EXTENSION OF SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY FOR UNDERSTANDING THE PERCEPTION TOWARDS ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR: A CASE OF BANKING SECTOR IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Abusive supervision has become a problematic issue across the world, which adversely affects employees’ productivity, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. The incidents of abusive supervision are more severe in service industry including the banking sector. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the effects of work-family conflict, supervisors’ narcissism, job demand and subordinates neuroticism on abusive supervision. The conceptual framework for the study is based on past literature, Social Learning Theory and Stress and Strain Model. The questionnaire was adapted from the earlier developed scales and measures. The questionnaire was administered to the bank employees of Karachi, Pakistan. The valid sample size for this study was 387 with a response rate of 92%, selected non-randomly. Since the scales and measures were developed in other countries, therefore their reliability and validity were re-ascertained. Finally, the developed model was tested through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The study found that the work family conflict, job demand and supervisor’s narcissism have a significant association with abusive supervision. Whereas subordinates’ neuroticism has an insignificant effect on abusive supervision. This study was restricted to the banking sector of Karachi. Future studies may explore the effects of antecedents in other sectors. Effects of antecedents vary by demographic, which other studies may examine. Future studies may also measure the consequences of abusive supervision and mediating roles of gossip, emotional exhaustion, emotional labor and burnout.

Keywords: Abusive Supervision, Work-Family Conflict, Job Demand, Supervisors’ Narcissism, Subordinates’ Neuroticism.

JEL Classification: G210

Introduction

Many employees at workplace perceive that they are victim of abusive and deviant behaviors,
which is also known as the darker side of leadership (Tepper, 2007; Tepper, Simon, & Park, 2017). Tepper (2000) coined the term abusive supervision. It refers to subordinates’ perception about their supervisors hostile (verbal & nonverbal) behaviors (Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhave, & Christian, 2015). Verbal abuse is inclusive of “forcefully criticizing, insulting, or denouncing another person” (Tepper, 2007), in a hostile tone. Verbal abuse negatively affects victim of abusive behavior (Tepper, Simon, & Park, 2017). On the contrary in non verbal abuse, supervisors belittle others through gestures or body language which is inclusive of “rolling eyes, smirking, whispering, ignoring or violating personal space” (Tepper, Simon, & Park, 2017).

Abusive supervision is negatively associated with employees’ performance, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction (Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007). Past studies have documented that abusive supervision positively effects employees’ turnover, absenteeism rates, dysfunctional resistance, organizational conflicts, and deviant behaviors (Henle & Gross, 2014; Vogel et al., 2015).

Earlier studies have examined the effects of abusive supervision on outcome performance, fallout effects outside organizations, and mediating roles of abusive supervision on organizational performance related constructs. Past studies have also measured its effects on organizational citizenship behavior (Rafferty & Restubog, 2011), job performance (Shao, Li, Mawritz, & Bagger, 2015), employees’ creativity (Tepper et al., 2017), employees’ turnover (Palanski, Avey, & Jiraporn, 2014). Studies on fall out effects (outside organizations) have documented that abusive supervision positively influences work-life-family conflict (Demskey, Ellis, & Fritz, 2014), employees wellbeing (Wu & Cao, 2015), condition of health (Che, Zhou, Kessler, & Spector, 2017), and family satisfaction (Wu & Cao, 2015). Studies have also found ingratiating and surface acting moderate abusive supervision and its consequences. It has also been documented that job mobility (Tepper, 2000), the meaning of work (Harris, Kacmar, & Zivnuska, 2007), the norm of reciprocity (Hooibler & Brass, 2006), and organization based self-esteem (Ferris, Brown, & Heller, 2009) moderate abusive supervision and its outcomes.

The literature review suggest that more studies are available on the consequences of abusive supervision in comparison to antecedents towards abusive supervision (Park, 2012; Tepper et al., 2017; Zhang & Bednall, 2016). In view of this gap, the study has extended social learning theory and stress-strain model to measure the effect of work-family conflict, job demand, supervisor’s narcissism and subordinates’ neuroticism on abusive supervision.

