

Abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes: the moderating effects of intimidation and recognition

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Given the conservation of resources (COR) theory, this study examines the moderating effects of intimidation and recognition on the relationship between abusive supervision and a subordinate's job tension, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention. Consistent with past research, the study found a positive relationship between abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes. However, regardless of the strong theoretical and empirical literature support for the moderating effects of intimidation and recognition on the direct relationship of abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes, empirical data did not reveal any moderating effects of the moderating variables, neither as a single construct nor as a combined construct. For the study, data has been collected through a convenient sampling technique from 443 professional employees in the telecommunications sector in Pakistan. The study contributes to the literature by focusing on the largely ignored subordinate's impression management tactic (e.g. intimidation) and the top management's recognition of the subordinate's job, on the relationship between abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes. Theoretical contributions and practical implications are discussed in the conclusion.

Introduction

The concept of supervision first appeared in the literature in 1915 and in annual reports of presidents and other administrative officers in 1925 (Burt, 1948). Burton (1930, p. 1045) defined supervision very generally as '... an expert, technical service designed to improve the efficiency of groups of workers under supervision'; he explained that usually supervision focuses on time-management and advance planning. However, Callan (1970) argued that it is all about the organisation's strategic resources utilisation to achieve its long- and short-term goals and objectives. Apart from such positive aspects, there are some negative aspects of supervision which impact employees and an organisation's overall performance very negatively. Perhaps foremost amongst these is abusive supervision (Rahimic and Kovacevic, 2009; Tepper, 2000). Abusive supervision is humiliating and ridicules subordinates in front of others (Neuman and Baron, 1998). Overall, abusive supervision is closely associated with many negative psychological outcomes such as helplessness (Ashforth, 1994, 1997) and decreased self-efficacy (Duffy, Michelle,

Ganster and Pagon, 2002). Ashforth (1994, 1997) and Tepper (2000) have shed light on its negative consequences, such as low levels of Organisation Citizenship Behaviour, job satisfaction and organisational commitment etc. Many studies have reported a strong positive relationship between abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes, e.g. emotional exhaustion (Breaux *et al.*, 2008; Chi and Liang, 2013; Harvey *et al.*, 2007; Khan *et al.* 2010; Mackey *et al.*, 2013; Tepper, 2000; Wheeler, Halbesleben and Whitman, 2013), job tension (Breaux *et al.*, 2008; Harvey *et al.*, 2007; Khan *et al.*, 2010), and turnover intention (Harvey *et al.*, 2007; Khan *et al.*, 2010; Schat, Desmarais and Kelloway, 2006; Tepper, 2000), such that the higher the abusive supervision, the higher the negative employee outcomes. Indeed, subordinates' personalities play an important role in moderating the adverse effects of abusive supervision because abusive supervision is a subjective assessment (Tepper, 2000), and the effects of such incivility (e.g. supervisory abuse) may vary from person to person (Skarlicki, Folger and Tesluk, 1999). Numerous studies have incorporated the subordinate's personality traits, such as agreeableness, neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, negative effectivity, positive effectivity, narcissism, locus of control, and ingratiation (an impression management tactic), into the relationship between abusive supervision and subordinate's range of outcomes, for example, counter-productive work behaviour (CWB) (Sulea *et al.*, 2013; Wei and Si, 2013), dysfunctional behaviour (Tepper, Duffy and Shaw, 2001), retaliation (Mitchell and Ambrose, 2012; Skarlicki *et al.*, 1999), deviance (Garcia *et al.*, 2015), somatic stress (Bamberger and Bacharach, 2006), perceived injustice (Burton and Hoobler, 2011), job performance (Nandkeolyar *et al.*, 2014), and job tension, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention (Harvey *et al.*, 2007). To this end, its effects on employee career-related outcomes has been widely investigated (Bolino *et al.*, 2008; Harris, Gallagher and Rossi, 2013). However, its effects on negative employee outcomes (e.g. job tension, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention) has largely been ignored in the current abusive supervision literature. Existing research has yet to incorporate the subordinate's impression management tactic (e.g. intimidation) and the top management's recognition of the subordinate's job as moderating variables on the relationship between abusive supervision and subordinate's negative outcomes.

