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Can’t Stop Eating My Feelings: The Maladaptive Responses of abused employees towards Abusive supervision

Abstract

Although organizational research on abusive supervision and its detrimental effects on individuals and organizations has become increasingly popular, little attention has been paid to the maladaptive responses of subordinates to abusive supervision. We build upon self-regulatory theory to investigate one common but overlooked maladaptive response of subordinates to abusive supervision: subordinate overeating behavior. We conducted a single-source, multi-wave daily diary study on ten consecutive working days (N = 115 employees and 1150 daily surveys) to investigate the relationship between abusive supervision and overeating behavior via a subordinate’s negative mood at the high vs. low values of subordinate’s recovery experiences. We, from the perspective of self-regulatory impairment, found that a subordinate’s perceptions of abusive supervision instill a sense of negative mood, which in turn render a loss of control over his/her behavioral intentions towards overeating behavior. Moreover, the first-stage moderation results demonstrated that recovery experiences at the workplace mitigate the depleting effects of abusive supervision. Abused subordinates are less susceptible to the effects of abusive supervision on overeating behavior via their negative moods when there are greater recovery experiences at the workplace. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

Keywords: Abusive supervision; negative mood; overeating behavior; recovery experiences

Can't Stop Eating My Feelings: The Maladaptive Responses of abused employees towards Abusive supervision

Introduction

In the past decade, abusive supervision, that is, subordinates' perceptions of "the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178) has been extensively investigated by practitioners and scholars in the organizational sciences (Harris, Kacmar, & Zivnuska, 2007; Harvey, Harris, Gillis, & Martinko, 2014). This destructive behavior of supervisors usually involves nonphysical actions like unfair demands and expectations from employees, disrespect in public, social isolation in the organization, exposing and exploiting subordinates' weaknesses, overburden, tight control over subordinates, threat, abusive language, insulting and criticizing subordinates, name-calling, etc. (Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006; Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011; Tepper, Uhl-Bien, et al., 2006). Some reasons for examining abusive supervision include its deleterious impact on individuals, as well as organizational outcomes and the increasing frequency at which such behavior is exhibited at the workplace (Khan, Moss, Quratulain, & Hameed, 2018; Walter, Lam, Van der Vegt, Huang, & Miao, 2015). Therefore, scholars need to further investigate this escalating phenomenon to develop interventions that can help managers, practitioners, and organizations at reducing or eliminating such destructive supervisory behaviors (Tariq & Ding, 2018; Tariq & Weng, 2018; Tariq, Weng, Ilies, & Khan, 2021).

While investigating the outcomes, existing research assumes a static approach of abusive supervision, i.e., some managers are abusive while others are not (e.g., see Burton, Hoobler, & Scheuer, 2012; Eissa & Lester, 2017; Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Nandkeolyar, Shaffer, Li, Ekkirala, & Bagger, 2014; Tariq & Weng, 2018). Organizational scholars have

neglected the potential within-person temporal variation approach of abusive supervision where it is measured in terms of occurrence rather than labeling a supervisor as abusive or non-abusive, i.e., some managers frequently engage in abusive supervisory behaviors, and in contrast, other managers do not (see Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhave, & Christian, 2015; Courtright, Gardner, Smith, McCormick, & Colbert, 2016; Tariq & Ding, 2018 for exceptions). This study extends the latter stream of research and focuses on the within-person temporal variation rather than its static approach.

Up until now, organizational scholars have paid attention to investigating the numerous consequences of abusive supervision in the workplace (see Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey, 2013; Zhang & Liao, 2015). Nevertheless, the majority of research in this area has focused on work-domain outcomes of abusive supervision, such as employees' creativity (Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012; Liu, Zhang, Liao, Hao, & Mao, 2016), knowledge sharing (Wu & Lee, 2016), workplace deviance (Lian et al., 2014), job performance (Harris et al., 2007; Tariq & Ding, 2018), and organizational citizenship behaviors (Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). Limited research has been conducted to investigate the cross-domain outcomes of abusive supervision, that is, the potential deleterious influence of abusive supervision on an employee's personal and family life beyond the boundaries of an organization, for example, work-family conflict (Carlson, Ferguson, Hunter, & Whitten, 2012), family undermining (Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Restubog, Scott, & Zagenczyk, 2011), and relationship conflict or tension with one's partner (Carlson, Ferguson, Perrewé, & Whitten, 2011). Therefore, we focus on one common but heretofore neglected cross-domain outcome of abusive supervision: subordinates' overeating behavior. More specifically, in this research, we answer how and when abusive supervision leads to subordinates' overeating behavior.

There has been a greater concern in the general public about healthy eating habits

as they are vital in developing a healthy lifestyle (Hesslink, 2016; Liu et al., 2017). Extant literature in applied psychology and management has neglected to investigate an employee's eating behavior (see Liu et al., 2017 for an exception). In particular, the relationship between workplace stressor (i.e., abusive supervision; Nandkeolyar et al., 2014; Tepper, 2000) and overeating behavior has been largely overlooked. Overeating behavior is considered to be present in anyone who is engaged in violation of eating in moderation (Herman, Polivy, & Leone, 2005; Liu et al., 2017). Such behavior usually includes eating at unnecessary times or events (e.g., when an individual is taking late-night snacks) or consuming food when not needed (in this case an individual is suffering rather than being satisfied; Colles, Dixon, & O'Brien, 2007). We, from the perspective of self-regulation theory (SRT), propose two reasons based on subordinates' self-regulatory failure or impairment (Thau & Mitchell, 2010) that answer the question of how abusive supervision leads to subordinates' overeating behavior.

Firstly, as stated in self-regulation theory, every individual has a single and limited pool of regulatory resources (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998), available for constraining counter-normative or undesirable behavioral intentions (Beal, Weiss, Barros, & MacDermid, 2005b). According to this theory, when an individual experiences a resource-demanding situation or those that require self-regulation (i.e., abusive supervision), he/she suffers from self-regulatory failure or impairment (Thau & Mitchell, 2010; Wang, Liao, Zhan, & Shi, 2011), and has a decreased capacity to exert control over his/her counter-normative or undesirable behavioral intentions (Barnes et al., 2015; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). It can thus be speculated, from the viewpoint of self-regulation impairment, that an employee experiencing a resource-demanding situation (i.e., abusive supervision) might find it challenging to resist the impulses or urges of consuming unhealthy food (referred here as employees' overeating behavior) and

therefore lose control over his/her behavioral intentions towards overeating behavior.

