross-sectional or time-lagged designs, cross-lagged panel designs better assess causal direction by capturing temporal dynamics (Kenny, 1975). Each variable must be measured at a minimum of two time points, producing six core correlations: two synchronous, two stability, and two cross-lagged. If a study reports multiple waves, we used the first two waves (e.g., Ricketta, 2008; Xu et al., 2023). This is because the first two waves typically have the largest sample sizes, whereas subsequent waves often experience sample attrition, leading to smaller sample sizes. Third, while misconduct has been widely studied in various contexts, such as work and school, we focus specifically on workplace misconduct, so the samples must come from organizational or workplace settings. Hence, samples from school settings (e.g., students) are excluded. Fourth, the study should be written in English.

After thoroughly reviewing all potential studies, we initially identified 1261 records through database searching. Following the removal of 631 duplicates, we screened the remaining records based on titles and abstracts, and excluded 443 irrelevant records where it was clear that they (a) did not examine the relationship between job demands/resources and workplace misconduct, (b) were not panel designs (i.e., were cross-sectional), (c) did not focus on organizational or workplace samples (e.g., student or school-based samples), or (d) were not written in English. We then downloaded 187 articles for full-text screening. Of these, 160 studies were excluded because they did not provide the full correlation matrix of interest, and an additional six studies were removed as their samples were not from workplace settings. The final database comprised 21 independent studies for demands and 8 for resources, totaling 174 correlations included in our analysis. Among the 21 studies, seven had two waves, while 14 had more than two waves. This selection process is illustrated in the PRISMA flowchart (Figure 2). Obtaining primary samples with a panel design has been notably challenging, as evidenced by previous meta-analyses using such designs (e.g., Ricketta, 2008, $k = 16$; Stasielowicz, 2022, $k = 13$; Wiese et al., 2025, $k = 28$). However, the data quality in cross-lagged panel designs is generally considered high, as each study typically includes six correlations, namely two synchronous correlations, two stability correlations, and two cross-lagged correlations, which help assess the causal direction.

Two researchers, both trained in meta-analytic methods and with prior experience publishing meta-analyses, independently coded the data. They documented key information for each study, including bibliographic details (authors and publication year), sample characteristics (sample size and country), study design (interval between measurement waves), effect sizes, measurement of job demands, job resources, or workplace misconduct, and reliabilities (Cronbach's α) of all scales used. For continuously coded variables (i.e., effect sizes and sample sizes), intercoder reliability was assessed using intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC). Agreement was excellent for effect sizes (ICC = 0.95) and sample sizes (ICC = 1.00). Discrepancies in coding were resolved through discussion until full agreement was reached. The coding results are presented in Table S1.

Analysis

Before conducting a meta-analysis, we accounted for potential publication bias. To identify this potential bias, we employed Begg and Mazumdar's rank correlation test and Egger's regression

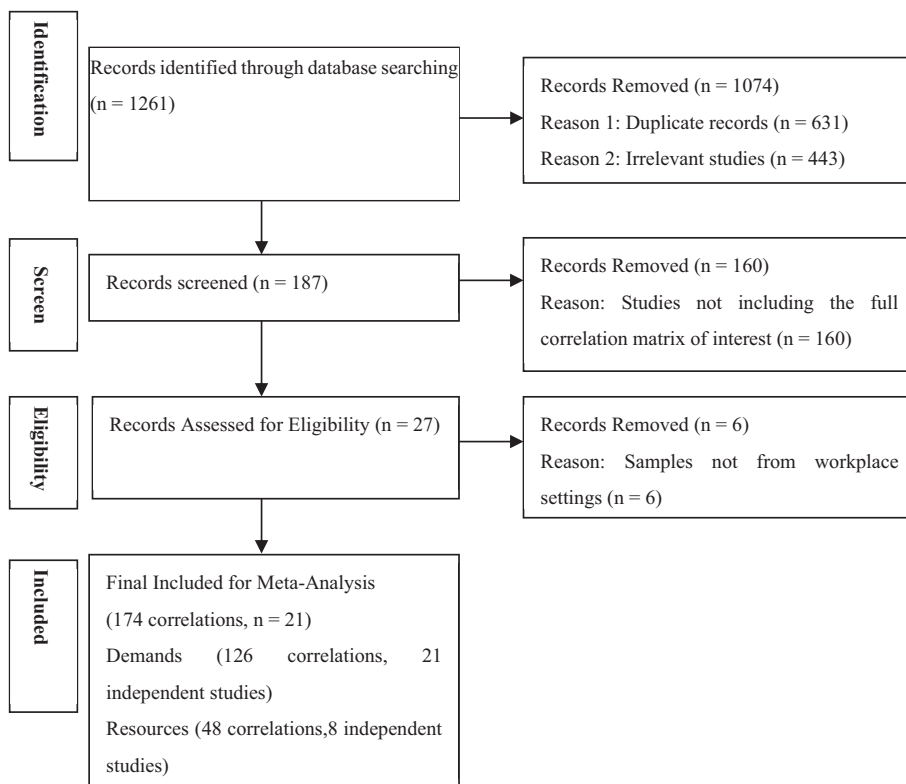


FIGURE 2 The PRISMA flowchart.

test within the *metafor* (Viechtbauer, 2010) package in R. The findings are presented in Table S2.