In the present study, the researcher examined two very different management tactics. One perpetrated is by subordinates, such as intimidation, which is a negative impression management tactic (Harris *et al.*, 2013), and defined as representing oneself as dangerous if not treated well (Jones and Pittman, 1982). On the other hand, recognition is a positive tactic perpetrated by the management, such as recognition of one's job. Given past research, the subordinate's recognition in the job gives them a sense of gratitude. As such, the researcher believes that these two tactics are likely to be negatively associated with negative employee outcomes and consequently will moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and a subordinate's job tension, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention. This study contributes to the literature in a number of ways. Firstly, it provides facts and figures about the adverse effects of abusive supervision on negative employee outcomes. It also

helps to demonstrate understanding and awareness of employees about abusive supervision, which will help them to cope with and tackle such incivility (e.g. supervisory abuse) in an organisation. Secondly, currently the impact of impression management tactics on performance and career-related outcomes has been widely investigated, but its effect on negative employee outcomes (e.g. job tension, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention) has been ignored at large in the existing impression management and abusive supervision literature (Harris *et al.*, 2013). However, the identification of such moderators will help reduce adverse effects of abusive supervision and play an important role in decreasing the cost to employers caused by workplace bullying (e.g. supervisory abuse), which ranges from AUD \$6 to 13 billion in Australia and USD \$23.8 billion in the USA (Chappell and Martino, 2002; Tepper *et al.*, 2006). By so doing, the present study also answers a call for future research on incorporating impression management tactic as a moderating variable on the relationship between abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes (Harvey *et al.*, 2007). Finally, the knowledge of such moderating variables is very important in two ways: (1) as Tepper (2000) noted, employees might hesitate to make a formal complaint about abusive supervision; and (2) abusive supervision is a subjective assessment, e.g. the supervisory abuse may vary from person to person in terms of their personality differences. For example, it is very likely that some subordinates may perceive the same supervisor as abusive and some may not. Hence, abusive supervision incites subordinate retribution but subordinates may vary in terms of the negative effects of supervisory abuse. However, the knowledge of such moderators will help subordinates to cope effectively with abusive supervision. This is also a step towards the identification of factors that can mitigate the adverse effects of abusive supervision on subordinates' outcomes. Given the conservation of resources (COR) theory perspective, the objective of the present study is to examine the impact of abusive supervision on negative employee outcomes. However, in order to moderate the negative effects of abusive supervision on the victim's attitude and psychological state (e.g. emotional exhaustion, job tension, and turnover intention), the study seeks to examine the subordinate's impression management tactic (e.g. intimidation) and the top management's recognition of the subordinate's job as moderating variables.

Theoretical framework

Confrontation in an organisation, especially with someone who is high in authority (e.g. a supervisor), can cause an actual or potential threat of loss of resources. To support this argument, the present study incorporates the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which states that people strive to attain and sustain resources to fulfil their future goals and the actual or potential threat of loss to these resources can cause stress. Hobfoll further defined resources 'as those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies' (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). Past research has reported abusive supervision as a potential source for a subordinate's job-

related stress (Carlson *et al.*, 2012; Keashly, Hunter and Harvey, 1997; Tepper, 2000). It has also been reported to have severe negative effects on the victim's personal and professional life that can further lead the victim to a significant loss of resources (Carlson *et al.*, 2012). Given past research (Carlson *et al.*, 2012; Demerouti, Bakker and Bulters, 2004), the initial loss of resources leaves victims with very few resources to resist the stressor (e.g. abusive supervisor). Hence, in such a situation, the victims are more vulnerable to supervisory abuse and will be more likely to experience psychological strain (e.g. emotional exhaustion and job tension), and will also be more prone to turnover intention.

Drawing on COR theory, it is argued that abusive supervision is a potential threat for the loss of victims' resources and hence can cause psychological strain (e.g. emotional exhaustion and job tension) (Carlson *et al.*, 2012; Harvey *et al.*, 2007; Tepper, 2000) and turnover intention for victims. This can further incite them to behavioural responses (e.g. reduced performance) to the perpetrator (e.g. abusive supervisor) (Aryee *et al.*, 2008). However, COR theory further states that the victims, in order to avoid further loss of resources, can invest or utilise their personal resources. A resource can be 'anything perceived by the individual that help attain his/her goals' (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2014, p. 1338). Hence, in context of COR theory, the present study argues that the victim's impression management tactic (e.g. intimidation) and the top management's recognition of the subordinate's job are resource-gaining tactics. The victims, in order to avoid further loss of resources, can use intimidation tactics towards their supervisor's abusive behaviour. On the other hand, top management's recognition of an employee's job also buffers the adverse effects of abusive supervision. It gives the employee a sense of gratitude and a feeling that, although the immediate supervisor is abusive, at least top management has recognised their job. Hence, in the context of COR theory, these two moderating variables are likely to moderate the adverse effects of abusive supervision on negative employee outcomes.

