

Linking Abusive supervision to employees' Personality in Food and Beverage of Pakistan

Sadaf Tahir

Ph.D.Scholar, School of Business Management, University Utara Malaysia

Assoc.Prof. Dr. Johanim Johari

A faculty member of School of Business Management, University Utara Malaysia

Dr. Tang Swee Mei

A faculty member of School of Business Management, University Utara Malaysia

IJMSSSR 2020

VOLUME 2

ISSUE 4 JULY – AUGUST

ISSN: 2582 - 0265

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to investigate the influence of subordinates' personality characteristics on their perceptions of abusive supervision. Results from a sample of 233 full-time working employees suggest that subordinates' perceptions of abusive supervision account for some of the variances with subordinates' extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. This study indicates that the perceptual experiences of control found within the subordinates' unique personality characteristics influences whether they are more or less likely to perceive abusive supervision.

Keywords: Perceptions of abusive supervision, Personality characteristics, and Food & Beverage Industry.

Introduction

Abusive supervision is defined as the "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178). Tepper (see Tepper, 2007 for a review) explained further that abusive supervision considered in the context of supervisor-subordinate relationships, and the incidents included supervisors' undermining the subordinates, ridiculing, invading their privacy, and taking credit for their work. According to the definition of abusive supervision, it is "sustained" experience of the subordinates' means it is not grounded on the one or two bits of abusive behaviors. Even though abusive supervision causes mental and psychological distress, but it did not rise to the point of physical ill-treatment. It is equally based on the subordinate's subjective judgments of consistent and hostile supervisory behavior. But at the same time, two subordinates may find the same supervisor abusive and supportive. Therefore, there are certain of subordinate's characteristics involved that made the same supervisor abusive or supportive. It is important to understand the victim's responses, reactions, including their behaviors and well-being. For this reason, the current study focused on the subordinate's personality traits to know which characteristics provoke or control the abuse.

In the past few years, scholarly research on the so-called "dark side" of leadership has been growing, and the overwhelmingly negative consequences of abusive supervision are well documented (Harris, Harvey, & Kacmar, 2011). These include some adverse psychological and attitudinal outcomes for subordinates like emotional exhaustion (Aryee, Sun, Chen, & Debrah, 2008; Breaux, Perrew, Hall, Frink, & Hochwarter, 2008; Chi & Liang, 2012; P. Harvey, Stoner, Hochwarter, & Kacmar, 2007), psychological distress (Restubog, Scott, & Zagenczyk, 2011; Tepper, Moss, Lockhart, & Carr, 2007), and burnout (Carlson, Ferguson, Hunter, & Whitten, 2012). Above and beyond, abusive supervision is not only detrimental to employees at the workplace, but also it has effects that spill over beyond the workplace, including problem drinking/smoking (Bamberger & Bacharach, 2006), family undermining (Hoobler & Brass, 2006), and work/family conflict (Hoobler & Hu, 2012; Carlson et al., 2012). The industry rate of abusive supervision is not only high in the USA but also Europe, Australia, and Asia (Schyns & Schilling, 2012). Tepper (2007), in his review, calculated an annual estimated cost of \$24 billion faced by the

corporate due to abusive supervision in the USA. Yearly around 2 million workers in the USA reported workplace violence incidents (United States Department of Labor Report, 2014-15). A study of nurses proved a 36.6 % rate of abuse in the health sector (Estes, 2013). Likewise, there is a high occurrence of violence in Pakistani companies, but most of the time, abusive supervisory complaints have gone unreported or underreported (Shahzad & Malik, 2014). According to the Supreme Court of Pakistan's annual report (2016-2017; 2017-2018), the registered cases of abuse are 8% and 5%, respectively, which shows traces of abuse at the workplace in Pakistan.