Consistent with early meta-analyses of panel studies (Ricketta, 2008; Xu et al., 2023), we conducted a MASEM analysis based on a meta-analytic correlation matrix. MASEM typically comprises two steps: the first involves constructing a correlation matrix, and the second entails conducting SEM using this matrix. To begin, the matrix incorporates six types of correlations: two synchronous, two stability, and two cross-lagged correlations. Employing the Hunter-Schmidt method of random effects meta-analysis, we assessed the correlations of interest to populate the matrix (Schmidt & Hunter, 2015). We corrected for measurement error using reliabilities (i.e., Cronbach's alpha). In cases where studies did not report an alpha, we used the alpha from the same construct obtained from other samples in our meta-analysis (Ogunfowora et al., 2022). This analysis was conducted using the *psychmeta* (Dahlke & Wiernik, 2019) package in R. The results are displayed in Table 2.

Then, we conducted a series of cross-lagged analyses using *Mplus* software. We employed the maximum likelihood estimation method to evaluate path coefficients. Initially, we evaluated the results based on the overall correlations of interest. Subsequently, following earlier studies (e.g., Ricketta, 2008; Xu et al., 2023), we utilized different groups within the correlation matrix for further evaluation. Specifically, we compared the differences in the cross-lagged effects between the two groups by simultaneously estimating models with the two correlation matrices in *Mplus* and testing whether the cross-lagged paths differed significantly. The results are presented in Tables 3 and 4, as well as Figures 3 and 4.

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Variable	Analysis	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	SDr	SDres	ρ	SDrc	SD ρ	95% CI	80% CR	% Var
D1M2	Low	7	7684	0.12	0.11	0.11	.16	0.14	0.14	[0.03, 0.29]	[-0.04, 0.36]	7.03
D2M2	Low	7	7684	0.18	0.15	0.14	.22	0.19	0.18	[0.05, 0.40]	[-0.04, 0.49]	4.06
M1D2	Low	7	7684	0.08	0.07	0.06	.1	0.09	0.08	[0.01, 0.18]	[-0.02, 0.22]	17.19
M1M2	Low	7	7684	0.53	0.23	0.23	.73	0.37	0.37	[0.39, 1.07]	[0.20, 1.26]	0.68

Abbreviations: CI = confidence interval; CR = credibility interval; D1 = demands (T1); D2 = demands (T2); *k* = number of studies contributing to the meta-analysis; M1 = misconduct (T1); M2 = misconduct (T2); *N* = total sample size; *r* = mean observed correlation; R1 = resources (T1); R2 = resources (T2); SDr = observed standard deviation of *r*; SDrc = observed standard deviation of corrected correlations (rc); SDres = residual standard deviation of *r*; SD ρ = residual standard deviation of ρ ; %Var = percentage of variance accounted for by sampling error, other artifacts, and in total; ρ = mean true-score correlation.

TABLE 3 Path analysis of demands and misconduct.

Analysis	k	n	Stability effects		Cross-lagged effects		Synchronous effects	
			D1 → D2	M1 → M2	M1 → D2	D1 → M2	M1 ~ D1	M2 ~ D2
Overall	21	14,897	0.63**	0.71**	0.08**	0.09**	0.27**	0.13**
Types of demands								
Challenge demands	3	3577	0.57**	0.86**	0.06**	-0.01	0.14**	0.03**
Hindrance demands	18	11,320	0.67**	0.66**	0.07**	0.13**	0.31**	0.15**
Organizational demands	7	7641	0.62**	0.87**	0.05**	-0.01	0.1**	0.04**
Social demands	14	7256	0.67**	0.54**	0.1**	0.23**	0.42**	0.19**
Country-level job resources								
Low	14	7213	0.65**	0.69**	0.12**	0.11**	0.41**	0.27**
High	7	7684	0.63**	0.72**	0.03**	0.07**	0.12**	0.1**

**p < .01. *p < .05.

TABLE 4 Path analysis of resources and misconduct.

