

# Self-Regulation Impairment Source of Abusive Supervision Leading to Employees' Turnover Intentions with Moderation of Resilience in Pakistani Service Industry

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to test a model on self-regulation impairment as source of abusive supervision which leads to employee's dominant behavioral outcomes such as turnover intentions, also to test resilience as an intervention in this link. Primary data was collected for analysis method. The total numbers of pairs of respondents were 215 in which the respondents were professionals belonging to service sector of Pakistan. The findings of this study confirmed the role of self-regulation impairment as a source of abusive supervision which further leads to deviant behaviors of employees in form of their intentions to leave the organization. This study encourages the companies to invest in programs which help employees develop resilience which will help them fight adversities at workplace and prevent depletion of their psychological resources which becomes a trigger to the whole cycle of abuse.*

**Keywords:** Self-regulation impairment, abusive supervision, turnover intentions, aggression towards peers, resilience.

## Introduction

Abusive supervision can be explained as the hurtful acts of the supervisors towards their followers which lead towards negative employee outcomes and is characterized as the continued presentation of threatening verbal and nonverbal conduct barring physical contact.<sup>1</sup>

Recently the focus of the researchers has shifted towards exploration of the antecedents which cause abusive supervision and there have been many calls of researchers to explore the area in more depth.<sup>2</sup> and what is the reaction of the people in environment.<sup>3</sup>

Previous studies conducted in domain of abusive supervision still have many limitations and it is still a growing field.<sup>4</sup> Research does not shed much light on the behaviors of the employees themselves which lead towards the abuse they receive from their supervisors.<sup>5</sup> In a recent study Oh and Farh (2017) proposed that abusive supervision leads to multiple constraints, regulated and dominated behavioral outcomes

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which may include psychological exit instead of actual exit e.g. turnover intentions, depression as well as displace aggression in terms of abuse directed to coworkers. In support to this Hackney and Perrewe (2018) also insisted on exploration of abusive supervision as a mechanism proposing that it leads to multiple emotional and organizational outcomes which need to be explored further. Recently a growing interest in understanding how the way a follower reacts to abusive supervision and abusive supervision itself is shaped by the attributions and perceptions of the follower himself.<sup>6</sup>

### **Literature review**

Substantial research has been produced in the area of abusive supervision in the past two decades.<sup>7</sup> Up this point in time, the research that has been conducted up has focused primarily on the consequences of abusive supervision and less focus has been on exploration of precursors. Abusive supervision is explained as harsh form of supervision which varies from indications of threatening verbal and nonverbal practices to rejection of physical contact,<sup>8</sup> representatives cause open insults of subordinates and neglect them.<sup>9</sup>

Any organization wishing to eliminate abusive supervision must investigate starting point of this problem.<sup>10</sup> Large number of explorers have concentrated on the outcomes that abusive supervision.<sup>11</sup> But recently focus is being shifted to what causes this type of leadership to start.<sup>12</sup> Tepper instituted the term damaging supervision in 2000 and the definition shows, harsh supervision includes the activities that fall in the space of injurious supervision including hollering on the subordinates, overlooking and attacking them.<sup>13</sup>

Abusive supervision has ended up being a working environment stressor, that pushes the representatives towards stress responses<sup>14</sup> which causes an individual to be mentally depleted<sup>15</sup> in addition, the maltreatment received from administration also provokes abuse of leaders towards subordinates.<sup>16</sup>

Mawritz et al. (2012) reported that hostile atmosphere fueled the effect of abusive supervision. In past investigations have been done to shed light on the costs that abusive supervision brings to the organizations.<sup>17</sup> Organizations struggle to bring down the numbers of voluntary turn over in order to maintain and retain the knowledge,<sup>18</sup> to reduce the costs of new hiring,<sup>19</sup> to maintain competitive resources<sup>20</sup> and to enhance the performance and motivation of employees.<sup>21</sup> The main dimensions of turnover intentions include the plan to leave the organization and the intention to search for some new job.<sup>22</sup> A small

number of studies conducted in Pakistan have studied the impact of impact of abusive supervision on employee turnover intentions.<sup>23</sup>

Resilience can be defined as an ability to recover or rebound from some adversity, a conflict, a failure or the situations which bring in increased accountability such as progress, it is an adaptation process helping organizations come out of adverse situations.<sup>24</sup> Employee resilience is a set of learning, adaptive and networking behaviors.<sup>25</sup>

Research has been attesting the importance of resilience in work settings for the benefit of both employee and organizational wellbeing for over a decade. But there is not much attempt to synthesize the efficacy of resilience training in the context or organizations.<sup>26</sup> Employee resilience refers to the behavioral capability, it is not a onetime activity in fact it is behavioral modeling of the employees working in a challenging business world in the organization, dependent on coping constructs such as psychological capital and hardiness.<sup>27</sup>

Hackney and Perrewe'(2018) indicated that workplace abuse leads to victim's emotional experience which is moderated by his/her traits. And the experienced emotions further lead to organizational outcomes.