According to Social Learning Theory supervisors’ aggressive behaviors depend on their personal traits and work-related stressors. Therefore, the developed conceptual framework has derived supervisors’ narcissism and subordinates neuroticism (Park, 2012) from social learning theory. On the other hand, stress and strain model suggests that the outcomes of stress are work-family conflict and job demand. Therefore, the developed conceptual framework has derived these variables from stress strain model.
Based on social learning theory and stress strain model and literature support discussed in the following sections a conceptual framework has been developed which is presented in figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

**Work-Family Conflict and Abusive Supervision**

Factors related to workplace and non-workplace effects employees’ attitudes and behaviors (Che et al., 2017). Family work conflict arises when individuals get exhausted due to high work-demands (resource drain). Consequently, it leads to depletion of resources for families. These factors stimulate abusive behavior (Liang, Liang, & Sun, 2016). Past studies on work-family conflict and abusive supervision found that work family conflict promotes distress and anxiety due to which employees/supervisors adopt obnoxious, insulting and offensive behaviors towards others/subordinates (Che et al., 2017; Wu & Cao, 2015). Barn, et al. (2015) argue that when individuals are unable to recover from stress and negative effects of work, it affects their self-control mechanism and results in abusive behavior. Contrarily Park (2012) found that work-family conflict is a weaker predictor of abusive supervision as compared to supervisors’ narcissism, subordinates’ neuroticism and boss abusive behavior (Park, 2012).
Supervisors/employees at the workplace have to deal with deadlines. Due to excessive workload, and other work’s demands they have lesser resources including time, attention and energy. This results in accumulated stress, frustrations and fatigues, which are transmitted to their family members and subordinates/employees in the form of deviant and aggressive behaviors (Hambrick, Finkelstein, & Mooney, 2005).

Studies on work family conflict suggest that deviant behaviors, strain and time based conflicts promote abusive supervision. Time-based conflicts arise when individuals spend too much time at the workplace and lesser at home with their families. Strain and behavior conflicts arise when individuals transmit families related stresses, frustrations and fatigues to the workplace and vice versa (Dollard & McTernan, 2011). All these factors individually and collectively promote abusive supervision. 

H1: Work-family conflict has a positive effect on abusive supervision.

Job Demand and Abusive Supervision

According to Schaufeli (2004), job demand is psychological, social or physical stress on employees/supervisors, which have specific psychological or physical cost. High job demand not only put excessive stress on employees and supervisors, but it leads to abusive and deviant behaviors (Bakker, Demerouti, & Dollard, 2008; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Individuals have a built-in self-control mechanism (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000), which controls their impulsive and negative behaviors. Job demand significantly effects this mechanism. Supervisors with low self-control are more offensive and abusive to others as compared to those who have a high self-control mechanism (Baumeister, Vohs, Nathan DeWall, & Zhang, 2007).

Job demand effects individuals physically and psychologically. The latter is about task complexity, and role ambiguity (DeWall, Baumeister, Chester, & Bushman, 2016). Studies have concluded that both physical and psychological stress individually, and as a whole lead to mental strain, and burnout due to which individuals become more abusive and aggressive (Frieder, Hochwarter, & DeOrtentiis, 2015; Mawritz, Folger, & Latham, 2014). Thus individuals and supervisors relieve their job-induced stress to others by bullying and adopting insulting and abusive behaviors. This behavior is generally directed towards those employees who are performing poorly and below expectation (Tepper et al., 2017).

H2: Job demand has a positive effect on abusive supervision.

Supervisors’ Narcissism and Abusive Supervision

Individuals with a high level of narcissism have a higher tendency to love themselves and perceive that they are superior to others (Baumeister, 2002). They are highly energetic, extrovert, and have high self-esteem. They, therefore, expect others to have zeal of self-accomplishment and
success (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006). Being charismatic by nature they in the short-term may increase motivation and performance level of their subordinates but in the long run their attitudes and behaviors may adversely affect the performance and commitment of their subordinates (Baumeister, 2002). Narcissists are highly focused on achieving their goals due to which they ignore the collective interest of organizations and others (Judge et al., 2006; Maynard, Brondolo, Connelly, & Sauer, 2015).

Narcissists, besides being abusive and uncooperative, are high achievers. Therefore, they are suitable for those jobs that require individual talents and abilities (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Judge et al. (2006) have documented a positive association between narcissism and abusiveness. The study concluded that on receiving negative feedback, narcissist become more abusive and hostile to others. Similarly, others have also documented that narcissists are not receptive to others’ feedbacks and suggestions. It has been found that many narcissists make sexual advancement towards female employees. When female employees do not reciprocate to the sexual advancements of narcissists, they become personal and adopt deviant behavior (Maynard et al., 2015; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001).

Narcissists are although are generally highly productive but due to their retaliating, bullying and abusive behavior they at times become counterproductive. Additionally, due to their short temper which they show very frequently hurts others feelings (Judge et al., 2006). They very often misguide and undermine others. They perceive that undermining others will give them more projection (Maynard et al., 2015).

H3: Supervisors’ narcissism has a positive effect on abusive supervision.

