

DOCTORAL THESIS

A comprehensive study on the impact of abusive supervision on employees' OCBs: testing the mediating role of group identification and the moderating roles of power distance and conflict with supervisors

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Abstract

In the field of leadership research, the constructive aspects of leadership, such as transformational, authentic, and ethical leadership, have been the predominant areas of focus. Nonetheless, the destructive aspects are gaining attention, with the subject of abusive supervision (AS) receiving more emphasis than toxic, aversive, and tyrannical types of leadership. AS is still in its infancy in terms of its theoretical development and efforts to understand the consequences AS has for working behaviors and how individual cultural dimensions might influence a leader–follower relationship within a work group. Furthermore, most relevant studies have been conducted in the Western context.

In this study, conducted in a Chinese cultural context, I investigate the effects of AS on group identity (GI), defined by the group members' value congruency and sense of belonging. I explore their associated organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), defined by discretionary behaviors beyond the scope of any work contract. OCBs, in the aggregate, reinforce an organization's effectiveness. I further test the moderating effect of the power distance (PD) between AS and GI and approach conflict with supervisors (CWS) in terms of the roles and goals during rounds of conflict, testing the hypothesis that CWS exerts an influence on GI and OCBs. The results from 337 direct reports and 61 of their respective supervisors confirm that AS and GI have a negative causal relationship, and low PD strengthens that relationship. The findings also suggest that GI plays no role in mitigating the relationship between AS and OCBs, and high PD does not facilitate adapting to the hostile behavior of supervisors. This study's theoretical and practical implications are discussed, and future research areas are outlined.

Table of Contents

Declaration	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	vi
Chapter 1: Background of the Study	1
1.1 Theoretical Background	3
1.2 The Research Gap.....	6
1.3 Research Questions	6
1.4 Research Objectives	7
1.5 Construct Definitions.....	8
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	9
2.1 Research on Abusive Supervision	9
2.1.1 AS Antecedents.....	9
2.1.2 AS Outcomes	10
2.2 Research on Group Identification.....	13
2.3 Research on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors	17
2.3.1 OCBs Antecedents.....	17
2.3.2 OCBs Outcomes	18
2.4 Research on Power Distance	22
2.5 Research on Conflict with Supervisors	25
2.5.1 Role Conflict	25
2.5.2 Goal Conflict	27
2.5.3 Conflict with Supervisors (CWS).....	29
Chapter 3: Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development.....	31
3.1 Theoretical Background	32
3.2 Hypotheses Development.....	38
3.2.1 The Effect of AS on Group Identification	39
3.2.2 The Effect of GI on OCBs	43
3.2.3 Mediating Effects of GI.....	45
3.2.4 Moderating Effects of PD.....	47
3.2.5 Moderating Effects of CWS	49
Chapter 4: Research Methodology.....	52
4.1 Sample and Procedure	52
4.2 Measures.....	53
4.2.1 Independent Variable	54

4.2.2 Dependent Variables	54
4.2.3 Moderators.....	54
4.2.4 Mediator	56
4.3 Validation of the Measurement Model	56
4.4 Aggregation of Group-Level Variables.....	57
4.5 Data Analysis Strategy	58
Chapter 5: Research Results.....	59
5.1 Descriptive Statistics	59
5.2 Hypotheses Testing.....	59
5.3 Mediating Effect Testing	60
5.4 Moderating Effect Testing	61
Chapter 6: Discussion of Results, Contributions, and Research Limitations	62
6.1 Results	62
6.2 Theoretical Contribution.....	67
6.3 Practical Implications	69
6.4 Research Limitations and Suggested Future Directions.....	72
Chapter 7: Conclusion.....	77
List of Tables	79
Table 1. Definition Summary of the Five Constructs	8
Table 2. Summary of the Abusive Supervision (AS) Effect Studies	11
Table 3. Review of Empirical Studies on Effects of OCBs	21
Table 4. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Variables Studied.....	79
Table 5. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations.....	80
Table 6. HLM Results.....	81
List of Figures	83
Figure 1. A Conceptual Model Summarizing the Research Objectives.	83
Figure 2. The Model with the Expected Result Indicators.	83
Figure 3. The Graph Shows the Interactive Effects of AS and Team Culture on Group Identification.....	84
Figure 4. The Monte Carlo Simulation Method Showing at 95% Confidence Interval.....	84
Figure 5. The Monte Carlo Simulation Method Showing at 90% Confidence Interval.....	85
Appendix 1	86
Survey of Frontline Employees' Experience—Wave 1	86
Appendix 2	89
Survey of Frontline Employees' Experience – Wave 2	89
Appendix 3	90
Survey of Group Leaders' Experience – Wave 3.....	90

List of References.....	92
Curriculum Vitae.....	110