The current study contributed to the literature of abusive supervision antecedents and outcomes. Previous research on perceptions of abusive supervision lacked in two ways: Firstly, most of the research focused much on the supervisor's psychological and attitudinal related factors, and relatively little work concentrated on the subordinates' relevant factors (Tepper, 2007). Because subordinate's perceptions regarding supervisory abuse are their subjective assessments (Tepper, 2007), that is why it is essential to measure the effects of abusive supervision perceptions from subordinates' point of view rather than the supervisor's perspective (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). Research studies of Henle et al.; Brees et al.; Wang et al. (2014) contributed to the initial understanding of the current research that a subordinate's personality plays a role in the creation and reactions to abusive supervision.]

Literature Review

Abusive Supervision

Tepper's (2000) groundbreaking article sparked a lot of research on abusive supervision. Since the year 2000, 82 studies on abusive supervision have published, and more 62 publications have come on record after the Tepper review of abusive supervision in 2007 between the period of 2008 to 2012 (Tepper review, 2013; Kermond & Schaubroeck, 2015). A lot more articles were published during the last five years. The focus of the most articles was on the concept of abusive supervision, its consequences, predictors, and the mechanism of abusive supervision, the methodological issues, and the directions for new research.

Research also shows inconsistent findings regarding personality and abusive supervision. Brees et al. (2014) study was the first to assess personality traits in abusive supervision literature. This study proved some interesting findings that some personality traits play a role in either to prompt abuse or to minimize it. On the theoretical basis of Reactance theory, which posits that the subordinates struggle to maintain control over their environment and react when their behavior is supposed to be restricted (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). Study findings proved that only the agreeableness, emotional stability, and extraversion relationships with aggression mediated by subordinate's perceptions of abusive supervision.

In the literature of abusive supervision, Henle and Gross (2014) first time used the theoretical foundation of Victim Precipitation Theory, which suggests that some subordinates' personality characteristics play a role in their victimization. The study proved that subordinates lower in conscientiousness and emotional stability are more likely to experience negative emotions; in this way, subordinates perceive higher levels of abuse.

Wang, Harms, and Mackey (2015) used the theoretical foundations of the Trait Activation theory for the first time in abusive supervision literature to prove that subordinates high in neuroticism and low in conscientiousness have high levels of perceived abusive supervision partially through their self-reported job performance. Subordinates low in both agreeableness and extraversion were more likely to engage in deviant behaviors in response to abusive supervision than subordinates high in either or both agreeableness and extraversion. These studies provide the initial understanding that some subordinates' personality traits are linked to the perceptions of abusive supervision, but the scope of these studies is limited to inconsistent findings. Therefore, it is difficult to determine which personality traits (lower or higher) influence more on the employees' perceptions of abusive supervision. That is why the current study includes Big Five Personality Model (FFM) factors to examine how lower or higher levels of personality traits are linked to the perceptions of abusive supervision with the reference of the Food and Beverage companies of Pakistan.

Hypothesis Development

Personality Traits and perceptions of abusive supervision

Extraversion

Extraversion referred to those individuals who are talkative, active, outgoing, and social. (Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002). Those individuals who are high on this personality trait tend to be more assertive than those lower on this trait (Salgado, 1997). They are active in their work and seek social opportunities to interact, they are often regarded as the “life of the party,” comfortable with others, and love to take action rather than mere contemplation (Lebowitz, 2016a). They make friends quickly and people like their company. Individuals lower in this personality trait regarded as introverts. They are timid and reserved and become the easy victim of their supervisory abuse. Thus, based on this, the following hypothesis is established:

Hypothesis 1: Extraversion will be negatively associated with the perceptions of abusive supervision.

Agreeableness

Agreeable people considered friendly, helpful, caring, and forgiving (Thompson, 2008; Matsumoto & Juang, 2012; Costa & McCrae, 1985). Agreeable employees have healthy interpersonal relationships and are competent to behave in stressful situations; that is why there are fewer chances that they perceive high abusive supervision (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). On the other hand, disagreeable are often selfish, aggressive, arrogant, and hostile (Thompson, 2008; Matthews & Deary, 1998). Thus, disagreeable employees are more provocative victims of supervisory abuse because of their annoying attitude at the workplace (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Therefore, disagreeable employees have a higher level of perceptions of abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 2: Agreeableness will be negatively associated with the perceptions of abusive supervision.