Abusive supervision

Abusive supervision is the '... subordinates' perception of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviours, excluding physical contact' (Tepper, 2000, p. 178). Representative behaviours include sabotaging, yelling, ignoring subordinates, publicly insulting them and hurting their feelings (Bies and Tripp, 2005; Harris, Harvey and Kacmar, 2011; Neuman and Baron, 1998; Sulea *et al.*, 2013; Zellars, Tepper and Duffy, 2002). Abusive supervision has detrimental effects on subordinates' personal and professional life. Victims of supervisory abuse are likely to experience diminished psychological and physical wellbeing, such as emotional exhaustion (Harvey *et al.*, 2007; Kiewitz *et al.*, 2012; Tepper, 2007; Wu and Hu, 2009), job tension (Breux *et al.*, 2008; Harvey *et al.*, 2007), detachment (Burris, Detert and Chiaburu, 2008), depression (Haggard, Robert and Rose, 2011; Tepper *et al.*, 2007), anxiety (Hobman *et al.*, 2009; Tepper, 2007), and psychological ill health and reduced life satisfaction (Bowling and Michel, 2011; Lin, Wang and Chen, 2013). These negative

psychological and physical outcomes have detrimental effects on subordinates' attitudes and behaviours. A large number of studies (e.g. Bowling and Michel, 2011; Breaux *et al.*, 2008; Haggard *et al.*, 2011; Hobman *et al.*, 2009; Kernan *et al.*, 2011; Lin *et al.*, 2013) have reported negative effects of abusive supervision on subordinates' job satisfaction. It has also been reported to have negative effects on the subordinates' family satisfaction (Carlson *et al.*, 2011). Abusive supervision also has a direct and indirect negative relationship with subordinate performance. Aryee *et al.* (2008) reported the negative effects of abusive supervision on subordinate task performance via emotional exhaustion. Past research has also identified other performance-related outcomes, such as work effort (Harris *et al.*, 2011), citizenship behaviour (Harris *et al.*, 2011; Xu *et al.*, 2012), and resistance behaviours (Tepper *et al.*, 2001; Tepper *et al.*, 2006). As a result, these negative outcomes cost the organisation in terms of lost productivity, absenteeism, turnover and health care expenditure (Tepper, Moss and Duffy, 2011).

Job tension

Job tension is defined by Chisholm, Kasl, and Eskenazi (1983, p. 387) as '... the psychological reaction of workers to disturbances in the objective or perceived work environment'. It is closely linked with supervisory abuse at work because 'the first sphere affected by aggression is the psyche' of employees at work (Merecz, Drabek and Moscicka, 2009, p. 243) and, especially when this aggression is too severe and abusive, it can cause mental health disorders and stress-related somatic symptoms in employees. Breaux *et al.* (2008) and Harvey *et al.* (2007) reported that supervisory abuse incites anxiety and tension in employees. One factor in and reason for subordinate job tension is abusive supervision (Ashforth, 1997; Tepper, 2000). Given the COR theory, the present study argues that abusive supervision is a source of resource-draining for a subordinate and is likely to be positively related to subordinate job tension. Therefore, the researcher hypothesised that the perception of abusive supervision will be positively related with employee job tension:

Hypothesis 1: Abusive supervision is positively correlated with an employee's job tension.

Emotional exhaustion

According to Demerouti *et al.* (2001, p. 499), 'Emotional exhaustion closely resembles traditional stress reactions that are studied in occupational stress research, such as fatigue, job-related depression, psychosomatic complaints, and anxiety'. Emotional exhaustion is defined by Cropanzano, Rupp, and Byrne (2003, p. 160) as a 'chronic state of emotional and physical depletion'. Emotional exhaustion is a key component of job burnout (Maslach, 1982) and depression (Street, Sheeran and Orbell, 2001) and is the outcome of workplace stressors (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2003). It is closely linked with negative health outcomes (Cherniss, 1980; Melamed *et al.*, 2006) and decrease in job performance (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2003; Taris, 2006; Wright and Cropanzano, 1998). Further, Cropanzano *et al.* (2003) and Abraham (1998) have found a

positive relationship between emotional exhaustion and negative job outcomes, such as poor job performance, reduced organisational commitment, absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, and turnover. According to Tepper (2000), one factor in and reason for emotional exhaustion is abusive supervision at work. It has strong positive effects on employee emotional exhaustion (Khan *et al.*, 2010; Tepper, 2000; Tepper *et al.*, 2007; Wu and Hu, 2009). In line with COR theory, the present study argues that abusive supervision is a source of resource-draining for a subordinate and is likely to be positively related to a subordinate's emotional exhaustion. Therefore, the researcher hypothesised that the perception of abusive supervision will be positively related with employee emotional exhaustion:

Hypothesis 2. Abusive supervision is positively correlated with an employee's emotional exhaustion.