Analysis	k	n	Stability effects		Cross-lagged effects		Synchronous effects	
			R1 → R2	M1 → M2	M1 → R2	R1 → M2	M1 ~ R1	M2 ~ R2
Overall	8	7934	0.65**	0.52**	-0.08**	-0.12**	-0.14**	-0.01*

**p < .01. *p < .05.

Misconduct indicators

Workplace misconduct refers to a class of norm-violating behavior (Kidder, 2005). Based on this definition and consistent with how primary studies operationalize these behaviors (Lee et al., 2024; Ogunfowora et al., 2022, 2023), we coded the focal employee's perpetration of norm-violating acts as workplace misconduct. Using this definition, we excluded conceptually distinct forms of norm violation, such as unethical pro-organizational behavior, which is defined by its prosocial intent toward the organization, even though such behavior may nevertheless undermine organizational moral norms (Umphress et al., 2010). Following our research question, we identified longitudinal studies that assessed workplace misconduct alongside job demands and/or job resources. Within the set of eligible studies, the misconduct measures available for coding were clustered into six categories: deviant behavior, bullying perpetration, instigated incivility, knowledge hoarding, CWB, and feedback avoidance. Although these behaviors differ in form and targets, each satisfies our definitional criteria as voluntary, perpetrator-enacted norm violations that can harm the organization and/or its members.

