

Exploring Supervisor's Power Distance Orientation in Service Sector: Understanding How it affect Employee Morale via Ego Depletion and Abusive Supervision

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to explore critical paradoxes related to abusive supervision in organizations, which is divided into two types: impulsive abusive supervision and strategic abusive supervision. After validating these types of abusive supervision empirically, we also investigate the impact at the individual level, i.e., employee morale. Drawing from ego depletion theory, our theoretical extension includes a serial mediation model of supervisor's power distance orientation (PDO) as a predictor of abusive supervision. We argue that supervisor PDO influences them to enact strategic abusive behaviors via less ego depletion and these abusive behaviors ultimately help to boost employee morale. Likewise, the explored predictor influences supervisors to enact impulsive abusive behaviors due to high ego depletion, and these abusive behaviors ultimately result in decreased employee morale. We collected the data through the survey based lagged design by using a purposive sampling technique and M plus for multilevel analysis. Using a sample of 541 supervisor-subordinate dyads, our study supports the indirect effects of PDO on abusive supervisor behaviors and authenticates the types of abusive supervision and the impact on the morale of subordinates, also received support for serial mediated paths. Furthermore, our study opens new avenues for research and discusses practical implications for various work settings.

Keywords: abusive supervision, impulsive abuse, strategic abuse, power distance orientation, employee morale

Introduction

Unethical leadership has appeared as an area of interest in the latest studies related to organizational behavior, which ultimately led to increased interest in abusive supervision research (Zhang & Bednal, 2015). The majority of the research on abusive supervision to date has focused on its negative individual and organizational consequences, such as psychological distress, job dissatisfaction, turnover, emotional exhaustion, and counterproductive behavior, including deviance and

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aggression toward others (Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey, 2013; Tepper, 2007). Due to the implications of these consequences for individual well-being and organizational performance, the attention of researchers has more recently turned to understanding the predictors of abusive supervision so that organizations can devise ways to prevent it. While the antecedents of abusive supervision are not yet fully understood, a growing set of studies have shown that situational variables, supervisor characteristics and subordinate characteristics are associated with perceived abuse from supervisors (Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007; Burton & Hoobler, 2011; Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Khan, et al. 2016; Martinko, Harvey, Sikora, & Douglas, 2011; Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006). Furthermore, Schat et al. (2006) found that approximately 13.6% of subordinates face abusive supervision in one form or another in the work place. Various surveys show that 65 to 75% of employees said that their supervisor was the worst part of their job (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005). Withholding desired information, using subordinates as scapegoats, humiliating them, and giving their subordinates the silent treatment are some examples of abusive supervisor behaviors (Tepper et al., 2009; Hoobler and Brass, 2006; Tepper, 2000; Aryee et al., 2007).

Despite these recent additions to our understanding of the antecedents of abusive supervision, there are very few studies that examine the dispositional variables of abusive supervision. The studies have already covered the contextual and structural variables. Eighty-two studies have been conducted on the construct of abusive supervision since the year 2000 (Martinko et al. 2013), and at least 62 abusive supervision studies have been published since then. Moreover, researchers have recently noted a few important limitations to the theory explaining abusive supervision. First, as noted by Tepper (2007) and again in Tepper, Moss, and Duffy (2011), theory and research on abusive supervision have focused much more on the outcomes of abusive supervision than the antecedents. Although the outcomes of abusive supervision are important, a sound understanding of its causes is necessary to enable management theory to guide managers towards reducing abusive supervision (Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhave and Christian, 2013; Martinko, Harvey, Brees & Mackey 2013). Therefore, it is very important to understand how different administrations can try to minimize abusive supervision. Therefore, our study investigates the antecedent of abusive supervision and its effect on employees.

Second, research on abusive supervision has typically taken a static approach, assuming that some supervisors engage in abusive supervision and some do not, rather than examining whether this

behavior fluctuates within a given supervisor. This assumption is highlighted by the word “sustained” in the definition of abusive supervision. Tepper (2007) explicitly notes that “abusive supervision involves continuing exposure to hierarchical mistreatment—a boss who has a bad day and takes it out on his or her subordinates by exploding at them would not be considered an abusive supervisor unless such behavior became a regular feature of his or her repertoire.” Thus, research has confirmed the proposition that some supervisors are often abusive, whereas others are usually not abusive (Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhave and Christian, 2013). Therefore, with our research, we offer a complementary perspective to the between-persons paradigm of abusive supervisors by examining abusive supervisory behaviors, which we argue fluctuate within a person on a contingent basis.

Abusive Supervision: Moving To a Split Approach

Tepper et al. (2012) identified two main kinds of abusive supervision: impulsive abusive supervision (IAS) and strategic abusive supervision (SAS). Impulsive abusive supervision is explained by Tepper et al (2012) as “automatic and uncontrolled actions that may occur outside the supervisor’s response” (p. 194), whereas strategic abusive supervision is elaborated by Tepper et al. (2012) as “thoughtful and deliberate expressions of hostility that are performed with specific objectives in mind” (p. 194). Most studies have primarily focused on the negative aspects of abusive supervision (Tepper, 2007 and Martinko et al. 2013). It could be interesting to highlight any positive aspects of abusive supervision by studying the identical characteristics of both types (Khan, 2014). According to Tepper (2000), abusive supervision is similar to, yet operationally and theoretically dissimilar from, related concepts in the organizational research literature (e.g., petty tyranny, generalized hierarchical abuse, workplace bullying, workplace victimization, supervisor aggression, negative mentoring and supervisor undermining).

Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to take a within-person approach to extend the theory of abusive supervision by examining antecedents and outcomes. Specifically, we draw from ego depletion theory to examine a supervisor’s PDO as an antecedent to the abusive supervisor behavior. Moreover, our conceptual framework suggests that when supervisors are depleted, and thus abusive, there will be regulatory consequences that trickle down, cause job stress, and weaken their collective work engagement. During the last 5 years, empirical examinations on the causes of abusive supervision began (Zhang & Bednal, 2015; Liu et al. 2012; Harris et al. 2011; Wu and Hu 2009) because of increasing importance of this construct at the workplace

(Martinko et al. 2013). Therefore, this paper explores the potential antecedents to abusive supervision and we expand the abusive supervision literature by hypothesizing that abusive supervision reduces job stress. We used numerous methods to determine the potential antecedents of abusive supervision.