Secondly, subordinates experience self-regulatory resource depletion and undesirable states (i.e., negative mood) when they encounter work-related stressors or negative events, such as workplace incivility (Meier & Gross, 2015; Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998). In line with this, it can be argued that abusive supervision, as a negative event or workplace stressor, (Nandkeolyar et al., 2014) leads to subordinates' negative mood at the workplace due to self-regulatory resource depletion. Moreover, Tice and Bratslavsky (2000) and Tice, Bratslavsky, and Baumeister (2001) found that an individual, in the presence of a negative mood, is motivated to regulate it to attain immediate pleasure (e.g., overeating). Thus, from the perspective of self-regulation impairment, we propose that a subordinate's negative mood mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and their overeating behavior.

For a better understanding of the relationship between abusive supervision and subordinate's overeating behavior, we draw on job-recovery literature and introduce a contextual factor (i.e., subordinate's recovery experiences at the workplace) that can mitigate the effects of abusive supervision on his/her overeating behavior. On-job recovery experiences refer to the extent to which an employee perceives that the breaks at the workplace help him/her to regain the depleted self-regulatory resources (Demerouti, Bakker, Sonnentag, & Fullagar, 2012; Sonnentag & Natter, 2004). An employee's on-the-job recovery experiences, such as socializing, napping, and relaxing are related to a lower level of workplace negative mood and facilitate in reshaping his/her workplace behavior (Trougakos, Beal, Green, & Weiss, 2008). Therefore, we propose that a subordinate's recovery experiences at the workplace can mitigate the effects of abusive supervision on his/her overeating behavior via negative mood.

This research integrates self-regulatory theory (Baumeister et al., 1998) with the job recovery literature (Mojza, Lorenz, Sonnentag, & Binnewies, 2010; Sonnentag & Natter, 2004) to shed light on the consequences of abusive supervision on employees beyond the workplace. First, drawing from the perspective of self-regulatory resource impairment or depletion, we propose that employees' resources are likely to be depleted when they experience a resource-demanding situation, such as abusive supervision. Second, we introduce the negative mood of employees as the underlying mechanism of the maladaptive response of employees to abusive supervision in the form of overeating behavior. Finally, deriving from job-recovery literature, we argue that employees' recovery experiences at the workplace tend to mitigate the depleting effects of abusive supervision, such that they are less susceptible to the effects of abusive supervision on overeating behavior when they encounter a high level of recovery experiences at the workplace. A summary of our moderated mediation model is depicted in Figure 1.

>Insert Figure 1, about here<

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Employees at the workplace may encounter such events, situations, or behaviors that provoke undesirable emotional reactions in them and cause resource depletion or drain (see Barber, Taylor, Burton, & Bailey, 2017; Barnes et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2017; Shillamkwese, Tariq, Obaid, Weng, & Garavan, 2020). More specifically, concerning the leader-follower relationship, followers may face criticism, negative comments, or silent treatment from their immediate leaders (referred here as abusive supervision; Tepper, 2000, 2007). Organizational scholars have noted and defined abusive supervision as a work-related stressor (Nandkeolyar et al., 2014) that can distract or sidetrack employees from performing their focal tasks. On one hand, such events may instigate tempting impulses or urges in followers as a response to such events (Tepper, Simon, & Park, 2017;

Thau & Mitchell, 2010). On the other hand, to respond less impulsively, employees may attempt to regulate aversive emotional states, redirect their attention to focal tasks, and avoid the potential negative appraisal (Beal et al., 2005b). Such measures can exhort employees to consume self-regulatory resources, defined as "the amount of mental capacity available to control and alter naturally occurring emotions, behaviors, and mental states" (Liu et al., 2017, p. 1239). Congruent with self-regulatory theory (Baumeister, 2003; Baumeister, Muraven, & Tice, 2000), when these limited and finite self-regulatory resources are excessively consumed to deal with abusive supervision, the employees may experience self-regulatory depletion or impairment. The self-regulation process plays an important role in maintaining employees' healthy eating habits and suppressing their overeating urges (i.e., unhealthy eating habits; Liu et al., 2017; Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000; Tice et al., 2001). Coping with abusive supervision can therefore elicit a maladaptive coping strategy of unhealthy eating (i.e., overeating behavior) in depleted subordinates.

To explain the underlying mechanism of the proposed relationship we draw on mood-regulation literature, which suggests that negative mood prompts a desire for mood-regulation as it is a natural tendency of human beings to avoid negative feelings or emotions and approach desirable feelings (Gross, 1998; Liu et al., 2017). Integrating this argument with the viewpoint of self-regulatory resource depletion implies that challenging and demanding situations at work, such as abusive supervision, prompt employees' negative workplace moods because they consider such situations as threatening (see Tepper et al., 2017 for a qualitative review). Additionally, in the presence of negative mood, scholars (e.g., Tice et al., 2001) noted that individuals are motivated to achieve short-term goals (for example, search for instant pleasure by overeating to cope with negative mood) rather than long-term goals (for example, maintain healthy eating habits), and they may engage in overeating to alter or relieve such moods (e.g., "eating one's

feelings;" Canetti, Bachar, & Berry, 2002). In doing so, employees may bring temporary comfort and find an escape from a stressful situation (Liu et al., 2017), but are unable to alleviate the central problem, that is, abusive supervision. Based on the aforementioned arguments, we reason that overeating behavior can be a maladaptive act or strategy adopted by depleted employees to cope with their negative mood caused by abusive supervision, and propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The subordinate's perceptions of abusive supervision positively influence his/her overeating behavior.

Hypothesis 2: The subordinate's negative mood mediates the relationship between his/her perceptions of abusive supervision and overeating behavior.