Turnover intention

One of the most important challenges that today's organisations face is to retain human talent and especially in knowledge-based industries, where turnover is very expensive (Soltis *et al.*, 2013). Employee turnover is costly in terms of recruitment, hiring, etc. (Alexander, Bloom and Nuchols, 1994). To highlight and explore the reason for employee turnover, Cangelosi, Markham and Bounds (1998) reported one reason is job-related stress at work that is the outcome of abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000; Tepper *et al.*, 2007). This argument is also supported by Harvey *et al.* (2007) and Kang and Jensen (2009): abusive supervision boosts employee turnover intention and can provoke employees to actual turnover (Alexander, Bloom and Nuchols, 1994) and, indeed, it strongly affects actual turnover (Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner, 2000). Drawing on COR theory, abusive supervision is a source of resource-draining for a subordinate and is likely to be positively related to a subordinate's turnover intention. Therefore, the researcher hypothesised that the perception of abusive supervision will be positively related with employee turnover intention:

Hypothesis 3. Abusive supervision is positively correlated with an employee's turnover intention.

Intimidation

Jones and Pittman (1982) identified five impression management tactics which individuals usually use in their workplace: ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplification, supplication and intimidation. They defined intimidation as '... whereby individuals seek to be viewed as intimidating by threatening or bullying others' (p. 236). In this tactic of impression management, individuals give an impression of being a hurdle if not treated well (Jones, 1990), because this is a forceful behaviour to compel others to behave properly and appropriately and is a set of those behaviours that are used to pressurise individuals with threats of punishment and penalties in return for the most desired outcomes, and such behaviour has more chance of inciting dislike and unfavourable behaviour by others. Such behaviours include aggressiveness,

intimidation, bullying and threatening, which convey a message of an aggressive person to others (Bolino and Turnley, 1999). The effects of abusive supervision can consequently be moderated by the use of different moderating variables (Tepper, 2000; Tepper *et al.*, 2001). The potential variable that the researcher believes can play a vital role in moderating the effects of abusive supervision can be intimidation (Jones and Pittman, 1982). In response to job tension employees would use more intimidation. Consistent with this argument, job tension and intimidation have both been reported to have a positive relationship with each other (Gallagher, Harris and Valle, 2008). Given the COR theory, the present study argues that intimidation (i.e. when perpetrated by subordinates toward their abusive supervisor) is a resource-gaining and sustaining impression management tactic, and is likely to be negatively related to subordinate job tension, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Hence, the researcher hypothesised that the subordinates' intimidating behaviour with a supervisor would moderate this relationship between abusive supervision and job tension, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention:

Hypothesis 4. The intimidation of a subordinate will moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and job tension (4a), emotional exhaustion (4b), and turnover intention (4c), such that the relationship will be weak for subordinates high in intimidation as compared to those who are low in intimidation towards their supervisor.

Recognition

Social exchange theory suggests that individuals give positive responses to others for their favourable actions (Blau, 1964). Others' favourable responses give a sense of motivation to employees to repay their partners for their sympathetic actions (Gouldner, 1960; Greenberg, 1980). Usually employees who observe a high level of organisational support and have a high-quality exchange with their supervisor feel a sense of gratitude and offer in return attitudes and behaviours that help the exchange partner (Wayne, Shore and Liden, 1997).

Podsakoff *et al.* (1984, p. 23) asserted that 'leaders who administer rewards and punishments contingently will be more effective than leaders who administer them non-contingently or not at all'. They have found that non-contingent punishment is associated with employee dissatisfaction and decreased employee performance. Generally, employees react absolutely and optimistically to supervisors who recognise employees' performance. Employee recognition programmes increase employee satisfaction, which ultimately lowers employee turnover rates (Blumberg, 2005). Blumberg further stated that changed recognition/rewards will not bore employees. He stressed non-monetary instead of monetary rewards. Non-monetary rewards have prolonged effects compared to monetary rewards. Cash awards are usually spent over time, while non-cash awards remind employees of their good work. An employee recognition programme is a good way to retain employees. It gives them high morale and the sense that their managers trust them, which negatively affect employee turnover intention. Bishop (1987) explained one aspect of recognition that deferred rewards do not attract workers for

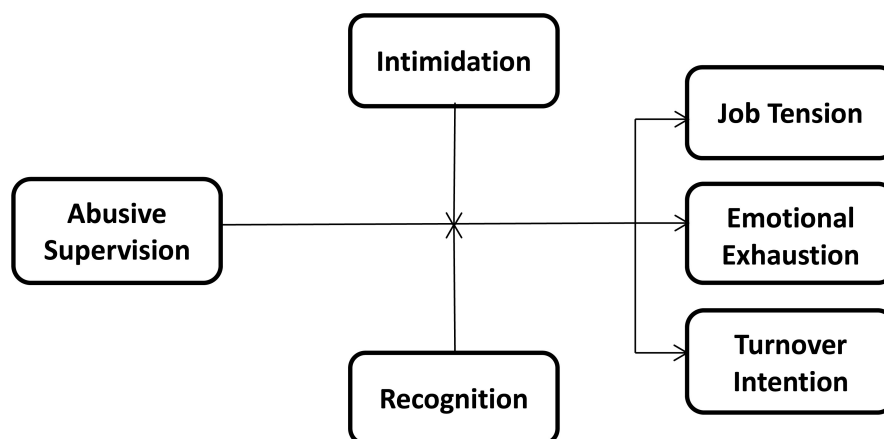


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of abusive supervision

outstanding performance: bonuses are more effective for motivating employees, especially in a firm with high turnover rates; they discourage turnover of high performers while encouraging weak performers to leave the organisation voluntarily.