Conceptual Framework

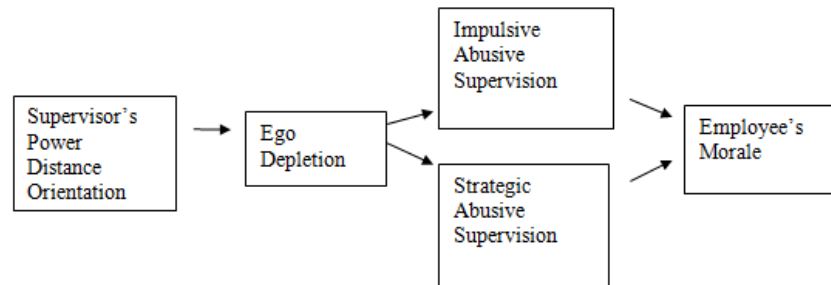


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

First, we examined the following relevant studies, Tepper (2007), Martinko et al. (2013), Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhave and Christian (2013), Zhang & Bednal, (2015) and Macckey, Frieder, Brees and Martinko (2016). Second, we searched scholarly databases (i.e., Google Scholar, ISI web of knowledge, and Dissertation) for journal articles and dissertations that included the terminology ‘abusive supervision’ anywhere in the text. Finally, after a rigorous literature review on the construct of abusive supervision, we listed several possible clinical and non-clinical antecedents, and after a focused group discussion, restricted our study to potential nonclinical variables that can cause abusive behavior. Our work links back to the larger topic of abusive supervision but allows for growth in a useful direction. We hope that it leads to further research questions beyond the model that we tested in our paper.

An originator of abusive supervision introduced in our paper is supervisor’s power distance orientation. Leaders play an important part in the success of organization. Supervisors guide and influence their subordinates, and support organizations to meet their performance objectives and goals (Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008).

Another antecedent of abusive supervision is supervisor’s power distance orientation (PDO). Power distance, defined by Hofstede “is the extent to which a less powerful individual expects and accepts unequally distributed power in a social context” (1991, p. 28). In high power distance cultures, those without or less power show deference to those with more power (Yang, Mossholder, & Peng, 2007) and also there is increased societal gap between those at different hierarchical levels

(Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque, & House, 2006). This means that supervisors in high power distance cultures are more formal and autocratic. Carl, Gupta, and Javidan (2002) illustrate leadership in high power distance cultures as having, “virtually no rapport between the leader and subordinate, leaders rely almost exclusively on the formal contract with subordinates to achieve organizational goals, with the organization compensating the employee through financial remuneration” (p. 535). This distant and formalized style of collaboration associated with less subordinate feedback seeking attitude (de Luque & Sommer, 2000) and high power holders have been considered less cooperative (Tjosvold & Okun, 1979), which ultimately involves supervisors into impulsive abusive behavior. Similar to social dominance, power distance has been conceptualized as a cultural variable applied at a societal level for instance countries can differ in their power distance orientation, but there are also individual and group-level differences. Research has established that individuals with high PDOs are expected to see leaders as having high levels of status (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994; Kirkman et al., 2009). On the other side abusive supervision is also used to encourage subordinates to perform better (Tepper et al., 2011). This is because collectivism can also motivate subordinates to restore harmony in their social relationships with abusive supervisors. It may require varying the environment for abuse, which ultimately makes abuse or hostile behavior seem like a feasible way to tackle subordinates (Priesemuth, Schminke, Ambrose, & Folger, 2014). As according to Chen and Aryee (2007), at the workplace, it is very common for people with high orientation of power distance (PD) to accept status differences and, as a subordinate, obey with supervisors’ commands. Likewise many researchers suggested that subordinates with high PD consider that their boss is elite and superior so they are enthused to perform in the ways to meet supervisor’s expectations (Javidan et al. 2006; Kirkman et al. 2009). Moreover people with high PDO are inclined to perceive greater significance of supervisor’s feedback and consider this feedback as superior expectations from their supervisors, which subordinates could rise to meet (Qian et al. 2012). As a result, feedback given by supervisors is more effective for employees with high PD. Subordinates get more benefits if they are feeling more responsible to respond to their superiors or supervisors.

Employee’s morale is another variable used in our study as mediator in relationship with abusive supervision and its outcomes. Hornstein, (1996) and Mehdi et al, (2012) argued that abusive supervision will have a negative impact on employee’s performance,

their physical health, attitude, self-respect and turnover. Abusive supervision has a negative correlation with employee's morale also (change & Lyons, 2012). As employee's morale is the excellence of lives within a society which involves "being known and appreciated, having professional knowledge valued, and being given the freedom to act" (Koerner, 1990, p. 3). Moreover Ferris, Treadway, et al. (2007) gave supportive notes about abusive supervision and discussed that strategic abusive supervision not only look for improvement in the victim but also improves the misconduct in behavior and boost productivity and employee's performance. Such behavior usually best fits in a situation that is suitable for their subordinates in terms of self-reliance and morale boosting. We hope that this study opens additional research questions beyond the model that we examined in our paper.