We previously argued that abusive supervision induces negative workplace moods in employees and leads to overeating behavior because abused employees consume their limited self-regulatory resources to cope with a demanding situation. Given the prominence of self-regulatory resources (Barnes et al., 2015; Beal, Weiss, Barros, & MacDermid, 2005a; Liu et al., 2017) in constraining undesirable emotions and behavioral intentions, the association between abusive supervision and subordinate overeating behavior may become weaker if subordinates have more self-regulatory resources. In this regard, job-recovery literature suggests that an apparent way to restore resources is to rest or take a break from those activities that caused self-regulatory resources depletion (Baumeister et al., 1998; Demerouti et al., 2012). Workplace breaks may include anything from sleep to doing stretching exercises, going out for lunch, checking one's emails, or having a cup of tea. We, therefore, draw on job-recovery literature to introduce subordinate recovery experiences at the workplace as a natural way to replenish subordinates' self-regulatory resources.

At the workplace, recovery experiences refer to the degree to which individuals perceive that the breaks they take help them to restore resources (Demerouti et al., 2012; Sonnentag & Natter, 2004). Previous studies show that recovery experiences replenish self-regulatory resources and have a long-lasting effect on subordinates' emotions and behaviors at the workplace (e.g., see Demerouti et al., 2012; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2005, 2006; Sonnentag, 2003; Trougakos et al., 2008). While taking into account job-recovery experiences at the workplace, scholars have focused more on extensive breaks such as weekends (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2005), vacations (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006), sabbaticals (Davidson et al., 2010), and evenings (Sonnentag, 2003) rather than short breaks e.g., relaxing, socializing, and napping that occurs during the workday (for exceptions see Demerouti et al., 2012; Trougakos et al., 2008). Under demanding and challenging situations, such as abusive supervision, subordinate recovery experiences can be a critical indicator of the replenishment or restoration of subordinates' self-regulatory capability. This is because taking breaks during the workday can restore the self-regulatory resources of employees (Barnes, 2012; Barnes, Wagner, & Ghumman, 2012) and prepare them to effectively respond to potential upcoming demands of a workday (Barnes et al., 2015; Demerouti et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2017). Therefore, we propose and investigate the moderating role of recovery experiences of abused subordinates in attenuating the positive relationship of abusive supervision → subordinate negative mood → subordinate overeating behavior by helping them recover, replenish or restore their depleted self-regulatory resources. We particularly focus on recovery experiences after short breaks on daily basis (i.e., relaxing, socializing, or napping), rather than extensive breaks (i.e., vacations, sabbaticals, or weekends), and their impact on replenishment or restoration of self-regulatory resources. The following hypotheses are thus proposed,

Hypothesis 3 (a): The subordinate's recovery experiences at work moderate the

relationship between his/her perceptions of abusive supervision and negative mood, such that the relationship is weaker (stronger) when the subordinate's recovery experiences at work are higher (lower).

Hypothesis 3 (b): The subordinate's recovery experiences at work moderate the indirect relationship between his/her perceptions of abusive supervision and overeating behavior via his/her negative mood, such that the mediated relationship is weaker (stronger) when the subordinate's recovery experiences at work are higher (lower).

Method

As mentioned earlier, limited research (e.g., Barnes et al., 2015; Courtright et al., 2016; Tariq & Ding, 2018) on abusive supervision has explored the potential within-person temporal variation approach of abusive supervision, whereby some managers frequently engage in abusive supervisory behavior while other managers do not frequently engage in such behavior. Moreover, negative mood, recovery experiences, and overeating behavior have often been measured through daily diary methods (e.g., see Derks & Bakker, 2014; Lanaj, Johnson, & Barnes, 2014; Liu et al., 2017; Sonnentag, Binnewies, & Mojza, 2008). Considering the aforementioned points, we measured our latent variables by using a daily diary approach where we asked participants to report abusive supervision, negative mood, overeating behavior, and recovery experiences for ten consecutive working days. At Time 1 (i.e., at the end of the working day), we asked participants to rate abusive supervision, negative mood, and recovery experiences. At Time 2 (i.e., before going to bed on that working day), we asked participants to report their overeating behavior. Thus, we collected a single-source, multi-wave daily diary study to test our moderated mediation model.

We recruited research assistants and used a paper-and-pencil method to collect data from employees of a large service company headquartered in Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan. The organizational scholars (e.g., see Khan et al., 2018) suggested that "abusive supervision most frequently occurs in high–power distance cultures… Pakistan, being high on power distance, appears to be a favorable context for studying abusive supervision" (p. 2809). The research assistants contacted the Human Resource (HR) manager of the said company to invite employees to participate in our study. The research assistants then directly communicated the study's objectives to those employees who showed their consent and delivered each participant a package containing: (a) a letter explaining the instructions about the completion of daily surveys, (b) a general survey, (c) a daily booklet, and (d) return envelops. Following the instructions, participants first completed their respective general survey and were then asked to fill out their two daily questionnaires: (a) an afternoon questionnaire (to be completed after work when still being at work) and (b) a night questionnaire (to be completed before bedtime) for ten consecutive working days.

The survey packages were delivered to 173 employees, out of which 159 were received back after completion. After detailed checking of the responses, the research assistants considered 115 responses valid for our final sample and excluded 44 responses due to the following reasons: (a) participants did not respond on all days (ten consecutive working days), (b) participants responded daily surveys at wrong times, (c) participants responded to Time 1 daily survey but didn't respond to Time 2 daily survey and vice versa. Therefore, we only considered those responses for our final sample in which the participants followed all the instructions.

Measures

Abusive supervision: To measure a subordinate's perceptions of abusive supervision on daily basis (i.e., within-person temporal variation rather than static approach), we adopted the 5-item scale developed by Johnson, Venus, Lanaj, Mao, and Chang (2012) who specifically developed the daily level abusive supervision scale from the work of Tepper (2000). We asked subordinates to rate "the frequency with which your supervisor engaged in each of the 5 behaviors today at work," using a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*frequently*). Sample items include, "Tells me I'm not capable," and "Makes negative comments about me to other."