#### *Theoretical Framework*

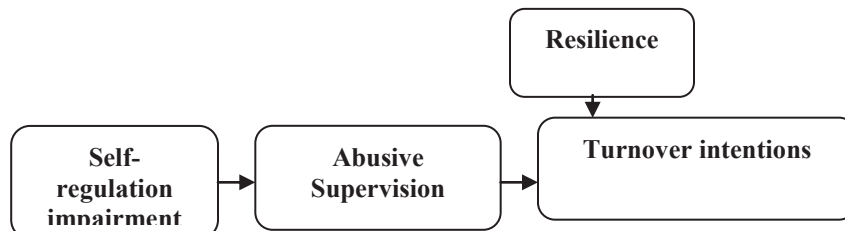


FIGURE 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### **Research Methodology**

The current study has used the quantitative method, which is acknowledged for its precise nature and reliability to examine the data. The Casual study technique has been used to test the hypothesis. First hand, data has been collected through questionnaire and the secondary data like published reports of the chief authorities was used for contextual analysis. The problem identification was done through analysis of existing research and discussion with working women in telecom sector of Pakistan.

All the items were presented in English. The author with the subject matter experts checked and ensured the face and content validity of the items. The unit of analysis in the research was professionals working in service sector organizations operating in Pakistan. In the first phase of the study employees were contacted by the researchers to collect data on IV and mediator at T1, after three weeks of the first phase they were again contacted to complete the second part of the questionnaire where data was collected in DVs and moderator. Pairs of employees were formed in teams to avoid data nesting problems and making the analysis possible. 400 questionnaires were distributed through personal administration but only 215 valid pairs of responses were received. The judgment sampling was used to collect data from the target population since we need to collect data from the targets of abusive supervision and the selection was based on the judgment of the researcher.

## Results

The average respondents ranged between 25 to 35 years of age. The average respondents had bachelors Level of education. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach's alpha ranged  $>0.7$  which is considered good. No items were deleted and the values of Cronbach's for the variables were Self-regulation impairment .77, abusive supervision .87, turnover intentions .78, and resilience.

### *Confirmatory factor analysis*

Since measures used in the current study are already established, a two-step procedure was used,<sup>28</sup> i.e. before execution of the measurement model Before validity and reliability of the model were tested. To measure the convergent and discriminant of the model variables, confirmatory factor analysis is run.<sup>29</sup> Amos was used to check the distinctiveness of the variables.<sup>30</sup> Results shows a good model fit with all the values in acceptable ranges (CMIN/DF=2.75, CFI=0.91, RMSEA=0.07). All the factor loading are statistically significant ( $>.05$ ) indicating the convergent validity.

*Table 1 Mean Standard Deviation and correlation matrix*

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Self-reg impairment	3.57	.898	1			
Abu-Supervision	3.55	.617	.520**	1		
Resilience	3.24	1.20	-.472**	-.545**	1	
Turnover intentions	3.75	.771	-.624**	-.658**	.665**	1

*Note.*  $n=215$ , \*\*,  $P<0.01$ , \*  $P<0.05$

The mean values indicate presence of the subject phenomenon in the organizations. All variables have significant correlations with the strongest one reported between Turnover intentions and Resilience.

#### *Mediation and moderation analysis*

##### *Mediation analysis*

##### *Impact of employee self-regulation impairment on employee's turnover intentions through abusive supervision:*

The indirect effect of employee self-regulation impairment on their turnover intentions through abusive supervision. In Step 1 of the mediation model, the regression of self-regulation impairment on the turnover intentions of employees ignoring the mediator, was significant,  $b = -.831$ ,  $t(215) = -15.018$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . For testing the hypothesis 2, 3 and 4 path analysis was done using model 4 in process with Sobel test leading to the next steps. Step 2 showed that the regression of the self-regulation impairment on the mediator, abusive supervision, was also significant,  $b = -.647$ ,  $t(215) = -10.066$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Step 3 of the mediation process showed that the mediator (abusive supervision), controlling for the turnover intentions of employees was significant,  $b = .462$ ,  $t(215) = 11.962$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Step 4 of the analyses revealed that, indirect effect of self-regulation impairment on turnover intention is significant ( $\beta = .5633$ ,  $S.E = .114$ ) at 95% confidence interval (LLCI=.396, ULCI=.851). Normal theory test for indirect effect is also significant ( $\beta = -.2996$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) giving support to hypothesis 4. Thus all hypothesis of the proposed model have been supported by the results.