Supervisor's PDO, Ego depletion and Abusive Supervision **Supervisor's PDO and Abusive supervision**

Erdogan & Liden (2002) said that despite the relevance of leaders' power distance orientation to how they should interact with subordinates is a considerable phenomenon, as Vidyarthi, Anand, and Liden (2014) reported that no study had examined the effects of leaders' PDOs on abusive behavior. Hofstede (1991, p. 28), defines power distance as it "is the extent to which a less powerful people accepts and expects unevenly distributed power in a social context". In high PD cultures, those without power show deference to those with power (Yang, Mossholder, & Peng, 2007) and there is greater social distance between those at different layers of the hierarchy (Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque, & House, 2006). It means that leaders in high PD cultures are more formal and autocratic. Carl, Gupta, and Javidan (2002) characterized leadership in high PD cultures as having, "virtually no rapport between the leader and subordinate. Leaders will rely almost exclusively on the formal contract with subordinates to achieve organizational goals, with the organization compensating the employee through financial remuneration" (p. 535) This distant and formalized style of interaction relates to less subordinate feedback seeking (de Luque & Sommer, 2000) and high power differentials have been shown to relate to less cooperation (Tjosvold & Okun, 1979), which ultimately involves supervisors into impulsive abusive behaviour. Similar to social dominance, power distance has been conceptualized as a cultural variable applied at a societal level; for instance countries can differ in their power distance orientation, but there are also individual and group-level differences. Research has found that individuals with high PDOs are likely to see leaders as having high levels of status (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994;

Kirkman et al., 2009). Likewise Cole et al. (2013) described that the correspondence of leaders' PDO and teams' PDO was important in the team perceiving high levels of procedural justice climate, but perceptions of this type of climate declined when the leader had a high PDO, but the team had lower levels of PDO values. They also found that these climate perceptions mediated the impact of PDO correspondence on team.

Abusive supervision is many times used to encourage subordinates or employees to perform better at workplace (Tepper et al., 2011). This is because; collectivism encourages individuals to restore harmony in their social interactions with abusive supervisors. It may entail changing the environment for abuse, which makes abuse seem like a feasible way to treat subordinates (Priesemuth, Schminke, Ambrose, & Folger, 2014). At the place of work it is usual that employees standing at highest levels of power distance has to cope with differences in status and to follow the instructions of supervisors (Chen and Aryee 2007). Following a line of investigations recommended that employees who stand high on power distance have orientation inclined to think that the supervisor is elite, superior, so they feel very enthusiastic to achieve the set goals so that they can make their supervisor happier (Kirkman et al. 2009; Javidan et al. 2006). These kinds of employees consider supervisor's commands and instructions more valuable (Qian et al. 2012). Consequently, when these employees consider pleasing their supervisors as obligation, the feedback they get from supervisors is also relatively high on power distance. This variable is also proposed by Khan (2014) as a potential predictor of abusive supervision. As we discussed above in Hypothesis 11, we expect a supervisor's POD to influence ego depletion. Furthermore we also noted above in Hypothesis 1a and Hypothesis 1b ,leaders are often faced with situations that may tempt them to engage in abusive behavior toward subordinates, especially when they experience stress, frustration, and difficulties at work. Suppressing those temptations and behaving in a civil manner requires self-regulation and if they fail to regulate themselves it leads towards impulsive abusive supervision and if they do so they move towards strategic abusive behavior. Thus, we contend that incompetence will influence abusive supervisory behavior and that ego depletion will mediate this effect. Accordingly, drawing from an ego depletion approach, we hypothesize the following relationships:

H1 (a): Supervisor's power distance orientation is positively related to IAS

H1 (b): Supervisor's power distance orientation is negatively related to SAS

Supervisor's PDO and ego depletion

Power holders or supervisor who observes themselves as incompetent may display abusive behavior as a reaction to the state of ego defensiveness. In like manner awareness of personal incompetence by supervisor also played important role because power of supervisors led to hostility only when this thing corresponds with one's assessment of self-incompetence. It further indicated that supremacy networks with intimidations to one's resources to create hostile behaviors and attitudes (Morrison et al., 2009; Georgesen & Harris, 2006), but incorporates such work activities by telling that power holders are encouraged to safeguard not simply their authority, but correspondingly their egos. To sum up influence holders i-e supervisors, who considered themselves as individually unskilled display abusive behavior as a reaction to the state of ego defensiveness.

Excessive use of power may be detrimental for the supervisor-subordinate relationship. For example, Lawrence and Robinson (2007) show that power can be viewed in four different dimensions, which include influence (manipulation and negotiation), force (e.g., physical abuse), discipline (e.g., surveillance), or domination (e.g., discrimination). High power distance orientation could result in any dimension like manipulation, discrimination, or abuse due to less self-control. Similarly, Detert, Treviño, Burris, and Andiappan (2007) argued that power predicted individuals' perceptions of injustice and loss of autonomy, which triggers frustration and eventually leads to negative consequences.

Dupre and Barling (2006) investigate the relationship between supervisor control and workplace aggression. The authors found that close supervisor control results in a feeling of constrained action and perceptions of interpersonal injustice which affect aggressive behavior. Some individuals may think that supervisors who monitor them closely or use certain influence tactics do not intend to cause negative justice perceptions within their employees. Instead, the supervisors may want to achieve the best outcomes for all parties involved. In contrast, abusive supervision, which reflects a hostile behavior from the supervisor toward an individual over a period of time, may create clearer perceptions of unfairness within subordinates. So in the light of above mentioned literature we hypothesized that;

H2: Supervisors' power distance orientation positively related to ego depletion

Supervisors are often exposed to circumstances that generate the impulse to engage in abusive behavior in their interpersonal interactions, especially with subordinates. The interpersonal conflict of supervisors or a poor performance of subordinates creates frustration, which ultimately produces an impulse to shout or show a discourteous attitude towards those subordinates (Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011). Sometimes supervisors struggle to regulate these impulses or urges. This lack of success in self-regulation is a major reason for their PDO. Muraven & Baumeister (2000) defined self-regulation (SR) as the psychological procedure through which anti-normative impulses are organized and controlled. In addition, in addition to this, ego depletion explains how the individual's capability to exercise self-regulation fluctuates over time. As with ego depletion, from a limited pool of one's skills, all kind of self-regulation can be produced as stated by Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice in (1998). Engaging in actions demanding self-regulation diminishes this pool and they are not as able to do so until the resources have been recovered. Gino, Schweitzer, Mead, & Ariely (2011) indicated that the ego depletion theory causes people to fail to resist an impulse or temptation to engage in negative activities. One example of these activities tempted by ego depletion could be unethical behavior (impulsive abusive supervision), according to Barnes, Schaubroeck, Huth, & Ghumman (2011). This argument is further supported by Hagger, Wood, Stiff, & Chatzisarantis (2010), who suggest that self-regulation is a dynamic capacity, and it can be decreased or depleted via ego.