Given the COR theory, the present study argues that recognition (i.e. the top management's recognition of an employee's job) is a resource-gaining and sustaining technique, and is likely to be negatively related to a subordinate's job tension, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Hence, the researcher hypothesised that the top management's recognition of an employee's job would moderate this relationship:

Hypothesis 5. The top management's recognition of a subordinate's job will moderate abusive supervision and job tension (5a), emotional exhaustion (5b) and turnover intention (5c), such that the relationship will be weak for subordinates who have high job recognition from their top management compared to those who have low job recognition.

Method

Sampling and procedure

For the present study, data were collected through convenient sampling techniques from the telecommunications sector in Pakistan. Only 600 professional and full-time employees were randomly approached for data collection from, e.g. customer services representatives, sales officers, IT persons, and administrative support staff and other similar positions. For data collection, the researcher contacted the staff through their human resources department during their official times and briefed them regarding the study. They were assured of the privacy of data and outcomes. After obtaining their consent, the researcher handed them the abusive supervision, job tension, emotional exhaustion, intimidation and recognition questionnaires and requested them to complete all the scales in one sitting. (Before conducting this study, the researcher conducted a pilot study to confirm the

reliability of the scales.) The response rate was 84% ($N = 504$); 74% ($N = 443$) were properly completed. The average age of respondents was 27 years (mean = 26.87 years, standard deviation = 4.71 years, range 18 years to 41 years). The sample consisted of 158 women (36%) and 285 men (64%). Of these, 143 respondents (32%) were married and 300 (68%) were single. Tenure with the supervisor was approximately 17 months (mean = 17.39 years, standard deviation = 12.44 months; range 2 months to 48 months). The respondents' qualifications ranged from undergraduate to Masters level. Approximately 50% of respondents were Masters degree holders, 47% were graduates and the remaining 3% undergraduates.

Measures

Abusive supervision

Tepper's (2000) 15-item scale of abusive supervision on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) with alpha reliability ($\alpha = 0.92$) has been used for this study. Representative items were 'My supervisor ridicules me' and 'My supervisor tells me my thoughts and feelings are stupid'.

Job tension

House and Rizzo's (1972) 7-item subscale of the Anxiety-Stress Questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) with alpha reliability ($\alpha = 0.71$) has been used for this study. Representative items were 'I work under a great deal of tension' and 'My job tends to directly affect my health'.

Emotional exhaustion

Maslach and Jackson's (1981) 9-item scale on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) with alpha reliability ($\alpha = 0.84$) has been used for this study. A representative item was 'I feel emotionally drained from my work'.

Intent to leave

Tepper *et al.*'s (2009) 3-item scale on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) with alpha reliability ($\alpha = 0.71$) has been used for this study. A representative item was 'I plan on leaving this organisation very soon'.

Intimidation

For the present study, the researcher has used the modified version of Gallagher *et al.* (2008), which he used for intimidation towards superiors, peers and staff. Responses were made on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never behave this way, 5 = often behave this way). A representative item was 'Use intimidation to get the supervisor to behave appropriately'. The reported alpha reliability for this study was ($\alpha = 0.78$).

Recognition

Wayne *et al.*'s (2002) 3-items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = much less, 5 = much more) with alpha reliability ($\alpha = 0.73$) has been used for this study. Representative items were 'visibility to upper management' and 'personal attention from management'.

Demographic variables

The researcher used age, gender, marital status and organisational tenure with the supervisor as demographic variables. These variables are used to control their fake effects (Harvey *et al.*, 2007). Past research showed that age has been used as a control variable because older employees are not inclined towards actual turnover and turnover intention. Gender effects vary from male to female (Barnes and Jones, 1974). Age and gender both have some impact on job tension and emotional exhaustion (Taylor *et al.*, 2000).

Correlation analysis

In Table 1, the researcher has reported means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities of the study variables. The mean for abusive supervision was 3.31 (standard deviation = 0.93) and for negative employee outcomes 3.45 (standard deviation = 0.72) for job tension, 3.60 (standard deviation = 0.81) for emotional exhaustion, and 3.34 (standard deviation = 1.07) for turnover intention. The means for moderators were 3.49 (standard deviation = 0.92) for intimidation, and 3.65 (standard deviation = 1.02) for recognition.