Negative mood: To measure a subordinate's negative mood at the workplace, we adopted the six-item scale from the work of Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988). We asked the participants to indicate the extent to which they agreed that each of the six-items described their current mood that morning or afternoon at the workplace using a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items include, "Today I have felt distressed," and "Today I have felt upset."

Overeating behavior: To measure a subordinate's daily overeating behavior, we adopted four-item scale from the work of Liu et al. (2017) who developed daily level overeating behavior scale, which is appropriate for measuring overeating behavior among normal employee samples. We asked participants to rate their overeating behavior in the evening after work using a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to (*strongly agree*). These four items are "Today I ate too many junk foods after work," "Today I had too many unhealthy snacks after work", "Today I ate and drank excessively after work," and "Today I had too many late-night snacks before going to bed."

Recovery experiences: To measure the daily recovery experiences of subordinates at the workplace, we followed the three-item scale from the work of Sonnentag (2003) who specifically developed daily level recovery experiences at the workplace. We asked

participants to respond to three items that linked feelings of recovery from short-term workplace activities or breaks using a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*not true at all*) to 5 (*very true*). These three items are (a) "Because of these activities pursued today at workplace breaks, I feel recovered," (b) "Because of these activities pursued today at workplace breaks, I feel relaxed," and (c) "Because of these activities pursued today at workplace breaks, I was again full of energy."

General survey: We used the general survey to assess the demographic information of our sample, for example, gender, age, education, tenure with supervisor, tenure with organization, and job experience. The participants were asked to record their responses to the general questionnaire before starting the daily diary sampling.

Results

Descriptive statistics

The intercorrelations, descriptive statistics (i.e., mean and standard deviations), and estimated reliabilities among the latent variables of our study are presented in Table 1, where we found preliminary support for our hypothesized relationships. We note that subordinates' perceptions of abusive supervision were positively correlated with their negative mood at the workplace ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.01$) and overeating behavior ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$). The subordinates' negative mood at the workplace were positively correlated with their overeating behavior ($r = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$). Finally, we found that the subordinates' recovery experiences were negatively correlated with their overeating behavior ($r = -0.16$, $p < 0.01$).

>insert Table 1, about here<

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS was conducted to confirm the factorial validity of the utilized measures. Byrne et al., (2010) and Schreiber, Stage, King,

Nora, and Barlow (2006) have recommended $\chi 2$/df, incremental fit index (IFI), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) as the appropriate fit indices to assess the adequacy of a model. According to Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson (2010), CFI, IFI, and TLI values above 0.90 and RMSEA scores below 0.08 represent the best model fit. The baseline four-factor model, i.e., abusive supervision, recovery experiences, negative moods, and overeating behavior, showed best fit to the data (CMIN/df=2.67, CFI =0.93, IFI=0.93, TLI =0.92, RMSEA=0.05). The two alternative measurement models (Bentler & Bonett, 1980) were compared and tested with the baseline model (see Table 2). In the first alternative model, recovery experiences and negative moods were combined into one factor, and the model was tested as a three-factor model. In the second alternative model, we loaded all constructs on a single factor, which showed a poor fit to the data. Thus, the baseline four-factor model was retained because of its best-fit indices over the two alternative models.

>insert Table 2, about here<

Analytical strategy

We followed the previous studies (e.g., Hongbo, Waqas, & Tariq, 2019; Mawritz, Greenbaum, Butts, & Graham, 2017; Tariq, Weng, Garavan, Obaid, & Hassan, 2020) to analyze our hypothesized moderated mediation model. Because of the within-person research design, hierarchical linear modeling (HLM; HLM version 6.08, Raudenbush, 2004) was used to test the hypothesized relationships. Initially, the intraclass correlations (ICC1) of dependent variables were calculated, and the results revealed significant between-individual variances in subordinate's negative moods ($X2 = 410.95$; $df = 108$; $p < 0.001$; $ICC = 0.20$) and his/her overeating behavior ($X2 = 499.69$; $df = 108$; $p < 0.001$; $ICC = 0.25$). Thus, it was appropriate to choose HLM as the analytical method for the present study. In addition, the main interest of this study was focused on within-person

level (e.g., level 1) rather than between-person level (e.g., level 2), as suggested by prior research (Enders and Tofighi, 2007); therefore, group-mean centering (e.g. individual-mean centering) was adopted for the independent variables (i.e. abusive supervision and subordinates recovery experiences) to rule out the potential between-person influence on dependent variables. Lastly, following the recommendation of Hayes (2013) and Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007), we used moderated path analysis and bootstrapping to analyze the formal indirect effects (i.e., abusive supervision → negative mood → overeating behavior; mediation relationship) and conditional indirect effects of abusive supervision on overeating behavior via negative mood at the high/low values of recovery experiences.

Test of formal mediation: Table 3 demonstrates the findings of the hierarchical linear modeling analyses. The findings show that abusive supervision was positively correlated with subordinates' overeating behavior ($r = 0.27$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = 8.82$, $p < 0.001$, *Model 6*). Thus, we found support for our Hypothesis 1, that is, subordinates' perceptions of abusive supervision were positively related to their overeating behavior. Moreover, we found that abusive supervision was positively correlated with subordinates' negative mood at the workplace ($r = 0.67$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = 24.30$, $p < 0.001$, *Model 2*), and the negative mood was positively correlated with their overeating behavior ($r = 0.48$, $SE = 0.02$, $t = 17.90$, $p < 0.001$, *Model 6*).

Finally, the results of direct ($r = 0.17$, $p < 0.001$, $LLCI = 0.12$, $ULCI = 0.23$), indirect ($r = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$, $LLCI = 0.27$, $ULCI = 0.38$), and total ($r = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$, $LLCI = 0.44$, $ULCI = 0.55$) effects provide support for Hypothesis 2, that is, subordinates' negative mood mediates the relationship of their perceptions of abusive supervision and overeating behavior.

Test of the moderated mediation model: Table 3 also demonstrates the findings of the moderated mediation model. We found that the interaction term of abusive supervision

and subordinates' recovery experiences (AS X RE) was significantly negative (r = -0.10, SE = 0.04, t = -6.46, $p < 0.05$, *Model 3*). Therefore, we found support for Hypothesis 3 (a), that is, subordinates' recovery experiences at work moderate the relationship between their perceptions of abusive supervision and negative mood, such that the relationship is weaker (stronger) when subordinates' recovery experiences at work are higher (lower).