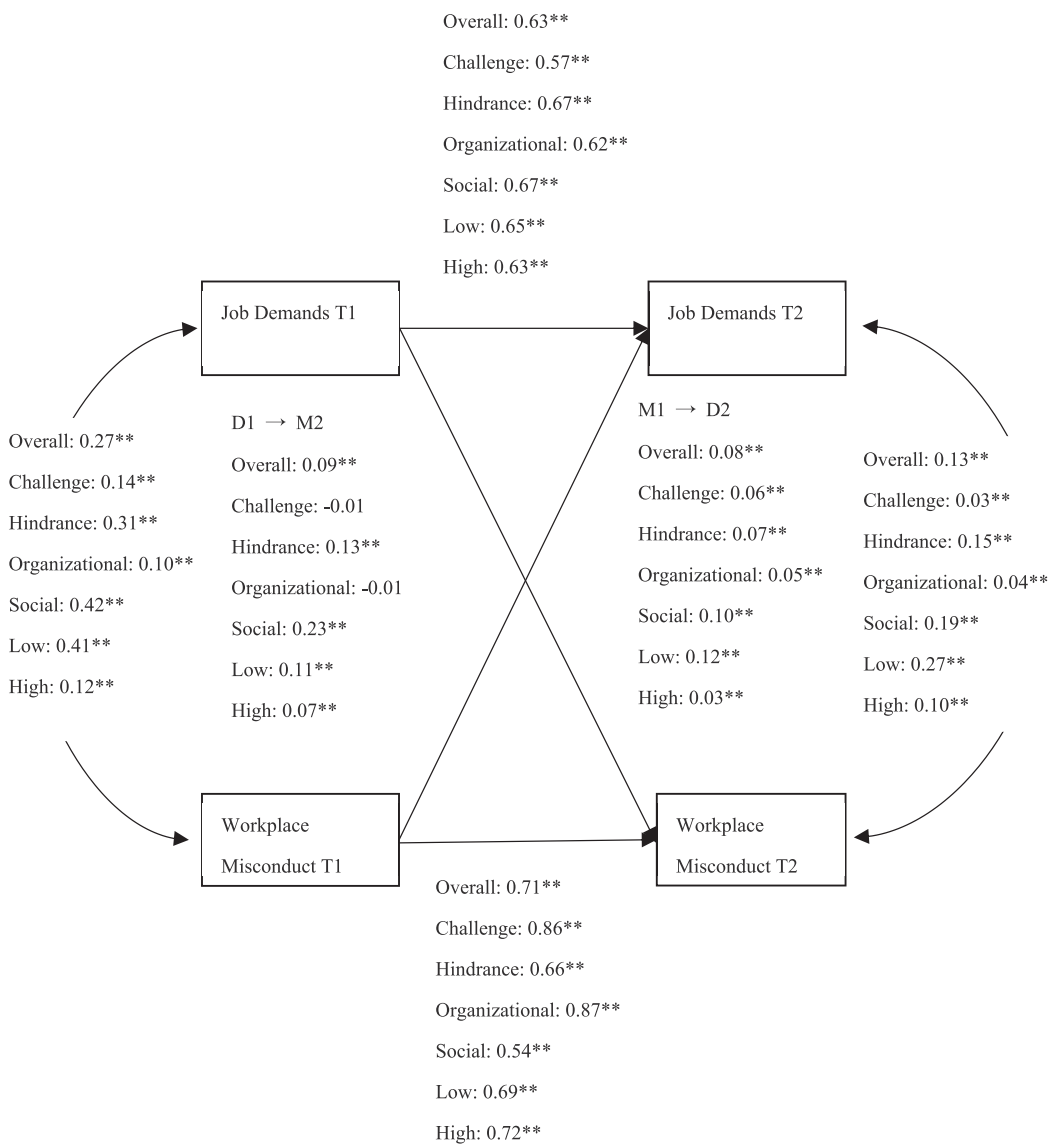


FIGURE 3 Cross-lagged relationships between demands and misconduct. *Note:* ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. M1 = misconduct (T1); M2 = misconduct (T2); D1 = demands (T1); D2 = demands (T2); challenge = challenge demands; hindrance = hindrance demands; organizational = organizational demands; social = social demands; low = low country-level job resources; high = high country-level job resources.

Types of demands

To investigate the moderating effects of demand types (challenge vs. hindrance demands; organizational vs. social demands), we categorized the demands accordingly and compared their cross-lagged effects. For challenge vs. hindrance demands, we followed the classification approach of LePine et al. (2005), identifying challenge demands (e.g., performance climate) and hindrance demands (e.g., abusive supervision). For organizational vs. social demands, demands

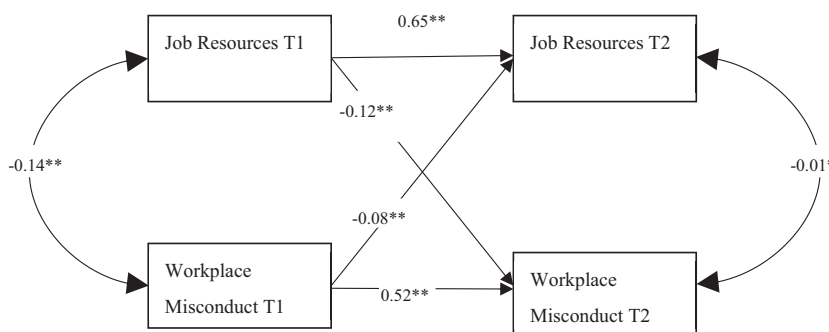


FIGURE 4 The cross-lagged relationships between resources and misconduct.

related to work tasks or the organizational context were categorized as organizational demands (e.g., job insecurity), while demands involving interpersonal interactions (e.g., abusive supervision, experienced incivility) were categorized as social demands. Although some social demands and workplace misconduct share similar behavioral labels (e.g., bullying and incivility), they were distinguished based on the role of the focal employee. Specifically, when employees were positioned as recipients of negative acts (e.g., abusive supervision, ostracism, and incivility), these experiences were coded as social demands. When employees were positioned as enactors of norm-violating behaviors (e.g., CWB, bullying, and unethical conduct), these behaviors were coded as workplace misconduct. This role-based coding rule ensured consistency with the operationalization in primary studies and provided a clear boundary between social demands and workplace misconduct in our meta-analytic coding.

Country-level job resources

The final sample comprised 21 studies, with the majority of studies from the United States ($K = 11$), followed by Belgium ($K = 5$), and one study each from Switzerland, Pakistan, Spain, Denmark, and Norway. We operationalize country-level job resources using ALMPs. ALMPs can be considered a form of job resource because they directly provide workers with resources that promote learning and personal growth through intensive employment assistance, skills training, work experience placements, and job creation schemes (Sage, 2015). These policies help workers acquire new skills and qualifications, enhance employment competitiveness, and provide social support, thereby enhancing subjective well-being (Sage, 2015). ALMPs align with the definition of macro-job resources, which refer to elements of the larger economic, social, and cultural system that influence the effectiveness of immediate resources (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Thus, ALMPs can be regarded as an important country-level job resource. Since we extracted country information from primary studies, we utilized OECD data to classify countries based on their levels of ALMPs (<https://goingdigital.oecd.org/en/indicator/42>). Countries were grouped into two categories: those with ALMP levels above the OECD average (high) and those below it (low). For instance, the United States' ALMP score in our sample is substantially below the OECD mean, whereas Belgium's score clearly exceeds the OECD average; Norway and Denmark show a similar high-ALMP pattern. This classification was used to examine the moderating role of country-level job resources.

Time lag

We employed the CoTiMA methodology (Dormann et al., 2020) to examine the influence of time lag. Specifically, correlation matrices, sample sizes, and time lags were used as inputs to estimate the continuous effect of time. Using this approach, the analysis was conducted with the CoTiMA package in R. The method applies continuous-time mathematical modeling to extrapolate or interpolate results from primary studies for any desired time interval, allowing us to observe how the cross-lagged effects change over time. We applied CoTiMA to examine the relationship between demands and misconduct ($k = 21$); however, due to the limited number of studies ($k = 8$), the relationship between resources and misconduct was not analyzed with this method. The results are presented in Figure 5.