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness is related to the individuals who are generally hard-working, well organized, competent, dutiful, and reliable (Carter & Nathan; Guan & Li; Maples & Jessica; Williamson & Rachel; Miller & Joshua, 2015). Individuals higher on this trait tend to demonstrate greater self-control and aim for high levels of accomplishments and competence. Managers appreciate and like to work with them and develop good relationships with conscientious subordinates because these employees tend to be more competent (Barrick & Mount, 1991).

On the contrary, people who score low on conscientiousness have a tendency to be careless, less goal-oriented, less driven by success, apathetic, disorganized, impulsive, confused, and unreliable (Ozer; Benet-Martínez, 2006). Employees with a lower level of conscientiousness are incapable of persuading themselves to perform a task that they would like to achieve (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Therefore, employees lower in conscientiousness perceive more abusive supervision than those who are at a higher level.

Hypothesis 3: Conscientiousness will be negatively associated with the perceptions of abusive supervision.

Neuroticism

Neurotics are perceived to be highly nervous, anxious, insecure, worried, stressed, and unstable (Costa & McCrae, 1992). High neurotics also experienced high levels of depression and anxiety (Henle & Gross, 2014; Colbert et al., 2012). Supervisors felt challenged to work with highly neurotic employees because of their consistent irritable attitude and anger and perceived these employees as disturbing and annoying (Watson & Clark, 1984). Due to their poor job performance, they have weak and worse relationships with their supervisors being less likable as an employee for their supervisors (George, 1992; Aquino & Thau, 2009; Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Employees with high neuroticism are more prone to provoke abusive supervision (Bos & Hankin, 2013; Leese & Peter, 2014).

Hypothesis 4: Neuroticism will be positively associated with the perceptions of abusive supervision.

Openness to experience

Openness to experience refers to the individuals who are daring, creative, curious, friendly, tolerant, experience new things, ideas, and approaches. Individuals high in this personality trait would like to learn new things, meeting or interacting with new people, having a love for learning, and having the ability to think out of the box (Leibowitz, 2016a). On the other hand, individuals low in openness will mostly stick to what they know; they prefer routine over variety, less friendly and entertaining. Thus, individuals lower on this trait are more prone to instigate their supervisors for their abusive behaviors.

Hypothesis 5: Openness to experience will be negatively associated with the perceptions of abusive supervision.

Methods

Sample and procedure

The objective of the current study is to investigate the impact of personality on the employees' perceptions of abusive supervision, which personality traits provoked more the supervisors to be abusive. To test the hypothesis and the relationship between the personality and the perceptions of abusive supervision, a cross-sectional sample of 233 full-time front line executives of the Food & Beverage companies in Pakistan was used. The unit of analysis in the current study was the salespersons working in the Food and Beverage companies of Pakistan. A stratified random sampling technique used to collect the data. The survey questionnaire adapted from the existing literature. Responses were given on the questionnaires distributed by the researcher through the Human Resource (HR) department of the companies.

Measures

Personality

Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, and Lucas (2006) developed the Mini-International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) from its parent inventory. Donnellan and his colleagues modify the IPIP-FFM of (Goldberg, 1999) and suggest that the mini-IPIP is a useful tool for researchers as the 50-item IPIP-FFM parent instrument was. Further, he asserts that there is no doubt about the reliability and validity of the mini-IPIP scale. The mini-IPIP scale is comprised of 20 items, among which each personality trait is given four items. The current study includes all these 20 items representing extraversion, agreeableness conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. Many researchers in psychology have extensively used this scale. Still, in the relevant context of the present research, the study of (Wang, Harms & Mackey, 2014) has recently employed the same scale. Responses to the statements were recorded on the 5 points Likert scale (1= Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree). Each statement begins with the "I see myself as someone who..." and some examples are "Talk to a lot of different people at parties," "Feels other's emotions," "Makes a mess of things."