>insert Table 3 & 4, about here<

We followed the approach of Edwards and Lambert (2007) to plot the conditional effects of abusive supervision on the subordinates' negative mood at the values of recovery experiences. We plotted the first-stage moderation, and Figure 2 demonstrates that subordinates' recovery experiences at work moderate the relationship between their perceptions of abusive supervision and negative mood, such that the relationship is weaker (r = 0.43, t = 3.92, $p < 0.001$) when subordinates' recovery experiences at work are higher and stronger (r = 0.58, t = 12.96, $p < 0.001$) when the recovery experiences are lower.

>Insert Figure 2, about here<

Finally, Table 5 demonstrates the conditional direct and indirect effects of abusive supervision on the subordinates' overeating behavior at the values (*-1SD, Mean, and +1SD*) of recovery experiences. We found that the effect of abusive supervision on the subordinates' overeating behavior via negative mood at the workplace at the low value (*-1SD*) of recovery experiences was significantly positive and weaker (r = 0.37, SE = 0.03, *LLCI* = 0.31, *ULCI* = 0.43). The effect of abusive supervision on the subordinates' overeating behavior via negative mood at the workplace at the mean value of recovery experiences was significantly positive (r = 0.29, SE = 0.02, *LLCI* = 0.25, *ULCI* = 0.34). The effect of abusive supervision on the subordinates' overeating

behavior via negative mood at the workplace at the high value (*+1SD*) of recovery experiences was significantly positive and weaker (r = 0.22, *SE* = 0.02, *LLCI* = 0.17, *ULCI* = 0.27). Thus, we found support for our Hypothesis 3 (b), that is, subordinates' recovery experiences moderate the indirect relationship between their perceptions of abusive supervision and overeating behavior through negative mood, such that the mediated relationship is weaker (stronger) when subordinates' recovery experiences at work are higher (lower).

>Insert Table 5, about here<

Discussion

We conducted a single-source, multi-wave daily diary study to explore the consequences of abusive supervision. From the perspective of self-regulatory theory, we proposed and found support for the direct relationship between abusive supervision and the subordinate's overeating behavior (Hypothesis 1). Moreover, we hypothesized a moderated mediation model and found that a subordinate's negative mood mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and overeating behavior (Hypothesis 2), and a subordinate's recovery experiences at work mitigate the effect of self-regulatory resource depletion and weaken the relationship between abusive supervision and overeating behavior through negative mood (Hypotheses 3 a & b). Our findings contribute to the management and organizational literature in several ways.

First, the majority of research on abusive supervision has argued that some managers are abusive at the workplace while others are not (i.e., a static approach of abusive supervision, e.g., see Ahmed, Sumbal, Akhtar, & Tariq, 2021; Ahmad, Tariq, Weng, Shillamkwese, & Sohail, 2019; Eissa & Lester, 2017; Mawritz et al., 2017; Yam, Fehr, Keng-Highberger, Klotz, & Reynolds, 2016). Researchers (e.g., see Barnes et al., 2015; Courtright et al., 2016; Tariq & Ding, 2018) have argued that some managers

frequently engage in abusive supervisory behavior, and in contrast, other managers do not (i.e., a within-person temporal variation approach of abusive supervision). We extend the latter line of inquiry by examining the daily relationships between abusive supervision, subordinates' negative mood, recovery experiences, and overeating behavior. Our findings add to this growing body of research by suggesting that organizational researchers should focus on a within-person temporal variation rather than a static approach to abusive supervision.

Second, while examining the consequences of abusive supervision, researchers have paid attention to exploring and investigating the work-related outcomes of abusive supervision (see Tepper et al., 2017; Zhang & Liao, 2015 for reviews). Our study extended the outcome domain and explored the potential adverse effects of abusive supervision on employees' personal and family life beyond the boundaries of an organization. To do so, we focused on one common but overlooked cross-domain outcome of abusive supervision: subordinate's overeating behavior. By utilizing the self-regulatory resource impairment perspective, we found that facing abusive supervision at work depletes subordinates' resources, and they look for coping strategies, but when retaliation against supervisors is not an option, they turn to other maladaptive responses to cope. Being depleted from resources makes them prone to lose control over their behavioral intentions and thus they resort to overeating behaviors to cope with the stress from being abused.

Third, our study proposes the subordinate's negative mood at the workplace as an underlying mediating mechanism to explain the relationship between abusive supervision and subordinate's overeating behavior. Our findings extend the management literature by suggesting that an individual in the presence of a negative mood is motivated for mood regulation by searching for immediate pleasure (e.g., overeating).

Finally, we built our model further on the premise of job-recovery literature and proposed a moderated mediation model to elaborate the boundary conditions of the relationship between abusive supervision and subordinates' overeating behavior. The results of our study showed congruence with our propositions and we found that on-job recovery experiences mitigate the effect of abusive supervision on subordinates' overeating behavior via negative mood at the workplace.

Practical implications

Our research offers several important implications for managers and organizations alike. Firstly, in line with the detrimental consequences of abusive supervision on employees and organizations documented in research (see Tepper et al., 2017), as well as its ineffectiveness in instrumentally increasing or boosting subordinates' job performance (e.g., Tariq & Weng, 2018; Walter et al., 2015), our research also expounds the unfavorable outcomes of abusive supervision on subordinates. Organizations should therefore pay significant attention to limiting such behavior at the workplace by clearly communicating the aversive consequences instigated by abusive supervision to the managers. Moreover, by imparting a zero-tolerance policy against such destructive leadership styles, for example, giving punishments or demotions, organizations can make supervisors well aware of the consequences of being abusive towards subordinates and eventually be able to curb such behavior at the workplace.