RESULTS

Publication bias analysis

The publication bias analysis results are presented in Table S2. We found no significant publication bias based on Begg and Mazumdar's rank correlation and Egger's regression test, with all p values exceeding .05. For example, for D1D2, Kendall's tau was -0.12 ($p = .46$) and the t value from the regression test was 1.04 ($p = .31$).

Results of meta-analysis

Table 2 presents the main meta-analytic relationships of interest, further broken down by moderator category. The autoregressive correlations were relatively large for both job demands and misconduct (M1M2: $\rho = .73$; D1D2: $\rho = .66$), indicating substantial stability over time in both constructs. Turning to the cross-lagged effects, demands at Time 1 positively related to misconduct at Time 2 (D1M2: $\rho = .28$), and conversely, misconduct at Time 1 was positively associated with demands at Time 2 (M1D2: $\rho = .25$). Notably, the 80% credibility intervals for these cross-lagged correlations included zero (D1M2: 80% CR $[-0.03, 0.59]$; M1D2: 80% CR $[-0.03, 0.54]$), indicating substantial between-study heterogeneity and suggesting the likely presence of moderator variables. Regarding job resources, as shown in Table 2, resources showed relatively large stability (R1R2: $\rho = .66$) and small negative cross-lagged associations with misconduct (R1M2: $\rho = -.19$; M1R2: $\rho = -.17$).

Results of cross-lagged analysis

Table 3 (see also Figure 3) presents the path analysis results of demands and misconduct. As shown in Table 3, the overall cross-lagged effects ($k = 21$, $n = 14,897$) for $M1 \rightarrow D2$ ($\beta = .08$, $p < .01$) and $D1 \rightarrow M2$ ($\beta = .09$, $p < .01$) demonstrate significant relationships. These results indicate a reciprocal relationship between demands and misconduct, where misconduct positively predicts subsequent demands, and demands positively predict subsequent misconduct. Hence, H1a is supported.