There exists a positive relationship between abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes, e.g. abusive supervision and job tension ($r = 0.31, p < 0.01$), abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion ($r = 0.62, p < 0.01$), and abusive supervision and turnover intention ($r = 0.23, p < 0.01$). The association between the moderating variable intimidation and negative employee outcomes was, e.g. intimidation and job tension ($r = 0.12, p < 0.05$), intimidation and emotional exhaustion ($r = 0.32, p < 0.01$), and intimidation and turnover intention ($r = 0.18, p < 0.01$), and, further, its association with the other moderating variable, recognition, was, e.g. recognition and job tension ($r = 0.10, p < 0.05$), recognition and emotional exhaustion ($r = 0.42, p < 0.01$), and recognition and turnover intention ($r = 0.17, p < 0.01$). The frequency check of this data revealed its normal distribution.

Results

The researcher conducted a hierarchical multiple regression analysis to test hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, which predict that abusive supervision is positively correlated with job tension, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Hypotheses 4 and 5 predict that intimidation coupled with recognition moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes. The researcher entered the variables into the model in four steps. First he entered control variables, followed by the main effect variables (i.e. abusive supervision, intimidation and recognition) in the second step. In

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities

Variables	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	26.27	4.71										
2. Gender	1.36	0.48	0.00									
3. M/status	1.32	0.47	0.19**	0.04								
4. TWSup	17.39	12.44	0.13**	-0.05	0.04							
5. AbSup	3.31	0.93	-0.00	-0.09	0.02	0.05	(0.92)					
6. JT	3.45	0.72	-0.00	-0.07	0.05	0.09	0.31**	(0.71)				
7. EX	3.60	0.81	0.01	-0.02	0.02	-0.07	0.62**	0.31**	(0.84)			
8. TI	3.34	1.07	0.05	-0.02	-0.04	-0.06	0.23**	0.11*	0.26**	(0.71)		
9. Intimid.	3.49	0.92	0.01	-0.10*	0.00	-0.12*	0.33**	0.12*	0.32**	0.18**	(0.78)	
10. Recog.	3.65	1.02	0.03	-0.04	0.01	-0.13**	0.33**	0.10*	0.42**	0.17**	0.56**	(0.73)

Note: N = 443 ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Reliabilities (a) given in bold along the diagonal.

the third step, three two-way interaction terms (i.e. abusive supervision $\times$ intimidation, abusive supervision $\times$ recognition, intimidation $\times$ recognition) were entered. In the final step, a hypothesised three-way interaction term (i.e. abusive supervision $\times$ intimidation $\times$ recognition) was entered.

As shown in Table 2, abusive supervision was positively related with job tension ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$, Model 4), emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$, Model 8), and turnover intention ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.01$, Model 12). In addition, there was direct positive association between intimidation and job tension ($\beta = 0.06$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 4), emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.00$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 8), and turnover intention ($\beta = 0.09$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 12). Recognition was also positively correlated with job tension ($\beta = 0.03$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 4), emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$, Model 8), and turnover intention ($\beta = 0.06$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 12), respectively. In step 3, the two-way interaction term of abusive supervision $\times$ intimidation predicted job tension ($\beta = 0.05$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 4) and emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.02$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 8), which was negatively correlated with turnover intention ($\beta = -0.01$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 12). Further, abusive supervision $\times$ recognition predicted job tension ($\beta = -0.12$, $p < 0.05$, Model 4), emotional exhaustion ($\beta = -0.01$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 8), and turnover intention ($\beta = 0.04$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 12), respectively. However, intimidation $\times$ recognition predicted job tension ($\beta = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$, Model 4), emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.01$, Model 8) and turnover intention ($\beta = 0.03$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 12), respectively. Further, in step 4, the three-way interaction term of abusive supervision $\times$ intimidation $\times$ recognition predicted direct negative association with job tension ($\beta = -0.07$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 4), and was positively associated with emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.09$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 8) and turnover intention ($\beta = 0.03$, ns , $p < 0.01$, Model 12).

The above data shows a positive correlation between abusive supervision and job tension, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention, which leads us to the implication that hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 received support, although recognition slightly negatively moderated the relationship between abusive supervision and job tension, and hence hypothesis 5(a) received support as well. However, there is no indication to suggest that there is a moderating impact of intimidation or recognition on the relationship between abusive supervision and job tension, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention as an individual variable or as a combined construct. Therefore, it is argued that the empirical data did not reveal any support for hypotheses 4 (a, b, c) and 5 (b, c).