Several recent studies have proposed that abusive supervision can be instrumental and may sometimes be doled out with strategic premeditation (Ferris et al., 2007; Krasikova et al., 2013; Tepper, 2007; Walter et al., 2015). Tepper, Duffy, et al. (2011) suggested some objectives that could motivate the strategic abuse of a subordinate. One of those objectives is to manage their impressions to fortify their image as a figure of authority and status.

Moreover, the analyses of self-regulation (Baumeister et al., 1994) emphasized four main ingredients of the self-regulation process. The first ingredient is standards. As the definition indicates, regulation means a change to align with some standard; hence, effective self-regulation requires a clear and well-defined standard. Ambiguous, uncertain, inconsistent, or conflicting standards make self-regulation difficult. Higgins (1987) emphasized how different standards can alter emotional reactions and behavioral processes. Second, self-regulation requires monitoring. It is difficult, if not impossible, to regulate a behavior without keeping track of it. Self-regulation theory has been

hugely influenced by the seminal work of Carver and Scheier (1998). One major aspect of their contribution was to adapt the feedback-loop theory to human self-regulation. The person performs a test by comparing the self (or the relevant aspect of self) to the standard. If the self falls short, then self-regulation requires initiating some operation to change the self to improve. Further tests evaluate progress toward meeting the goal and eventually confirm that the self has now been brought into line with the standard, whereupon no further operations are required, and so the operations can cease.

The third ingredient is self-regulatory strength, colloquially known as willpower. Operations aimed at changing the self are difficult and therefore require some power. Regulating the self appears to depend on a limited resource that operates similar to a strength or energy and becomes temporarily depleted afterward (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998; Muraven&Baumeister, 2000; Vohs& Heatherton, 2000), thus creating the state of ego depletion. Recent work has indicated that blood glucose, which is the brain's principal source of fuel, is an important component of this resource: Acts of self-control consume substantial quantities of glucose, resulting in lower levels of it in the bloodstream (Gailliot et al., 2007). The fourth ingredient is motivation – specifically, motivation to achieve the goal or meet the standard, which in practice amounts to motivation to regulate the self. Even if the standards are clear, monitoring is fully effective, and the person's resources are abundant, he or she may still fail to self-regulate due to lack of motivation to reach the goal. Therefore, we claim that the pool of resources will be depleted less to achieve the desired results, as self-regulation enables an individual to maintain his resources.

As we noted above, leaders are often faced with situations that may tempt them to engage in abusive behavior toward subordinates, especially when they experience stress, frustration, and difficulties at work.

Suppressing those temptations and behaving in a civil manner requires self-regulation. As noted in Hypotheses 1a and 1b, we expect a supervisor's PDO to influence abusive supervision.

Thus, we contend that PDO will influence abusive supervisory behavior and that ego depletion will mediate this effect. Accordingly, drawing from an ego depletion approach, we hypothesize the following relationships:

H3: Ego depletion is positively related to impulsive abusive supervision

H4: Ego depletion is negatively related to strategic abusive supervision

H5: Ego depletion mediates the combined effects of (a) supervisor PDO and impulsive abusive supervision and (b) supervisor PDO and strategic abusive supervision.

Effects on Employee Morale

It is very important to understand how ego depletion affects the performance of individuals, and it also exposes the procedures involved in self-control. The major result of depletion is the damage to one's self-control. Research related to depletion found similar results that depletion always leads to poor control over one's own behavior and the behavior of others. Likewise, Baumeister et al (1998) established that depleted people were more passive than non-depleted people. Tepper et al. defines impulsive abuse as "automatic and uncontrolled actions that may occur outside the supervisor's awareness" (2012, P.194) Slightly different from Tepper's definition, Ferris, Zinko, et al. (2007) discussed impulsive abusive supervision as 'assertive tactical abuse' and stated that such behaviors demonstrate the individual's response to contextual features, with specific and obvious short-term intended objectives of employees. In addition, pressure has been used as an influential tactic in the capacity of assertive serious abuse (Sadler, Hunger, & Miller, 2010). Intimidation is basically an impression management tactic recognized by Jones and Pittman (1982) that creates threat and fear. Jones and Pittman (1982, p.236) illustrated it as a tactic "whereby individuals seek to be viewed as intimidating by threatening or bullying others". These behaviors encompass bullying, aggression, threats and intimidation, (Bolino & Turnley (1999). Both bullying and threats have been defined in the same manner, as somebody who oppresses or threatens others (Ferris et al., 2007). Many of the studies carried out in the field of abusive supervision have considered this type of supervision as a negative impulsive abusive behavior (Adams, 1992) that is supported by its deficiency to be understood as a strategic behavior. Hence, it can be concluded that all these terms, such as abuse, bullying, intimidation and aggression, could act as synonyms to each other due to lack of clarity regarding their strategic aspect. Thus, it is argued that all these terminologies, such as aggression, abuse, intimidation and bullying, are identical. Hornstein, (1996) and Mehdi et al, (2012) argued that abusive supervision will have a negative impact on an employee's performance, their physical health, attitude, self-respect and turnover. Similarly, abusive supervision affects employee morale. As Change & Lyons (2012) reported, abusive supervision has a negative correlation with employee morale. In addition, unethical behavior extracts a significant human cost: employee performance, morale, and well-being are all impacted by such deviant behaviors (Robinson & Greenberg, 1998; Lian,

Ferris, Brown, 2012). Therefore, concluding from the above-mentioned arguments, we can say that the unconsciously exhibited hostile behavior of supervisors reduces employee morale. Therefore, based on the above-mentioned literature review the following hypotheses have been developed.

H6: Impulsive abusive supervision is negatively related to employee morale.

H7: Ego depletion and impulsive abusive supervision will serially mediate the supervisor PDO to employee morale relationship.

Based on a rigorous literature review, theoretically, it has been established that strategic abusive supervision has positive results. Strategic abuse is explained by Tepper et al (2012) as “thoughtful and deliberate expressions of hostility that are performed with specific objectives in mind” (p.194). Strategic abuse has been used as a strategy to accomplish set targets and organizational goals by supervisors (Ferris, Zinko, et al., 2007). It can be used as an efficient management tool. Moreover, they elaborated that “leader bullying represents strategically selected topics of influenced by leaders designed to convey a particular image and place targets in a submissive, powerless position whereby they are more easily influenced and controlled in order to achieve, personal and/or organizational objectives” (Ferris et al., 2007, p.197).