Second, in contrast to the work-related consequences of abusive supervision, managers and organizations should understand the cross-domain negative outcomes of abusive supervision on employees' health and well-being. Our findings suggest that a failure in dealing with abusive supervisors might have possible long-term detrimental effects on the health and well-being of employees whereby, when abused, they may

engage in overeating behaviors as a mood-altering strategy. As organizations strive towards creating healthy work environments for their employees, they should understand the effects stressors at work can have on employees' personal life. A possible strategy to deal with such issues would be to provide psychological support to employees and a safe space to report abusive supervision should they face it at work.

Finally, our findings suggest that it is worthwhile for organizations to provide sufficient recovery experiences at work to replenish the depleted self-regulatory resources of employees. Organizational scholars have reported that taking recovery breaks at work reduces fatigue and maintains the limited pool of employees' self-regulatory resources (Sonnentag & Binnewies, 2013; Sonnentag et al., 2008; Trougakos & Hideg, 2009). To accomplish the goal of providing recovery experiences, organizations can provide napping pods, snack stations, and socialization breaks to employees. Such practices will ensure sufficient recovery experiences for employees and indirectly inform them that their well-being is also a workplace priority. Lastly, it is also plausible to argue that eating behavior at work (e.g., snacking at work) is itself a form of resource replenishment that could help abused employees to deal with their negative moods instigated by abusive supervision. Therefore, organization could provide more workplace eating avenues such as a snack cupboard for this purpose and fill it with healthy snacks, for example, fruits, nuts, and chopped vegetables.

Limitations and future directions

Despite the theoretical and managerial implications, our study has several limitations that need to be investigated and addressed by future studies. First, we used single-source to rate abusive supervision, negative mood, recovery experiences, and overeating behavior, which raises concern about the common method variance (CMV).

Following the recommendations of Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2012), we dealt with the CMV concern by conducting a multi-wave daily diary study (i.e., collected data two daily surveys for 10 consecutive working days), which is an effective method for reducing CMV (Lanaj et al., 2014). Despite the strength of a multi-wave daily diary study, we recommend future studies to conduct a multi-source study, for example, by incorporating supervisor and spouse ratings for a comprehensive understanding of abusive supervision and overeating behavior.

Second, we conducted the study in a large service company headquartered in Pakistan, which may limit the generalizability of our findings to Western countries as significant differences exist in eating behaviors between Western and Eastern countries (Liu et al., 2017). Moreover, Kim, Haines, Siega-Riz, and Popkin (2003) found significant differences among specific aspects of eating behaviors in different countries, for example, Chinese people tend to be better at moderating food intakes as they consume more vegetables, bean products, and whole grains in comparison to the people of the USA. Therefore, while investigating abusive supervision-overeating behavior, we encourage researchers to conduct comparative studies between Eastern and Western samples.

Third, while attempting to study eating behaviors within the organizational context, our study only focused on investigating the relationship between abusive supervision and employees' overeating behavior and ignored the possible influence of employees' overeating behaviors on their short-term (e.g., job performance and job satisfaction) and long-term outcomes (e.g., health and well-being). The underdeveloped line of inquiry testing the influence of eating behaviors on employees' outcomes can be of interest to organizational researchers and we encourage them to explore how eating behaviors at home and work might affect employees' emotions, attitudes, and behaviors at work.

Fourth, we proposed and tested the moderated mediation model that implicitly suggests that an abused employees' overeating behavior is the maladaptive response to abusive supervision. Therefore, the causal direction of our moderated mediation model's findings could be an important limitation of our study. Our research design does not allow us to test such causal inferences. For example, it is plausible to argue that eating behavior at work (e.g., snacking at work) is itself a form of resource replenishment that could help abused employees to deal with their negative moods instigated by abusive supervision. Therefore, we call for further studies to use cross-lagged panel designs to test such causal inferences.

Conclusion

While there exists an abundance of research on the detrimental consequences of abusive supervision, we believe that our study stands in contrast as we investigate the adverse outcomes of abusive supervision beyond the workplace and in the personal life of subordinates. Employees may often be victims of abusive supervision, but retaliation against the abusive supervisor is rarely an option for them, and they may resort to maladaptive strategies that may, in turn, prove harmful rather than beneficial. We integrated the self-regulatory theory with job-recovery literature and elaborated that when depleted of resources after facing abuse from supervisors, subordinates may experience a negative mood. To remedy this situation, and rid themselves of the negative mood, they may look for immediate pleasure in the form of overeating. Our study further suggested that to alleviate the negative consequences of abusive supervision on subordinates' overeating behavior via negative mood, recovery experiences in the form of socializing, napping, and relaxing should be made available to subordinates. Such experiences will not only replenish their depleted resources but also refrain them from engaging in maladaptive behaviors after facing abusive supervision.

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Table 1

Intercorrelations, descriptive statistics, and estimated reliabilities among the latent variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender[a]	1.17	0.37	--									
2. Age[b]	1.39	0.55	-0.12**	--								
3. Education[c]	4.68	0.58	0.13**	0.30**	--							
4. Tenure with supervisor[d]	1.01	0.13	-0.06*	0.14**	0.07*	--						
5. Tenure with organization[e]	1.32	0.65	-0.12**	0.51**	0.22**	0.13**	--					
6. Job experience[f]	1.66	0.82	-0.09**	0.69**	0.35**	0.14**	0.70**	--				
7. Abusive supervision	1.86	0.68	-0.04	-0.87**	-0.01	0.03	-0.22**	-0.13	(0.81)			
8. Subordinate's negative mood	2.42	0.79	-0.04	-0.80**	-0.10**	-0.03	-0.21**	-0.15**	0.54**	(0.79)		
9. Subordinate's overeating behaviour	2.68	0.84	-0.03	-0.11**	-0.07**	-0.01	-0.17**	-0.16	0.46**	0.34**	(0.86)	
10. Subordinate's recovery experiences	2.45	0.99	-0.10	0.01	-0.03	0.09**	-0.05	-0.03	0.14**	-0.05	-0.16**	(0.77)

Notes: N = 115 direct reports and 1150 daily ratings; Significance at: $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; the figures in parentheses are alpha internal consistency reliabilities.