Table 2 Mediations analysis

Statement of hypothesis	$\beta$	S.E	t	p
H1 Direct impact of SRI on TOI	-.831	.055	-15.018	.000
H2 Direct impact of SRI on Abu-sup	-.647	.053	-10.066	.000
H3 Direct impact of Abu-sup on TOI	.462	.038	11.962	.000
Indirect effect using normal distribution				
Sobel Test	Effect	S.E	Z	P
For Abu-sup	-.2996	.039	-7.6863	.000
Bootstrap results for indirect effects				
	Effect	S.E	LLCI	ULCI
H4 Indirect effect of SRI on TOI through Abu-sup	.5633	.114	.396	.851

*Moderation analysis; Role of employee's resilience between abusive supervision and turnover intentions:*

According to the claim of the current study H5: resilience moderates the relationship between the abusive supervision and turnover intentions. The test moderation in process was run using model 1 at 95% confidence interval. The results have shown that the impact of the interaction between abusive supervision and resilience is significant (LLCI=-.4844, ULCI=-.3990). Looking at the conditional effect it has increased from low to medium to high. The decrease in the effect size ( $\beta$ ) and its movement from positive to negative shows that the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intentions weakens as the resilience becomes strong.

*Table 3 Conditional effect of Resilience between abusive supervision and turnover intentions*

Parameters	R2	F	P	Coefficient	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	.9499	1865.42	0.000	-1.2195	.2872	-4.24	-1.784	-.6544

Res	0.000	2.1592	.0804	26.84	2.000	2.3174
Abu-sup	0.000	.5428	.0734	7.3965	.3983	.6872
Res*Abu-sup	0.000	-.4417	.0217	-20.355	-.4844	-.3990

Conditional effect from X to Y at values of moderator

$\beta$	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
-.3425	.0341	-10.038	-.4096	-.2753
-.7519	.0222	-33.9366	-.7955	-.7083
-1.1614	0.250	-46.3689	-1.2107	-1.1121

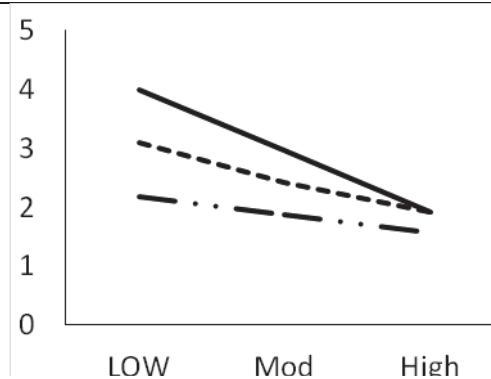


Figure 2: Moderation graph low-high

### Discussion

Keeping in view the recent calls the current study attempted to test the cause and outcomes of abusive supervision. The claims of the study were fully supported with the results, literature and theory. Tepper, Simon and Park (2017) in their review of the past 15 years of research on abusive supervision highlighted the significance of the process of ego depletion which leads to self-regulation impairment. The current study based the foundation of the model on the basis that at work place an employee faces a lot of emotional episodes where he or she has to

regulate their emotions and not behave impulsively which leads towards ego depletion and ultimately self-regulation impairment.<sup>31</sup>

Other studies in past have also confirmed that once an employee feels that they have been receiving inconsistent treatment from their organization, they fail to self-regulate and their feelings that justice does not prevail in the organization strengthen.<sup>32</sup>

One of the recent study analyzing the cyclic nature of the abusive supervision with regard to breaking the cycle of abuse identified the social learning mechanism of abuse that the managers who are abused lead to become abusive supervisor and the cycle goes one.<sup>33</sup>

The current study following the concept of cyclic nature of abuse focused on what behaviors or emotions of employees lead to the abuse they receive. The outcomes of abusive supervision have been often discussed and confirmed, still more exploration is required to come up with the remedies of the phenomena, so following the recent calls the current study investigated turnover intentions and aggression towards peers and confirmed that the said behaviors of employees are their dominant and constraint responses to abuse that they receive.<sup>34</sup>

The current study was able to confirm the relationship also tested and confirmed that if an employee is resilient in nature he or she would be able to work towards their own goals at the work place despite the adversities in the external environment.<sup>35</sup>

## Conclusion

The psychological health of employees and their attitude places direct costs on the organization. There has been a lot of stress in the recent past urging the organizations to pay close attention to the underlying reasons of the behavioral outcomes of the employees. The turnover intentions of the employees have been discussed a lot in the past but still require more attention to understand what causes such behavior. The current study investigated one of the possible reasons, self-regulation impairment of the which triggers the phenomenon of abusive supervision.

The inability to focus and regulate on work tips off the supervisors and their behavior turns abusive if their goals are not met. Abusive supervision leads to the intentions of the employees to distant themselves from the organization and also the abuse of the supervisor trickles down to the employees as well which further fuels their self-regulation impairment hence the cycle of abuse keeps going on.

Here the current study has proposed intervention of the ability of employees to be resilient to break this cycle of abuse. The organizations



must help employees identify and develop resilience which will help them fight adversities in both their personal and professional lives.

The current study has focused on only one source of the abusive supervision and further to behavioral outcomes, however, there are multiple other theoretical sources such as conservation of resources<sup>36</sup> social learning,<sup>37</sup> etc. which can be a source of the process and need future testing.

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