Tepper, Duffy, et al. (2011) have recommended some objectives that could motivate the strategic abuse of a subordinate. One of those objectives is to manage impressions to fortify their image as a figure of authority and status. In addition, the tactical behavior in an organization is to achieve the preferred goals, which are a type of political behavior, as explained by Liu et al., (2006). To support the same argument, Ferris, Zinko, et al. (2007), stated that a supervisor’s strategic skills helped him to influence others by his abusive behavior at the workplace. Additionally, Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas, & Ammeter (2004) stated that the strategic behaviors of leaders can be used to achieve personal or organizational goals and to practice this understanding to influence other people to attain specific goals. Furthermore, Ferris et al. (2007) argued that politically skilled supervisors know how to behave in diverse situations to orient productivity through sincere and authentic actions. Supervisors try to minimize unfavorable or negative outcomes and achieve desired, constructive effects. To achieve personal and organizational goals, they employ their ability to understand others (Ferris et al., 2005). Furthermore, they argue that strategic abusive supervision is needed to help employees with their maturity level and to

teach them how to handle strict deadlines. In contrast, if a supervisor isn't really known, with such strategic behaviors, he/she would fall into the same typical traditional way of abuse, which would result in adverse impacts on employees. Ferris, Treadway, et al. (2007) gave supportive notes about abusive supervision and reported that strategic abusive supervision not only improves the victim but also improves the behavior and boosts productivity and employee performance. Such behavior usually best fits a situation that is suitable for their subordinates in terms of self-reliance and morale-boosting (Khan, 2104). Moreover, supervision is frequently used to improve morale, which, in turn, should improve other organizational outcomes. We used the term supervision controls as a broad set of managerial approaches to encourage employees to move toward desired objectives, including these types of specific controls: accountability (Tetlock, 1985), feedback (Earley, 1986), incentives (Jenkins, 1986), and empowerment/ autonomy (Breaugh, 1985). Hence, based on the above-mentioned literature, we develop the following hypotheses.

H8: Strategic abusive supervision is positively related to employee morale.

H9: Ego depletion and strategic abusive supervision will serially mediate the supervisor PDO to employee morale relationship.

Method

Sample

We drew our participants from the service sector of Pakistan by using the purposive sampling technique. The data were collected through personal and peer contacts to obtain self and supervisory responses to the questionnaires. We contacted managers from these organizations and informed them about our study. After the managers expressed their respective organizations' willingness to participate in the study, we informed the employees of these organizations via e-mail about the project and invited them to sign up individually for the study. We offered feedback about the study results after the completion of data collection as an incentive for participation. Participants were from a variety of industries and occupations, including accounting, supply chain, operation management, human resources, and marketing in the industries of banking, information technology, and health care. A total of 164 supervisors agreed to allow the administration of surveys and completed the surveys themselves. Their workgroups ranged from 5-11 members, with a mean of 5.61 per group. We distributed 164 questionnaires to supervisors and 1700 questionnaires to employees at different time

points and received completed questionnaires from 1045 subordinates, representing a response rate of 56%.

Across groups, response rates ranged from 24% to 100%. For supervisors, 20% of respondents were female; 13.3% were between 20 and 30 years old, 55.5% between 31 and 40, 22% between 41 and 50 and 7.4% were older than 51 and 10% were 51 and onwards (mean 46 years, SD 9.8). Twenty-nine percent of supervisors worked within the current position for less than 2 years, 15% between 2 and 4 years, 24% between 4 and 6 years, and 38% worked more than 6 years in the current positions. The mean supervisor tenure with the organizations was 7 years (SD 5.8). Forty percent of subordinates were female; 26% were between 18 and 30 years old, 36% between 31 and 40, 25% between 41 and 50 and 13% were older than 51 (mean 38 years, SD 9.8). Twenty-eight percent of subordinates worked with the current supervisor for less than 1 year, 47% between 2 and 4 years, 12% between 4 and 6 years, and 13% worked more than 6 years with the current supervisor (mean 3.6 years, SD 3.3).

Overall, from the participating respondents, we received 124 out of 164 possible supervisor surveys (83.43% response rate) and 1332 out of 1736 possible subordinate surveys (82.30%). Fifty-eight supervisors provided surveys with some missing responses, so they were not included. After the available subordinate surveys were matched with the available supervisor surveys and were aggregated to the supervisor level, it yielded a final sample of 541 unit-days nested within 106 supervisors.

Procedures

Participants were recruited through contacts with their organizations. Individuals who indicated an interest in participating were presented with the informed consent document. This provided instructions for the study, as well as assurances of confidentiality. To collect reliable data and to capture the accurate effect of variables and avoid the common method bias, the data was collected from supervisors in four different time lags of two weeks, which is similar to the majority of sampling research in the management literature. We chose a two-week period, which is consistent with Reis and Wheeler's (1991) suggestion that two weeks represents a generalizable sample of individuals' lives. Additionally, Podsakoff et al. (2003) recommended that data collected at different time lags can help to alleviate bias and ensure that the common method variance has little or no effect on the results. Data on Supervisor's PDO was reported by the supervisors and collected during the first time period. Data on Impulsive Abusive supervision and Strategic Abusive supervision was collected from employees in the second time period. Data on Employee morale

and job stress was collected in the third time period and the fourth period from employees, respectively.

Measures

Supervisor's power distance orientation

For PDO, we used the 8-item measure created by Earley and Erez (1997) based on Hofstede's (1980) conceptual description of power distance. Respondents answered on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree"; 5 = "strongly agree"). The alpha reliability of this scale is .81. Sample items include: Rules should not be broken—not even when the subordinate thinks it's in the best interest of the group.