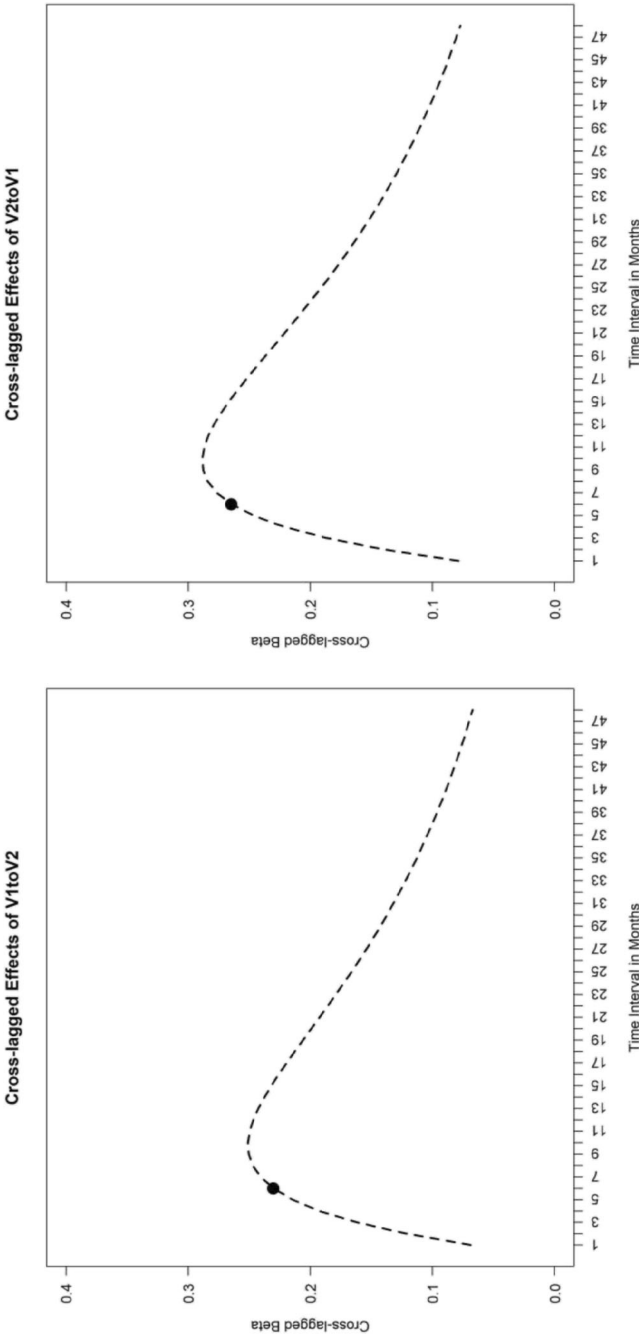


FIGURE 5 Cross-lagged effects of demands and misconduct over time. *Note:* The left figure represents demands \rightarrow misconduct; the right figure represents misconduct \rightarrow demands. The dashed lines indicate the meta-analytic cross-lagged effects change over time. These continuous-time estimates are exploratory in nature and reflect the aggregation of multiple operationalizations of job demands and workplace misconduct across studies. Given this heterogeneity, they are best interpreted as descriptive trend indicators of temporal dynamics rather than precise effect estimates for any specific lag length. Future research aiming to obtain more precise temporal estimates should rely on longitudinal designs focusing on more narrowly defined and consistently operationalized demand and misconduct constructs.

Table 4 (see also Figure 4) outlines the results of the path analysis examining the relationship between job resources and workplace misconduct. It demonstrates significant cross-lagged effects ($k = 8$, $n = 7934$) for $M1 \rightarrow R2$ ($\beta = -.08$, $p < .01$) and $R1 \rightarrow M2$ ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .01$). The data reveal a reciprocal relationship: misconduct negatively predicts later resources, and resources negatively predict future misconduct. Therefore, Hypothesis 1b is supported.

Types of demands

Table 3 shows that hindrance demands ($\beta = .13$, $p < .01$) have a significant positive cross-lagged effect on misconduct, while challenge demands ($\beta = -.01$, $p > .05$) do not.² Subgroup path analysis revealed a significant difference (difference = 0.14, $p < .01$). In contrast, we found no significant difference in the effect of misconduct on subsequent challenge demands ($\beta = .06$, $p < .01$) and hindrance demands ($\beta = .07$, $p < .01$), as the difference between these paths was nonsignificant (difference = 0.01, $p > .05$). Therefore, H2 is not supported.

Social demands ($\beta = .23$, $p < .01$) significantly predict misconduct, whereas organizational demands ($\beta = -.01$, $p > .05$) do not, and the difference between the two effects is significant (difference = 0.23, $p < .01$). Conversely, we also found that misconduct more strongly predicts social demands ($\beta = .10$, $p < .01$) than organizational demands ($\beta = .05$, $p < .01$), with the difference again reaching significance (difference = 0.05, $p < .01$). Taken together, these results suggest that reciprocal dynamics between demands and misconduct are more salient for social demands. Therefore, H3 is supported.

Country-level job resources

Table 3 indicates that the cross-lagged effect is stronger in low-resource countries ($\beta = .11$, $p < .01$) than in high-resource countries ($\beta = .07$, $p < .01$). A significant difference (difference = 0.04, $p < .05$) confirms that country-level job resources buffer the impact of job demands on misconduct. Conversely, when country-level job resources are lower, misconduct induces more subsequent job demands ($\beta = .12$, $p < .01$) compared to when country-level job resources are higher ($\beta = .03$, $p < .01$), and the difference between the two effects is significant (difference = 0.09, $p < .01$). These findings support H4.

Time lag

Figure 5 illustrates the reciprocal effects between job demands and misconduct across varying time lags. The lines show the meta-analyzed effect sizes, which capture the overall reciprocal dynamics. The strength of the reciprocal effects increases from shorter to intermediate time intervals and then slightly declines at longer intervals, indicating a non-linear temporal pattern. Therefore, H5 is supported.

Robustness check

To address concerns that aggregating heterogeneous forms of workplace misconduct may obscure substantive differences, we conducted leave-one-subtype-out sensitivity analyses (see

Tables S3 and S4). Each major misconduct subtype (i.e., deviant behavior, bullying perpetration, instigated incivility, knowledge hoarding, CWB, and feedback avoidance) was excluded in turn, and the meta-analytic models were re-estimated. The corrected correlations remained highly consistent across all iterations, with very limited variation and no reversal in effect patterns, indicating that the results were not driven by any single subtype.

Additionally, we conducted targeted sensitivity analyses to assess whether the observed temporal patterns were driven by a small subset of extreme lags. Specifically, we symmetrically removed the shortest 10% and the longest 10% of time lags and re-estimated the CoTiMA models using the remaining studies. The results remained substantively unchanged in terms of the direction and overall shape of the temporal effects, suggesting that the observed patterns may not be driven by extreme lag values (see Figure S1 and S2).