Abusive supervision

Abusive supervision measured using Tepper's (2000) 15- item scale. Mackey et al. (2015) suggested using the measurement scale in cross-cultural studies for more validation across samples, especially outside the USA and in industries like health, retail, and military, where employees may experience more abusive supervision than any other sector. The researcher in the current study uses Tepper's (2000) uni-dimensional 15 item scale to test the salesperson's perceptions of abusive supervision working in the Food and Beverage companies of Pakistan. The responses to the statements "my boss lies to me," "my boss invades my privacy," were recorded on a five-point Likert scale (1= Never, 5= Very often).

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix conducted in SPSS.v. 25 to test the preliminary analysis. The results consisted of all six variables extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience, and abusive supervision presented in Table 1. The findings showed the overall values of mean and standard

deviation within the acceptable range. Hence, it can ascertain that responses showed support and an acceptable level of execution with all constructs. Further, the preliminary analysis conducted for the normality of the data collected. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and the interrelation of the study variables

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for the study variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Extraversion	3.2554	0.88776	1					
2 Agreeableness	3.3847	0.89727	.200**	1				
3 Conscientiousness	3.3912	0.85803	0.070	.326**	1			
4 Neuroticism	3.3772	0.82932	0.099	.248**	.230**	1		
5 Openness to experience	3.2909	0.88209	0.041	0.062	0.084	.158**	1	
6 Abusive Supervision	2.9319	0.75439	-.321**	-.122*	-.149*	.173**	-0.044	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)

The values of skewness and kurtosis fell under the normal ranges, which shows that the data is normally distributed (Hulland, Ryan,& Rayner, 2010). Further, the variance inflation factor values and the Tolerance values were not exceeded from the threshold values of 5 and 0.20, respectively (Haier et al., 2010). Thus, multicollinearity is not an issue in the current study. Bootstrapping was conducted in PLS 2.9 to analyze the measurement model. The measurement model consisted of all six variables extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness to experience, and abusive supervision. A bootstrapping method used to assess the direct analysis of all the variables presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Direct relationships between the IV and DV

H	Variables	(β)	SE	T value	P-value
H1	Extraversion -> Abusive supervision	-0.315	0.058	5.465	0.000
H2	Agreeableness -> Abusive supervision	-0.078	0.059	1.319	0.188
H3	Conscientiousness -> Abusive supervision	-0.147	0.07	2.107	0.036
H4	Neuroticism -> Abusive supervision	0.27	0.07	3.835	0.000
H5	Openness to Exp -> Abusive supervision	-0.095	0.108	0.885	0.377

The research findings showed in Table 2 proved that among five hypotheses, Hypotheses 1, 3, and 4 were supported, but hypotheses 2 and 5 were not supported in the hypothesized direction. Thus, the results proved that extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism were more associated with the subordinates’ perceptions of abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 1 was supported, predicting that the perceptions of abusive supervision did have a negative

relationship between the extraversion and the perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = -0.3154$; $t = 5.465$; $p < 0.01$). Hypothesis 2 was not supported, suggesting that agreeableness did not have a significant direct relation with the perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = -0.078$; $t = 1.319$; $p > 0.05$). Hypothesis 3 was supported, demonstrating that the conscientiousness did have a statistically significant direct effect on the perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = -0.147$; $t = 2.107$; $p < 0.05$) in the hypothesized direction. Likewise, hypothesis 4 was also supported, recommending that neuroticism did have a significant positive relationship with the perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = 0.270$; $t = 3.835$; $p < 0.01$). Hypothesis 5 was not supported, predicting that the openness to experience did not have any significant influence on the perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = -0.095$; $t = 0.885$; $p > 0.05$)