Ego Depletion

To measure ego depletion, we used the 5 item scale of Twenge et al. (2004). Participants were instructed to indicate the degree to which they agreed with each item on a 5 point Likert scale, in which 1=very slightly or not at all and 5=very much. A sample item is "My mental energy is running low." Average coefficient alpha for this scale was .92.

Abusive Supervision

Abusive supervision measured with 15 items developed by Tepper (2000). Responses for these items made on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree." Subordinates also responded to items on a likert scale ranging from 1 (I cannot remember him/her ever using this behavior with me) to 5 (He/she uses this behavior very often with me). A sample item is, "My boss tells me I am incompetent." The scale demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha reliability =.91).

Employee morale

For employee's morale, we used the 16-items based on the previously conducted studies related to employee's morale, the details are as follows; (a) Satisfaction of the employees is assessed in terms of feelings of safety, colleagues and perception of the company, based on Dimitriades, Papalexandris (2011) and Hetherington (1997), Employee commitment explored based on Dimitriades, Papalexandris (2011) and Hetherington (1997) and questions regarding employee perceptions of team spirit and morale based on the questions suggested by Dimitriades and Papalexandris (2011) as adopted from Young (2000), sample items are; Respondents answered on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree"; 5 = "strongly agree"). The alpha reliability of this scale is .94.

Procedures

Participants were recruited through contacts with their organizations. Individuals who indicated an interest in participating were presented with the informed consent document. This provided instructions for the study, as well as assurances of confidentiality. In order to collect reliable data and to capture the accurate effect of variables and avoid common method bias, the data collected from supervisors in four different time lags of two weeks which is similar to the majority of experience sampling research in the management literature, we chose a 2 week period. This is consistent with Reis and Wheeler's (1991) suggestion that two weeks represents a generalizable sample of individuals' lives. In addition to this Podsakoff et al. (2003) recommended that data collected at different time lags can help to alleviate such bias and expect that the common method variance has little or no effect on results. Data on Supervisor's PDO was supervisory reported and collected in first time lag. Data on Impulsive Abusive supervision and Strategic Abusive supervision collected from employees in second time lag. Data on Employee's morale and job stress collected in third time and fourth lag from employees respectively.

Control variables

We included several control variables at both the individual and team levels. We considered age, gender and education as the individual level control variables. We included these control variables because previous studies found them to be significantly related to Abusive supervision and they were statistically controlled in several studies on abusive supervision (Aryee et al., 2007).

Analysis

We performed the data analysis in three steps. First, we measured the convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability of the instruments with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). We used the model re specification technique to establish convergent validity and discriminant validity (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Second, we tested the hypothesized model using the multilevel, calculating direct and indirect effects. Given the multilevel nature of our model, the data collected to test our model included nesting that violates assumptions of independence of observations required for ordinary least squares regression analyses. Accordingly, we conducted our analyses in multilevel format using Mplus (Muthen&Muthen, 2010). Furthermore, in order to test the proposed serial mediation, we performed multilevel path analysis (MacKinnon, 2008; Preacher, Zyphur, & Zhang, 2010). Specifically, in order to test the serial mediation, in our model

PDO was independent variable, first stage mediator was ego depletion and IAS and SAS were the second stage mediators' and employee morale was the dependent variable. We test and report mediation through a test of the statistical significance of the indirect effect and its associated confidence interval (MacKinnon, 2008). The data consisted of 2 levels. The lowest level (Level 1) comprised IAS, SAS and employee's morale, which were nested within supervisor and our control variables (Level 2). In order to empirically justify aggregation of subordinate ratings of a given supervisor and aggregation of subordinate ratings to unit ratings, we conducted ICC analyses. This analysis indicates what proportion of the variance is accounted for by the group level, and whether or there is significant nesting. For abusive supervision ICC (1) = .411 ($p < .01$) and ICC (2) = .489, $F = 2.21$. For employee morale, ICC (1) = .398 ($p < .01$), $F = 2.81$. These values all support the aggregation we indicated in our conceptual development.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We used existing instruments in a new setting (South Asia), it was necessary to assess the validity and reliability of the full set of measures. Therefore, we performed CFA to measure the convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability of all variables. The six factor CFA showed good fit with data ($\chi^2 =$; $df = 266$; $\chi^2/df = 3.02$; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)= 0.031 ; goodness-of-fit index (GFI)= ; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI)= 0.725, confirmatory fit index (CFI)= 0.808).

Within the six-factor model, the standardized loadings of all items were reasonably high and above the recommended value of 0.50 (0.60-0.94; Kline, 2011). Because the model fit indices in the six-factor model were good (Table I) and factor loadings were greater than 0.50 on their respective factors, these instruments were adequate for use in the South Asian context.

We also examined the convergent validity of four factors by computing their average variance extracted (AVE) for each factor; all estimates were greater than the recommended value of 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). For the discriminant validity analysis, we used the method proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981); the AVEs of all factors were compared with the squared correlations of all factors, and the AVE values were greater than their squared correlations (Table II). Finally, we assessed the internal consistency of all variables; the Cronbach's α values were greater than 0.70 (Nunally and Bernstein, 1978).

Table 1 Reliability, Convergent Validity and test of discriminant validity for all study variables

Latent Variables	1	2	3	4	5	A
PDO	<i>.70</i>					0.96
Depletion	<i>.65</i>	<i>.93</i>				0.93
Impulsive Abusive Behavior	<i>.47</i>	<i>.68</i>	<i>.70</i>			0.93
Strategic Abusive Behavior	<i>.56</i>	<i>.69</i>	<i>.52</i>	<i>.68</i>		0.94
Morale	<i>.31</i>	<i>.64</i>	<i>.30</i>	<i>.33</i>	<i>.78</i>	0.94

Notes: The italic values on the diagonal represent convergent validities (AVE). Values in the columns are the squared inter item correlations (discriminant validities when compared to the AVEs). Italic values in the last column present Cronbach's α internal consistency reliability estimates

Table 1 presents the Cronbach's α values, AVEs, and squared correlations among variables.