DISCUSSION

Theoretical implications

First, we contribute to the literature by clarifying the role of workplace misconduct in resource dynamics. Prior research has primarily treated misconduct as a reaction to demanding or resource-poor work conditions, yielding mixed evidence regarding the direction of its relationship with job demands and job resources (e.g., Baillien et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2023; Mawritz et al., 2017; Meier & Spector, 2013; Morf et al., 2017). Leveraging a meta-analytic cross-lagged approach, we synthesize longitudinal evidence while reducing statistical artifacts that may have obscured dynamic relationships in prior studies. Our findings show that misconduct is not only associated with prior high demands or depleted resources, but also linked to subsequent changes in job demands and job resources. This reciprocal pattern highlights that workplace misconduct is embedded within ongoing resource loss processes, rather than representing a purely downstream outcome. By explicitly modeling bidirectional relationships, our study extends prior meta-analytic work that has largely emphasized unidirectional associations and advances a more dynamic understanding of demands–misconduct relationships over time.

Second, this research identifies demand type and demand domain as boundary conditions shaping reciprocal demands–misconduct relationships. Whereas prior meta-analytic work has reported limited differentiation across demand types (Mazzola & Disselhorst, 2019), our findings indicate that not all demands are equally implicated in misconduct dynamics. Specifically, demands that obstruct goal attainment, such as hindrance demands, are more strongly linked to the emergence of misconduct than demands that involve effortful but potentially challenging tasks. This distinction clarifies that misconduct is more likely to arise when demands are experienced as constraining rather than motivating. Importantly, demand type did not differentiate the reverse pathway from misconduct to subsequent demands, revealing an asymmetry in the reciprocal process: While the psychological meaning of demands shapes whether misconduct emerges, once enacted, misconduct tends to reshape the work environment in ways that elevate subsequent demands regardless of their type. Moreover, reciprocal dynamics were more pronounced in the social domain, where interpersonal visibility and conflict escalation intensify both the antecedents and consequences of misconduct. Together, these findings demonstrate that resource loss spirals involving misconduct depend not only on the presence of demands, but on their qualitative nature and social embeddedness.

Third, we highlight the role of institutional resource contexts by showing that country-level job resources shape the strength of reciprocal relationships between job demands and workplace misconduct. Whereas prior research has primarily emphasized organizational-level resources as buffers of job demands (e.g., Brough et al., 2013; Bunjak et al., 2021), our findings extend this perspective by demonstrating that broader institutional resources also condition how demands and misconduct reinforce one another over time. Drawing on COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018) and consistent with emerging evidence at the macro level (e.g., Guthier et al., 2020), our results indicate that supportive institutional environments weaken reciprocal demands–misconduct cycles. This perspective suggests that misconduct dynamics cannot be fully understood without considering the institutional environments that shape employees' resource security, thereby extending COR-based explanations of workplace misconduct beyond the organizational level.

Fourth, our research advances understanding of the temporal dynamics linking job demands and workplace misconduct. Rather than assuming static or monotonically increasing effects, we show that reciprocal demands–misconduct relationships follow a phase-specific temporal pattern. Specifically, reciprocal effects intensify from short to intermediate time lags—when cumulative resource depletion and behavioral feedback have had sufficient time to unfold—but attenuate at longer intervals as recovery and adaptation processes emerge. Theoretically, this pattern provides one of the first meta-analytic demonstrations of the dynamic contours of COR's resource loss spiral, showing that loss processes involving workplace misconduct and job demands are time-sensitive rather than linear or indefinite. By clarifying when reciprocal dynamics are most likely to escalate and when they stabilize, our findings underscore time as a core theoretical dimension for understanding how job demands and workplace misconduct mutually shape one another.

Finally, our findings also speak directly to Bakker et al.'s (2023) Proposition 9, which posits that “job strain can instigate a loss cycle of self-undermining and job demands” (p. 33). Consistent with this proposition, we find that workplace misconduct and job demands are reciprocally related across longitudinal panel studies, suggesting that misconduct may operate in a manner consistent with self-undermining behaviors within loss cycles. Moreover, the observed temporal pattern—where reciprocal effects intensify at intermediate lags and attenuate at longer intervals—further clarifies the dynamics of strain-induced self-undermining. Specifically, our findings suggest that such loss cycles may unfold and accumulate over time, while varying in strength across intervals, thereby offering a more temporally nuanced elaboration of JD–R theory.