Discussion and conclusions

Drawing upon the COR theory, the present study examines the effects of supervisory abuse on a subordinate's job-related attitude. The study proposes that abusive supervision has direct positive effects on a subordinate's attitudes and behaviours (Carlson *et al.*, 2012; Keashly *et al.*, 1997; Tepper, 2000), and abusive supervision is an actual or potential threat to the subordinate's loss of resources. Given the COR theory, the loss of resources can cause stress and an uncomfortable psychological state for subordinates (Hobfoll, 1989), which is

Table 2: Result of hierarchical multiple regression

	Job tension				Emotional exhaustion				Turnover intention			
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
Age	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07
Gender	-0.07	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.03	0.03	0.04	0.03	-0.02	0.00	0.01	0.01
Marital Status	0.06	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.05	-0.06	-0.06	-0.06
Tenure with Supervisor	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.07	-0.08	-0.07	-0.07	-0.07	-0.07	-0.06	-0.06	-0.06
Step 2:												
Abusive Supervision (A)		0.29**	0.28**	0.30**		0.55**	0.54**	0.51**		0.19**	0.19**	0.19**
Intimidation (B)		0.04	0.05	0.06		0.01	0.02	0.00		0.08	0.09	0.09
Recognition (C)		-0.01	0.03	0.03		0.23**	0.27**	0.27**		0.05	0.06	0.06
Step 3:												
A × B			0.04	0.05			0.02	0.02			-0.01	-0.01
A × C			-0.08	-0.12*			-0.06	-0.01			0.03	0.04
B × C			0.13*	0.12*			0.13**	0.14**			0.03	0.03
Step 4:												
A × B × C				-0.07				0.09				0.01
R	0.12	0.32**	0.35*	0.35	0.08	0.67**	0.68	0.68	0.10	0.27**	0.28	0.28
R ²	0.02	0.10**	0.12*	0.12	0.01	0.45**	0.46*	0.46	0.01	0.08**	0.08	0.08
ΔR ²	0.02	0.09**	0.02*	0.00	0.01	0.44**	0.07*	0.00	0.01	0.06**	0.00	0.00
F	1.69	7.23**	5.91**	5.45**	0.70	49.89**	36.94**	33.92**	1.17	5.03**	3.59**	3.26**
ΔF	1.69	14.40**	2.64*	0.87	0.70	114.75**	4.18**	2.46	1.17	10.07**	0.30	0.02

Note: N = 443 *p < 0.05, two-tailed. **p < 0.01, two-tailed.

Regression model 1: control variables entered.

Regression model 2: individual study variables entered.

Regression model 3: two-way interaction terms entered.

Regression model 4: three-way interaction term entered.

further evident in prior research that there exists a direct positive relationship between abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes (e.g. job tension, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention) (Breux *et al.*, 2008; Harvey *et al.*, 2007; Mackey *et al.*, 2013; Schat *et al.*, 2006; Tepper, 2000; Wheeler *et al.*, 2013). The COR theory further states that people strive to attain and sustain their resources to circumvent further loss of resources and to fulfill their future goals. However, in order to mitigate the adverse effects of abusive supervision on a subordinate's job-related attitude, the present study incorporated two moderating variables, intimidation, which is an antecedent of impression management (Jones and Pittman, 1982), and recognition (Wayne *et al.*, 2002), on a direct relationship of abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes. Past research has reported that recognition of the employee's job by the management/supervisors has a direct positive effect on the former's attitudes and behaviours. Subordinate job recognition programmes increase a subordinate's level of job satisfaction, which further decreases the turnover rate (Blumberg, 2005). However, Bishop (1987) reported that it positively affects the turnover rate of high performers while negatively affecting the turnover of weak performers rather than encouraging weak performers to leave the organisation. On the other hand, intimidation is a subordinate's personal impression management tactic (Jones and Pittman, 1982), which conveys a message of an aggressive person to others (Bolino and Turnley, 1999). Intimidation has been reported to have positively correlated with job-related tension and strain (Gallagher *et al.*, 2008; Harris *et al.*, 2013). In the context of COR theory, the subordinate intimidation tactic is a resource-gaining and sustaining impression management tactic. When confronted with abusive supervisors, subordinates use their intimidation tactics in order to mitigate the adverse effects of abusive supervision and to retain and sustain their resources to fulfill their future goals. However, the findings of the present study provided support for the first three hypotheses, 1, 2 and 3, such that the higher the abusive supervision, the higher the job tension, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention. However, contrary to past literature and COR theory, the data of the present study did not reveal any empirical support for the moderating effects of intimidation and recognition, except for the recognition of moderating effects on abusive supervision and the job tension relationship, and hence this provided support for hypothesis 5a. Despite the strong theoretical and literature support, the moderating variables (e.g. intimidation and recognition) did not moderate individually as well as collectively on the relationship between abusive supervision and job tension, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention. Neither of the aforementioned moderating variables, intimidation and recognition, acted as neutraliser effects on abusive supervision.