Table 2 Correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
PDO	0.03	1.06	1				
Ego Depletion	2.83	1.01	<i>.27**</i>	1			
Impulsive Abusive Supervision	2.46	1.01	<i>.11**</i>	<i>.25*</i>	1		
Strategic Abusive Supervision	3.73	.89	<i>-.13*</i>	<i>-.27*</i>	<i>.08**</i>	1	
Employee Morale	0.01	1.01	<i>-.04**</i>	<i>.01*</i>	<i>-.02*</i>	<i>.16**</i>	1

Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics and the correlations among studies variables.

We note that supervisor's PDO was positively associated with IAS ($r = .11, p < .01$), while it was negatively correlated with SAS ($r = -.13, p < .01$). Supervisor's PDO was positively related to leader ego depletion ($r = .27, p < .01$). Ego depletion is positively related to impulsive abusive supervision ($r = .12, p < .01$) whereas Ego depletion is negatively related to strategic abusive supervision ($r = -.27, p < .05$). Impulsive abusive

supervision is negatively related to employee's morale ($r = -.02, p < .01$) while Strategic abusive supervision is positively related to employee's morale ($r = .16, p < .05$).

Table 3 Multilevel Path Analysis Results

Variables	Ego Depletion	Impulsive Abusive Supervision	Strategic Abusive Supervision	Employee's Morale	
Main Effects:					
Supervisor's PDO	0.208**	0.032*	-0.072**	-0.117*	
Ego Depletion		0.469**	-0.500**		
Impulsive Abusive Supervision				-0.352**	
Strategic Abusive Supervision				-.314**	
R- Sq	.02	.14	.17	.30	
Indirect Effects					
Supervisor's PDO (Via Ego Depletion)	→	IAS	0.098**	0.100	0.272
Supervisor's PDO (Via Ego Depletion)	→	SAS	-0.104**	-0.237	-0.110
Ego Depletion Morale (via IAS)	→	Employee	-0.152*	-0.274	-0.029
Ego Depletion Morale (via SAS)	→	Employee	0.111	-0.009	0.232
Supervisor's PDO (via Ego Depletion & IAS)	→	Employee Morale	-0.06	0.119	-0.012
Supervisor's PDO Morale (via Ego Depletion & SAS)	→	Employee	0.062	-0.004	0.120

Notes. N = 561. LLCI = lower level of the 95% confidence interval. UCLI = upper level of the 95% confidence interval. The model was estimated simultaneously. Standardized estimates are reported. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

Table 3 reports the results of our hypotheses and the multilevel path analysis. We proposed that supervisor's PDO (H1a) posited that positive related to IAS and negatively related to SAS (H1b). Results provided

support for H1a: supervisor's PDO ($\gamma = 0.09$, $p < .05$) was positively related to IAS; H1b: supervisor's PDO ($\gamma = -0.19$, $p < .05$) was negatively related to SAS

Hypothesis 2, which posited that supervisor's PDO positively relates to ego depletion, received empirical support ($\gamma = .208$, $p < .01$). Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4 posited that ego depletion positively relates to IAS and negatively relates to SAS respectively. Results provided support for H4: ego depletion ($\gamma = 0.469$, $p < .05$) was positively related to IAS and H5: ego depletion ($\gamma = 0.50$, $p < .05$) was positively related to SAS. Hypothesis 5 posited that ego depletion mediate the relationship between (a) supervisor's PDO& IAS (b) supervisor's PDO& SAS. Hypothesis both parts were supported: the indirect effect of supervisor's PDO on IAS via ego depletion was significant ($ab = .098$, $p < .05$; 95% CI [0.030, 0.165]) and the indirect effect of supervisor's PDO on SAS via ego depletion was significant ($ab = -.104$, $p < .05$; 95% CI [-.180, -.028])

Hypothesis 6, which posited that IAS negatively relates to employee's morale, received empirical support ($\gamma = -0.352$, $p < .01$).

Hypothesis 7 posited that ego depletion and impulsive abusive supervision serially mediate the supervisor's PDO to employee morale relationship. Hypothesis 7 was not supported: the indirect effect of supervisor's PDO on impulsive abusive supervision via leader ego depletion (the first-stage mediator) was statistically significant ($ab = .098$, $p < .05$; 95% CI [0.030, 0.165]); notably, the indirect effect of supervisor's PDO on employee's morale via both leader ego depletion (the first-stage mediator) and abusive supervision (the second-stage mediator) was insignificant. The estimate (ab) of the indirect effect for the serial mediation is statistically significant at the 5% level of significance (i.e., $p < .05$), and the lower bound of the 95% confidence interval is a non-zero positive value beyond the three decimal places, which, as such does not include zero.

Hypothesis 8 which posited that SAS positively relates to employee's morale, received empirical support ($\gamma = 0.314$, $p < .01$). Hypothesis 9 was not supported: the indirect effect of supervisor's PDO on strategic abusive supervision via leader ego depletion (the first-stage mediator) was statistically significant ($ab = -.104$, $p < .05$; 95% CI [-.180, -.028]); notably, the indirect effect of supervisor's PDO on employee's morale via both leader ego depletion (the first-stage mediator) and abusive supervision (the second-stage mediator) was also insignificant.

Overall, the results indicated that supervisor's ego depletion mediated the relationship between supervisor's PDO& impulsive abusive supervision and supervisor's PDO& strategic abusive supervision.

Discussion

We used a convenient sampling design to examine the relationships among supervisor PDO, succeeding supervisory abusive behaviors towards subordinates, and subordinate outcomes. The results generally supported our hypotheses with regards to mediating relationships among supervisor PDO, via ego depletion with impulsive abusive supervision. Similarly, the results also supported our hypotheses with regards to mediating relationships among supervisor PDO via ego depletion with strategic abusive supervision. As far as serial mediation is concerned, supervisor PDO was not linked indirectly—via leader ego depletion and impulsive abusive supervision—to employee morale.