[a]Gender was coded 1 = Male, 2 = Female;

[b]Age was coded 1 = less than 25 years, 2 = 26-33 years, 3 = 34-41 years, 4 = 42-49 years, 5 = more than 49 years;

[c]Education was coded 1 = Diploma, 2 = Matriculation, 3 = Undergraduate, 4 = Graduate, 5 = Postgraduate;

[d]Tenure with supervisor was coded 1 = less than 1 years, 2 = 1-2 years, 3 = 3-4 years, 4 = more than 4 years;

[e]Tenure with organization was coded 1 = less than 1 years, 2 = 1-2 years, 3 = 3-4 years, 4 = more than 4 years;

[f]Job experience was coded 1 = less than 1 years, 2 = 1-2 years, 3 = 3-4 years, 4 = more than 4 years.

Table 2

Results of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA; Model fit indices)

Model	***Variables***	**χ^{2}/df**	**IFI**	**TLI**	**CFI**	**RMSEA**
One-factor model	All constructs combined as one factor	7.23	0.68	0.62	0.68	0.14
Three-Factor model	Abusive supervision, Recovery experiences+ Negative moods, Overeating behavior	3.50	0.82	0.80	0.82	0.12
Four-factor model (baseline)	Abusive supervision, Recovery experiences, Negative moods, Overeating behavior	2.67	0.93	0.92	0.93	0.05

Notes: CFA = confirmatory factor analysis; Incremental fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root-mean square error of approximation; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index.

Table 3

Results of (HLM) hierarchical linear modeling analyses

Variable	Negative Moods						Overeating Behavior					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	***b*(*SE*)**	**t-value**	***b*(*SE*)**	**t-value**	***b*(*SE*)**	**t-value**	***b*(*SE*)**	**t-value**	***b*(*SE*)**	**t-value**	***b*(*SE*)**	**t-value**
Level 2												
Intercept	0.93***		0.92***		0.87***		0.71*		0.69*		0.62*	
Age	.11(.12)	.95	.12(.12)	1.02	.03(.11)	.34	.01(.13)	-.09	-.01(.13)	-.21	-.07(.10)	-.68
Gender	-.15(.13)	-1.17	-.12(.12)	-.99	-.10(.12)	-.86	.13(.14)	-.98	-.13(.14)	-.10	-.07(.11)	-.64
Qualification	-.09(.09)	.99	-.09(.09)	-1.02	-.08(.08)	-.93	.03(.09)	-.31	-.03(.09)	-.97	-.02(.04)	.44
Experience	-.04(.10)	-.43	-.05(.09)	-.57	-.03(.09)	-.03	.06(.10)	-.60	-.07(.10)	-.73	-.04(.18)	-.57
JTS	.32(.10)	-3.07**	-.31(.10)	-3.04**	-.32(.10)	-3.21**	.21(.11)	-1.86	-.20(.11)	-1.85	-.05(.09)	-.63
JTO	-.07(.37)	-.19	-.05(.36)	-.01	-.31(.13)	-.88	.06(.40)	.17	.15(.39)	.38	.13(.31)	.42
Level 1												
Independent Variable												
Abusive Supervision (AS)			.67(.02)	24.30***	.94(.07)	12.20***			.59(21.1)	21.10***	.27(.03)	8.82***
Mediator												
Negative Moods											.48(.02)	17.90***
Moderator												
Recovery Experiences (RE)			-.10(.04)	-2.15**	.19(.09)	2.00*			-.07(07)	-1.54	-.02(.03)	-.60
Two-Way Interaction Term												
AS x RE					-.10(.04)	-2.49**						
PSEUDO-R2			.68		.45				.66		.53	
Deviance	3.83.47		2589.33		2350.86		3056.74		2655.54		2328.54	

Notes: *N* = 115 direct reports and 1150 daily ratings; JTS = Tenure with supervisor; JTO = Tenure with organization; AS = Abusive supervision; RE = Recovery experiences; AS x RE = Two-way interaction term of abusive supervision and recovery experiences; $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; and $^{***}p < .001$.

Table 4

Results of direct, indirect, and total effects of abusive supervision on overeating behavior via negative mood

Predictor	Effect	LLCI	ULCI
Direct effect			
Abusive supervision on subordinate overeating behavior	0.17***	0.12	0.23
Indirect effect			
Abusive supervision on subordinate overeating behavior via subordinate negative mood	0.32**	0.27	0.38
Total effect			
Abusive supervision on subordinate overeating behavior via subordinate negative mood	0.50***	0.44	0.55

Notes: N = 115 direct reports and 1150 daily ratings; LLCI = Lower level of the 95% confidence interval; ULCI = Upper level of 95% confidence interval; $^{**}p < .01$; and $^{***}p < .001$