Limitations and future research directions

Despite its contributions, the present study has some weaknesses. Firstly, the researcher did not incorporate contextual factors, i.e. family problems, financial problems, etc., which could have had an impact on negative employee outcomes. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that in future

research these variables in a broader context should be incorporated to see their potential impact on negative employee outcomes. Secondly, it is possible that subordinates might not have reported truthfully about abusive supervision, especially regarding their turnover intention. To reduce such bias in data, future research should investigate third-party observations, e.g. subordinate peers' and supervisor colleagues' points of view regarding abusive behaviour of supervisors. Thirdly, the present study tested the theory for empirical results on only one industry, cellular firms. This might be a weakness of the study that, regardless of the strong theory and literature support for the positive effects of the moderating variables, i.e. intimidation and recognition, the data did not support this and prove the moderating effects of intimidation and recognition on the relationship between abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes whether as a single construct or as a combined construct. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this model should be applied in some other industries and perhaps in some other cultural context. Fourthly, as we know, research may continue in a number of directions. In this study the researcher examined only one impression management tactic (intimidation) and recognition as moderating variables which could not prove to be significant as theorised by the researcher. Both the moderating variables have shown no effects on the relationship of abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes. Therefore, in future research other tactics of impression management (self-promotion, exemplification, and supplication) should be incorporated to moderate the adverse effects of abusive supervision. Fifthly, different employee reward and compensation policies would be useful moderators to cope with abusive supervision. Employees' motivational techniques can play a vital role in moderating adverse effects of abusive supervision. Human capital is crucial in sustaining competitive advantage of the firm in the competitive market place (Barney, 1991). The one mediating variable which the researcher was interested to test in this model was 'organisation culture', but due to shortage of time this could not be included in the present study. For future research it is strongly recommended to be included in this model.

Implications for theory and research

The present study makes several contributions to the existing domain of abusive supervision research. Firstly, the main contribution of the study is the conceptualisation and testing of abusive supervision as a source of subordinates' resource depletion. Based on the COR theory, the researcher expands the existing domain of abusive supervision by examining the contextual (i.e. top management's recognition of a subordinate's job) and behavioural (i.e. a subordinate's intimidation) moderators concurrently. However, the results of the study did not support the COR theory in that abusive supervision is indeed a source of subordinate resource depletion and can cause an actual or potential threat to subordinate psychological state and attitude. According to this theory, individuals, in order to gain and sustain their resources, invest more resources, but in this study, the contextual (recognition) and behavioural (intimidation) factors did not neutralise the adverse effects of abusive super-

vision. This might be because (a) in a high power distance culture these resource gaining and sustaining strategies (e.g. intimidation and recognition) might not be useful, and (b) the organisation internal culture may not support these strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of abusive supervision.

Implications for practice

Consistent with past research, the study highlighted the adverse effects of abusive supervision on subordinates' psychological health and attitude. These negative effects can have detrimental effects on subordinates' performance and productivity, which can cost the organisation in terms of lost productivity, absenteeism, and health care expenditure. However, the identification of such negative supervisory behaviours can compel the top management and employers to incorporate strategies to cope with such behaviours (Harvey *et al.*, 2007), which are a constant threat to organisational goals, objectives and competitive advantage (Barney, 1991, 2000), and can also cause an organisational death (Abatecola, 2013). Given past research, top management's recognition of the subordinate's job can motivate the subordinate for heightened performance and productivity and can neutralise the adverse effects of incivility (e.g. supervisory abuse) in the workplace (Beugré, 2011). Subordinates can in turn use the tools at their disposal (e.g. intimidation) towards abusive supervisors. Past research has reported the positive effects of subordinates' use of intimidation towards abusive supervision. However, the frequent use of such intimidating behaviours against the abusive supervisor may trigger and encourage conflict in an organisation. A subordinate's intimidating behaviour against supervisory abuse is a clear indication of top management/human resource department failure to mitigate supervisory abuse in an organisation, as the top management/human resource management is responsible for promoting internal management effectiveness (Francis-Smythe, Robinson and Ross, 2013; Li-Qun, 2013). If, in a worse scenario, such intimidating behaviours become habitual in an organisation, then, on the one hand, management will have to control supervisory abuse, and, on the other, the subordinates' intimidating behaviours. Further, this will also raise questions about the role of top management and human resource departments in an organisation. Thus some subordinates may be comfortable in intimidating against supervisory abuse but not all subordinates. Hence, in case of such incivility (e.g. supervisory abuse) the subordinate should be encouraged to report the abuse to the top management/human resource department. On the other hand, managing injustice (e.g. abusive supervision) is a skill which is very important for the managers to gain, in order to mitigate the adverse effects of their abusive behaviours on subordinates as well as on their organisation as a whole (Beugré, 2011).

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