Likewise, the findings of serial mediation regarding supervisor PDO were also not related indirectly—via leader ego depletion and strategic abusive supervision—to employee morale. Our results have several theoretical and practical implications. To begin, we challenge the prevailing stagnant viewpoint that assumes that leaders are either abusive to some degree or not abusive at all. Whereas most of the research has considered abusive supervision to be a chronic factor—similar to a trait or a consistent style—our study suggests that supervisors vary in their intent of abusive behavior at the workplace. Our findings add to the literature by suggesting that to accurately describe abusive supervision, theory and research should focus as much on the positive side of abuse as it has on “sustained” abuse. Thus, our research moves the literature on abusive supervision and on leadership more generally, forward by demonstrating the importance of a both perspectives in understanding leader behavior. Further, our results suggest at least two reasons why fluctuations in abusive behavior are theoretically important.

First, our findings authenticate empirically the bifurcation of the construct (abusive supervision) into two types, impulsive abusive supervision and strategic abusive supervision (Tepper et al. 2012; Khan, 2014). Second, by establishing that impulsive and strategic abusive behaviors are both associated with fluctuations in supervisor PDO, we contribute to the very small body of research on antecedents to abusive supervision (Martinko et al., 2013). Moreover, our study explains reasons why leaders exhibit inconsistency in their abusive behaviors, filling a critical gap in our understanding of the reasons why managers may be abusive (Tepper, 2007; Tepper, et al., 2011).

Our study also contributes to research on PDO in organizations in several ways. Using an ego depletion framework, we theorized that both would affect leadership behavior and relationships that have not previously been proposed.

Moreover, the results indicate that PDO of supervisors may play an important role in determining behavior (Vohs, Baumeister and Ciarocco, 2005) in the workplace. We discuss that sometimes supervisors struggle to regulate impulses or urges when they are faced with challenging situations in terms of their competency or if they feel threatened to disclose, then they may become overwhelmed by their PDO and fail at self-regulation. Engaging in actions demanding self-regulation diminishes an individual's pool of resources and their ability to self-regulate may be diminished until they are able to recover their resources. Consequently, people who fail to resist impulses or temptations involving negative activities (Gino, Schweitzer, Mead, & Ariely, 2011) and are unlikely to have the capacity to regulate, can use this quality as a tactic to control the behaviors of others to achieve desired results. This is the same case with individuals with less PDO, when they fail to regulate their emotions then they engage in impulsive abusive supervision as a result of ego depletion and if they able to regulate themselves then ego depletion will be less and consequently, they can use it as a strategic tactic.

Although we theorized the sequential effects of the antecedent of abusive supervision via ego depletion on employee morale. For instance, when impulsive abusive supervision occurs, a significant decrease in employee morale is seen, but strategic abusive supervision leads to a positive change in employee morale as it is done tactfully. Nevertheless, we posit that fluctuations in employee morale can cause considerable amounts of lost value to organizations. This becomes even more apparent when one begins to aggregate across many days of low employee morale, many work units, many organizations, and many years, or when one examines high-reliability contexts in which a moment of low morale can produce disastrous consequences.

Unlikely predicted sequential effects of antecedents of abusive supervision via ego depletion till employee morale were generally supported.

An alternative possibility is that supervisors are more aware of their condition which could be contextual. Another possibility is that might be few other factors deprivation of supervisors may be more powerful than enduring PDO by any particular source in predicting abusive supervision. Although we do not have any measures of

enduring PDO deprivation, future research may do well to examine this question.

Limitations and future research

Despite the strengths of our methodology—we collected data over time from separate sources of subordinates and supervisors—helping us to avoid inflated correlations commonly found in same-source data (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), our study has several limitations. We did not manipulate variables or use random assignment techniques, which would enable clearer causal inferences. Because the focus of our research was on supervisor PDO, we did not examine the effects of these on subordinates (either as predictors or consequences), despite some compelling theoretical possibilities that can be addressed in future studies.

Another potential area for future research would be individual differences that would moderate the effects of ego depletion and abusive supervision. Our model focuses on the causal mechanism of ego depletion, from a perspective of self-control. However, future research may find that individual differences in trait self-control play an important moderating role. Finally, future research should delve deeper into the causal steps suggested by our model. Although we already present a model with a mediational chain, future research should examine the processes underlying each of these links and fill in greater detail to further enhance our understanding of how these relationships play out. For example, it may be that subordinate psychological safety or emotions mediate the relationship between abusive supervision and employee morale.

Practical implications

Our study also makes several contributions to practice. By focusing on the antecedent to abusive supervisor behavior, we offer important guidelines to organizations interested in limiting abusive behaviors among supervisors at work. Our approach towards supervisory behavior has implications for management practice and possesses distinct advantages over more traditional static approaches. For example, static approaches assume that leaders are consistently abusive and imply selection or termination as the only effective methods by which abusive supervision can be curbed: abusive managers are abusive, through and through. However, our study suggests that the rate of abusive behavior is related to contextual factors such as PDO of people. Our framework

suggests that within-persons interventions to aid internal factors will lead to lower levels of abusive supervision behavior. Indeed, treating abusive supervision tactfully may be much less intimidating and much more manageable than preventing all occurrences of abusive supervision in a between-persons approach. The finding that abusive behavior varies suggests that certain factors, including and in addition to PDO, might lead to increases and decreases in abusive supervision. Leaders should thus be aware of their own abusive “triggers.” For example, they can attempt to delay important interactions or decisions on days when they have low self-regulation ability. Through leadership training, organizations can increase awareness of the connections that we observed in our research, by helping leaders to connect the dots between their PDO, their abusive behavior towards subordinates, and the resulting subordinate hostility and attitudes. In customer service organizations, cultivating a clear understanding of the relationship between a leader’s behavior and the resulting subordinate hostility could have positive effects on customer perceptions of service quality and emotional delivery. Moreover, subordinates can learn from our results as well—it is advisable that a subordinate refrain from behaviors that could instigate an abusive episode if they are aware that their manager has slept poorly.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our study connects supervisor PDO to abusive supervisor behavior, which ultimately results in negative outcomes for subordinates. Organizations wishing to create positive work environments for their workforce should take note of the importance of considering the effect of events, both non-work (e.g., power distance orientation) and during work (e.g., abusive supervision behavior) as precursors to important motivational factors such as employee morale. Our study shows that abusive supervision varies within a person, not just between people, creating a complicated—but increasingly complete—picture for organizational scholars, managers, and workers.

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