Discussion

The results of the current study revealed that the subordinates lower in conscientiousness and extraversion are more likely to perceive the abusive supervision. Likewise, the salespersons high in neuroticism perceive more supervisory abuse. Firstly, conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism have a statistically significant effect on the perceptions of abusive supervision. The findings of the current study are consistent with the previous studies; for instance, the higher level of extraversion tends to withstand the stress related to abusive supervision (Mayende & Musenze, 2014; Wang et al., 2014). Likewise, the previous research proved that conscientious subordinates could control the abusive behavior of their supervisors (Wang, Harms & Mackey, 2015), and some studies showed the significant positive relation of neuroticism with the perceptions of abusive supervision (Brees et al., 2014; Henle & Gross, 2014). Thus, the salespersons lower in conscientiousness, extraversion, and high in neuroticism become more provocative victims of supervisory abuse.

On the contrary, agreeableness was not negatively significant with the perceptions of abusive supervision (Wang et al., 2014). It means that the salespersons higher in agreeableness provoke more abusive supervision than the salespersons lower in this personality trait. Although the researcher proposed that the agreeable employees are more forgiving and cooperative, these subordinates are the most vulnerable targets for abuse because they are unlikely to defend themselves against abusive behavior. Likewise, the research results proved that openness to experience has no significant effect on the perceptions of abusive supervision (Brees et al., 2014; Henle & Gross, 2014; Wang et al., 2015). Thus, the salespersons who exhibit a higher level of openness to experience follow their passion for exploring more, and they become influential creative leaders by the time they age. Such salespersons might be the reason for provocative victims of abuse because they cannot retaliate against the abusive behavior or did not involve themselves in confrontation.

Research contribution to the current study

The current study contributed in many ways to the research of abusive supervision. First, from the contextual point of view, the present study is among the few studies conducted with Pakistani respondents. This research concern addresses the current gap in past research. The western findings of abusive supervision cannot apply to every country's employees. For instance, the research outside the west, specifically, in under developing countries like Pakistan, might provide different and diverse research insight. It was suggested by Tepper (2007) to test the measurement of abusive supervision scale outside the USA for more validation. The current study employed the salespersons of Pakistani organizations to test the validation of the abusive supervision scale.

In a practical sense, the current study contributed to investigate what personality traits are suitable to hire in occupations. Like in sales departments, the theory of Trait Activation suggests that extroverts are more related to social and healthy interpersonal relationships; that is why they proved to be successful salespersons. Further, organizations can screen the employees using pre-hire personality tests to assess the personality traits best suited for the job position.

Theoretically, the current study contributed to examine the subordinate level antecedents that can predict and control the perceptions of abusive supervision. It is an old saying that it takes two to tangle (Wang et al., 2014), so in any problematic situation, there are at least two people involved if one provoked the other reacts. Still, if what one reacts and the other manage to control, that can change the picture of the situation. In this way, there are some personality traits of the subordinates that, if involved in such situations, they behave differently either to

provoke abusive supervision or to control the phenomena.

Limitations and future recommendations

Like every study, the current study is not devoid of the limitations. Firstly, the current study collected the data for the perceptions of abusive supervision from the single source based on the subjective assessments and the self-reports of the subordinates. The researcher suggested that the data for abusive supervision must be collected multisource involving different management levels so that the actual abusive behavior could be measured, not merely the perceptions. Secondly, the data was collected at one point in time, as the perceptions changed by the time. Therefore, to measure the frequency of the abuse, the data must be collected at two points of time with a minimum of six months' time intervals to test the consistent abusive behavior of the supervisors.

Conclusion

This study contributed to the existing research on abusive supervision and personality that subordinates' personality characteristics have a significant link with their perceptions of abusive supervision. The current study proved that the subordinates process social information, and perceptions of control inhibit employees' personalities influence their perceptions of supervisory abuse. The findings demonstrated three personality traits of extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism affect more on the perceptions of abusive supervision. On the other hand, salespersons who are on the higher level of extraversion and conscientiousness and lower levels of neuroticism tend to withstand the stress posit in abusive supervision, and they activated their control mechanism to reduce the negative outcomes of abusive supervision. Thus, the organizations must seek to hire those employees who are suitable for the sales job after conducting a pre-hire personality test.