Table 5

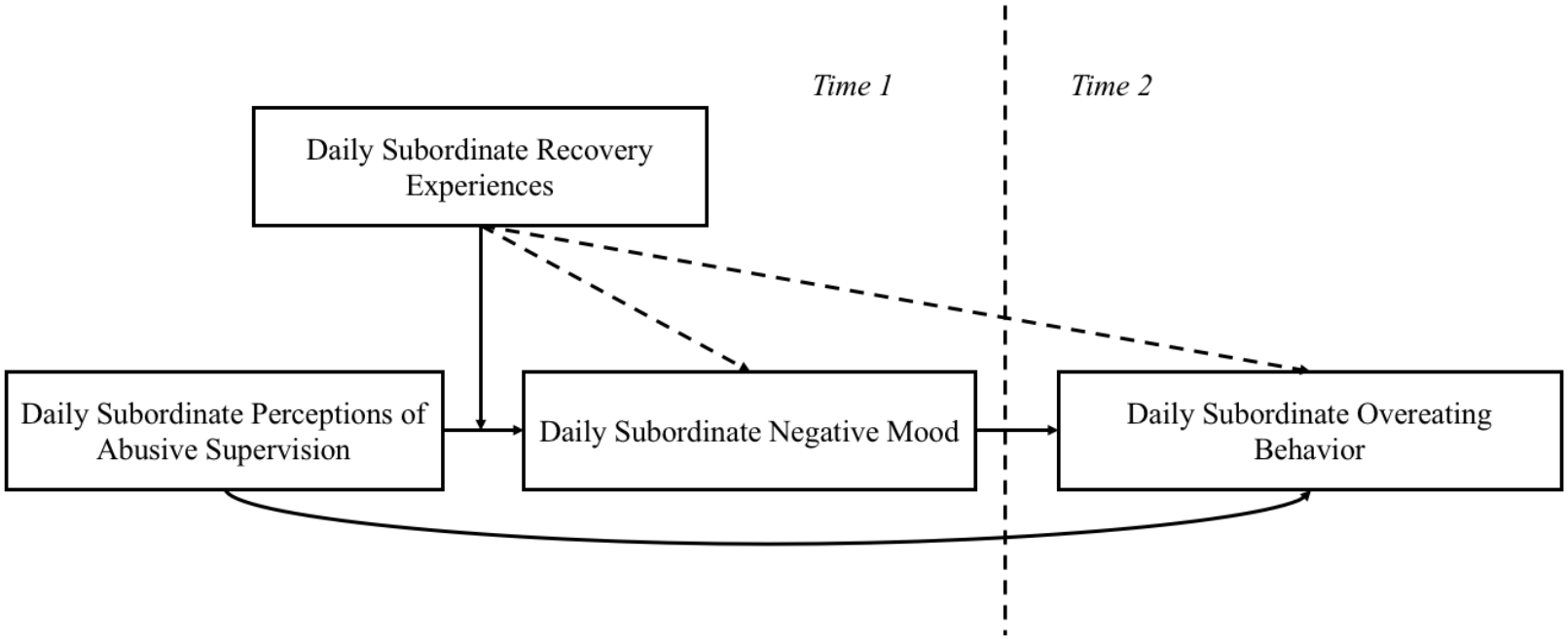
Results of conditional effects of abusive supervision on overeating behavior via negative mood at values of subordinate recovery experiences

Predictor	Recovery Experiences	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Conditional direct effects					
Abusive supervision on subordinate overeating behavior	*-1 SD*	0.21	0.04	0.14	0.28
Abusive supervision on subordinate overeating behavior	*Mean*	0.20	0.03	0.15	0.26
Abusive supervision on subordinate overeating behavior	*+1 SD*	0.19	0.03	0.13	0.26
Conditional indirect effects					
Abusive supervision on subordinate overeating behavior via subordinate negative mood	*-1 SD*	0.37	0.03	0.31	0.43
Abusive supervision on subordinate overeating behavior via subordinate negative mood	*Mean*	0.29	0.02	0.25	0.34
Abusive supervision on subordinate overeating behavior via subordinate negative mood	*+1 SD*	0.22	0.02	0.17	0.27

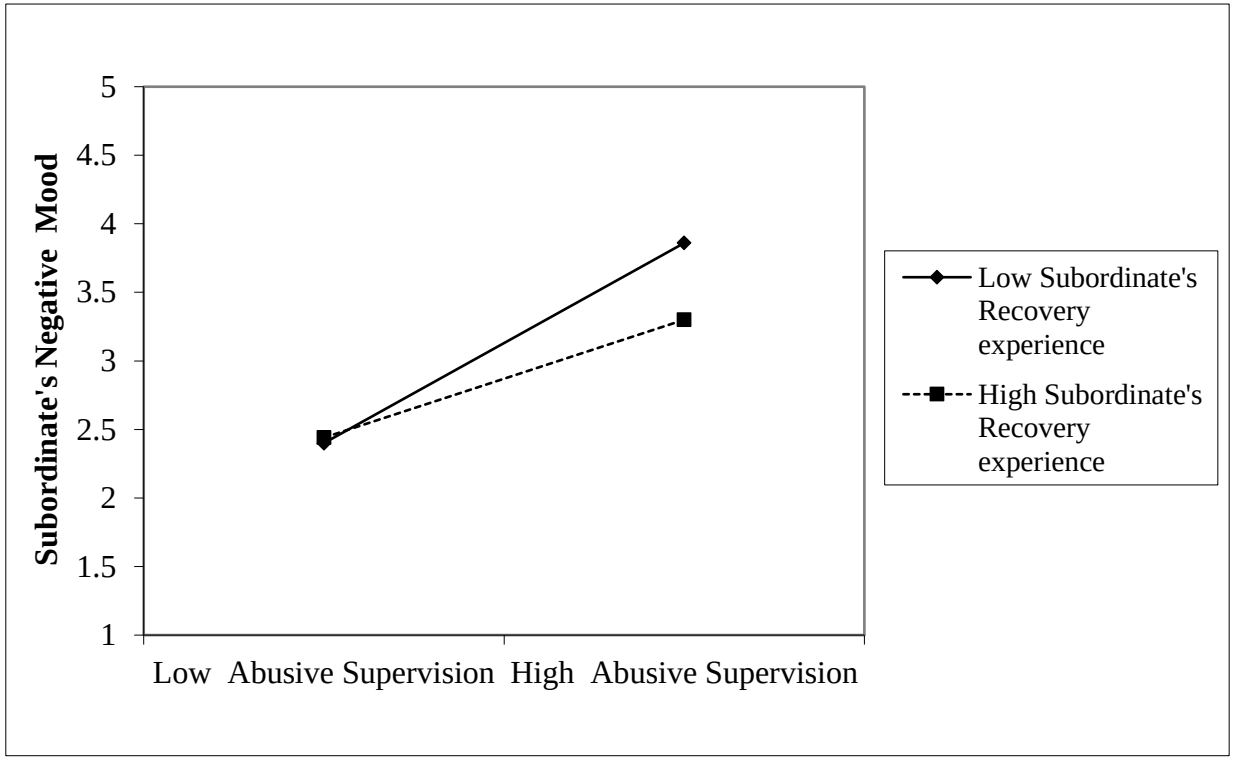
Notes: *N* = 115 direct reports and 1150 daily ratings; LLCI = Lower level of the 95% confidence interval; ULCI = Upper level of 95% confidence interval.

Figure 1

A proposed moderated mediation model



Notes: Solid lines depict the daily hypothesized relationships and dashed lines indicate the relationships that are not hypothesized.

Figure 2

An interaction of abusive supervision and subordinate recovery experiences on subordinate negative mood