Practical contributions

First, in the field of management, failing to ensure causal direction could be a critical factor in the failure of management practices. For example, if practices are designed to target outcomes rather than their antecedents, such efforts may fall short of achieving the desired results. This echoes calls for more accurate causal claims in management research (Cornelissen & Kaandorp, 2023). Our study highlights the reciprocal relationship between resources, demands, and misconduct, offering valuable insights for managers. Given this reciprocal nature, we suggest that management practices should focus on addressing both the drivers (e.g., job demands) and the buffers (e.g., job resources) simultaneously to break the cycle of misconduct.

Second, managers should focus on reducing hindrance demands, as they have a cross-lagged effect on misconduct. However, for challenge demands, we did not find a significant

moderating effect in our study. Nonetheless, earlier studies highlight the potential benefits of challenge demands (LePine, 2022; LePine et al., 2005). For managers, this suggests that incorporating suitable challenge demands may not be harmful to the organization.

Third, managers should work to decrease social demands, as our meta-analysis indicates these demands have a positive cross-lagged effect on misconduct. Social demands may create a *one bad apple in the barrel* effect, where misconduct spreads disproportionately among employees (Brass et al., 1998; Gino et al., 2009). Since social demands often arise from interactions with leaders or coworkers, managers should actively identify and address these demands, fostering a supportive and respectful workplace. Proactive measures, such as promoting healthy communication, addressing toxic behaviors promptly, and providing training on managing interpersonal conflicts, can help prevent the escalation and spread of misconduct.

Finally, this study offers valuable insights for policymakers. Country-level job resources buffer the effects of workplace demands, thereby reducing misconduct. However, these resources can be very costly; OECD data show that ALMPs account for an average of 0.46% of GDP in OECD countries (<https://goingdigital.oecd.org/en/indicator/42>).³ Workplace misconduct can harm both employees and organizations, resulting in significant financial losses. By showcasing the broader benefits of these policies, our findings provide policymakers with some evidence to support the implementation of such investments.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

First, this meta-analysis adopts a cross-lagged design, which allows us to examine correlations and temporal ordering while ruling out some alternative explanations. Nevertheless, as in earlier meta-analyses (e.g., Ricketta, 2008; Xu et al., 2023), the data remain correlational in nature. Thus, the reciprocal relationships we identified cannot be taken as strong causal evidence; as Ricketta (2008) noted, such causal claims remain tentative. Future studies could employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs to establish stronger causal conclusions. Second, despite the contributions to the main effects, this study does not explore the mechanisms of reciprocal relationships. Future studies could investigate potential mediators to gain deeper insights. Despite observing the reciprocal relationship, the mediating mechanisms may differ across directions. For instance, while job demands may operate through mechanisms like strain and ego depletion, the reverse pathway may be driven by punitive and social consequences of misconduct. Future research could test these potential mediators. Third, this meta-analysis only includes English-written studies. Future studies could collect data from non-English-speaking countries to investigate whether such relationships may differ across various cultural contexts. Finally, although we distinguished between types of job demands, the limited number of available studies on resources prevented us from conducting similar subgroup analyses. Likewise, we were unable to examine national-level demands due to data limitations. Future research should therefore investigate whether different domains of job resources—particularly social versus organizational resources—and national-level demands play distinct roles in shaping misconduct.

CONCLUSION

This research advances understanding of the interplay between job demands, job resources, and workplace misconduct. We show that demands, resources, and misconduct are reciprocally

related. Our findings reveal that demand type matters: hindrance demands are consistently associated with greater misconduct, whereas challenge demands are not, and reciprocal effects are especially pronounced in the social domain compared with organizational demands. We also find that country-level job resources moderate these dynamics. Finally, by examining temporal boundaries, we show that reciprocal effects change over time, reach a peak, and then gradually decline or stabilize, thereby offering new insights into the temporal dynamics of COR theory.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There is no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data are shown in the supporting information.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This is a review study. The Renmin University of China Research Ethics Committee has confirmed that no ethical approval is required.

ORCID

Jiaxin Xue  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5478-1285>

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Since our study is a meta-analysis of cross-lagged research, we did not distinguish between categories of resources because the number of available empirical studies was insufficient to support such classification.
- ² Given the small number of available studies ($K = 3$), we descriptively examined the coded lagged correlations (r) between challenge demands and subsequent misconduct. Across the three studies, the lagged correlations were small in magnitude and positive (for $D1 \rightarrow M2$, $r_s = 0.03, 0.06, \text{ and } 0.20$; for $M1 \rightarrow D2$, $r_s = 0.01, 0.07, \text{ and } 0.21$). Given the very small K , these descriptive patterns should be interpreted with caution.
- ³ As our analysis was conducted in 2024, the reported value of 0.46% may differ slightly from more recent statistics. Readers may refer to the OECD website for the latest data.
- ⁴ Coding information and papers included in the current meta-analysis are shown in the supplemental materials.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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