References

1. Asif Shahzad, R. K. (2014). Workplace violence: an extensive issue for nurses in Pakistan—: a qualitative investigation. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.
2. Bennet J. Tepper, S. E. (2007). Abusive supervision, upward maintenance communication, and subordinates' psychological distress. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50, 1169–1180.
3. Christine A. Henle, M. A. (2014). What have I done to deserve this? Effects of employee personality and emotion on abusive supervision. *J Bus Ethics*, 122, 461–474.
4. Christine L. Porath, A. E. (2007). Does rudeness really matter? The effects of rudeness on task performance and helpfulness. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50, 1181–119.
5. Christopher M. Barnes, L. L. (2013). You wouldn't like me when I'm sleepy: Leader Sleep, daily abusive supervision, and work unit engagement. *Academy of Management Journal*.
6. Debra L. Shapiro, P. H. (2014). How do leader-departures affect subordinates' organizational attachment?: a 360-degree relational perspective. *Academy of Management Review*.
7. Ding Xiaqi, T. K. (2012). Abusive supervision and LMX, leaders emotional intelligence as antecedent variable and trust as consequence variable. *Emerald Insight Chinese management studies*, 6, 257-270.
8. Ding Xiaqi, T. K. (2012). Abusive supervision and LMX: leaders' emotional intelligence as an antecedent variable and trust as a consequence variable. *Emerald Insight Chinese Management Studies*, 6(2), 257-270.
9. Dong Liu, H. L. (2012). The dark side of leadership: a three-level investigation of the cascading effect of abusive supervision on employee creativity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55, 1187–1212.
10. Gang Wang, P. D. (2015). Does it take two to tangle? Subordinates' perceptions of and reactions to abusive supervision. 487–503.
11. Gumussoy, Ç. A. (2016). The effect of the Five-Factor Model of personality traits on turnover intention among Information technology (IT) professionals. *Academic Journal of Information Technology*, 7, 22.

12. Huiwen Lian, D. J. (2014). Abusive supervision and retaliation: a self-control framework. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57, 1, 116–139.
13. J.Tepper, B. (2007). Abusive Supervision in work organizations: Review, synthesis, and research agenda. *Journal Of Management*, 33(3), 261-289.
14. Jeremy D.Mackey, R. E. (2015). Abusive supervision:a meta-analysis and empirical review. *Journal of management*, XX, 1-26.
15. Jeremy R. Brees, J. M. (2013). An attributional perspective of aggression in organizations. *Journal of managerial psychology*, 28, 252-272.
16. Kelly L. Zellars, B. J. (2002). Abusive supervision and subordinates' organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 1068–1076.
17. Kenneth J. Harris, K. M. (2013). An investigation of the impact of abusive supervision on technology end-users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(6), 2480–2489.
18. Kyle J. Mayer, R. T. (2013). From the editors integrating theories in AMJ articles. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56, 917-922.
19. Lewis R.Golgberg, J. A. (2006). The international personality item pooland the future of public-domainpersonality measures. *Journal of research in Personality*, 40, 84-96.
20. Lindie H. Liang, H. L. (2015). Why are abusive supervisors abusive? A dual-system self- control model. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59, 1385-1406.
21. M. Brent Donnellan, F. L. (2006). The mini-IPIP scales: tiny-yet-effective measures of the Big Five factors of personality. *Psychological Assessment*, 18, 192–203.
22. Mark J.Martinko, P. H. (2013). A review of abusive supervision research. *Journal of organizational behavior*, 34, 120-137.
23. Park, J. H. (2012). Antecedents and outcome of abusive supervision: a multilevel perspective. ProQuest.
24. Tepper, B. J. (2000). Consequences of abusive supervision. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43, 178-190. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1556375>.