**Subordinates’ Neuroticism and Abusive Supervision**

Neuroticism refers “to a dispositional tendency towards negative emotionality such that individuals high in neuroticism show worrying and insecure, self-conscious, and temperamental behaviors” (Park, 2012). Neuroticism from stress-strain perspective is considered as an interpersonal conflict between stress and psychological strain (Tepper, 2007). Thus individuals with a high level of neuroticism generally take stressful incidents more severely as compared to others (Webster, Brough, & Daly, 2016).

Neuroticism has two mechanisms which are perception mechanism and stressor creating mechanism. They both are closely associated with abusive supervision (Park, 2012). In the case of perception mechanism, individuals appraise stressful events based on their levels of neuroticism (Roberton, Daffern, & Bucks, 2012). Neurotic employees have tendency to compare their perceived stress with others. This comparison aggravates their suffering and stress level. All individuals have different threshold levels of neuroticism (Webster et al., 2016). Highly neurotic individuals take stressful events more seriously. They report these events more often as compared to others. Thus they are also more vulnerable to conflicts (Baumeister, 2002). Additionally, they recall past stressful events frequently, which further increase their depression level (Park, 2012).
A study on abusive supervision found that negative affectivity (feelings & emotions) is highly associated with self-perception of abuse (Tepper, Duffy, & Shaw, 2001). Others in this context have concluded that neuroticism is primary in nature, therefore, is more stable. While negative affectivity (Feelings & emotions) is secondary in nature and is more closely associated with mood state (Bamberger & Bacharach, 2006). Perception mechanism of neuroticism is positively associated with abusive supervision. Individuals with high perception mechanism feel the effect of abusive supervision and stressful events more severely (Tepper, 2007). The second mechanism of neuroticism is stressor creation mechanism which effects individuals’ perception differently than perception mechanism discussed above. In the case of stressor creation mechanism individuals who are victims of abusive behavior reacts more negatively as compared to others (McLaughlin, Hatzenbuehler, & Hilt, 2009).

Studies on children found that children in stress creation mechanism of neuroticism feel more insecure, are highly anxious, and have low self-confidence (Tam & Zhang, 2012). In the context of the workplace, studies found that individuals who are emotionally unstable will face more bullying from others including supervisors (Weaver, 2000). Victims of abusive supervision are generally less out-spoken and less extravagant, and they portray themselves as submissive of provocative victims. Since they take bullying and abuses without retardation, it encourages others and supervisors to be more abusive to them (McLaughlin et al., 2009). Thus both perception creation and stressor creation mechanisms of neuroticism discussed above positively influence abusive supervision.

H4: Subordinates’ Neuroticism has a positive effect on abusive supervision.

Methodology

Sample

The target population for this study is employees working in the banking sector of Karachi. The sample size for this study is 387 with a non-response rate of 15%. The authors personally visited the selected local banks and collected the data. Due to non-availability of sample frame, we have used non-random sampling technique. The targeted respondents were middle and upper-level management. Of the total respondents 26% were of AVP level, 32%, were of manager level, and 42% were of assistant manager level. Male respondents were 75%, and females were 35%. In terms of marital status, 55% were married, and 45% were single. About 35% of respondents had master degrees, 55% had a bachelor degree, and the rest 15% had at least intermediate level of education.

Variables and Instruments

Abusive Supervision Scale

Abusive supervision refers to the extent to which workers in the organization feel that their bosses are engaged in forceful behavior with them, excluding physical violence (Tepper, 2000). This
study has measured employees’ perception of supervisor abusive behavior. The scale used in the study was adapted from the scale and measure developed by Tepper (2000). This part of the questionnaire has five items all based on five points Likert scale. The reported reliability of the scale ranged from 0.80 to 0.89 (Park, 2012; Judge et al., 2006). A high mean score reflects a higher perception towards the supervisor’s abusive supervision.

**Work-Family Conflict Scale**

Family work conflict generally arises when individuals due to high work-demands get exhausted (resource drain) and they do not have sufficient time for their families. These factors thus play a significant role in promoting abusive supervision (Liang, Liang, & Sun, 2016). This study has measured employees’ perception towards work-family conflict. The scale used in the study was adapted from the scale and measure developed by Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian (1996). This part of the questionnaire has five items all based on five points Likert scale. The reported reliability of the scale ranged from 0.75 to 0.87 (Park, 2012; Hambrick, Finkelstein, & Mooney, 2005). A high mean score reflects a higher perception towards work-family conflict.

**Job Demand Scale**

According to Schaufeli (2004), job demand is psychological, social or physical stress on employees/supervisors which have specific psychological or physical costs. High job demand not only put excessive stress on employees/supervisors, but it leads to abusive and deviant behaviors (Bakker, Demerouti, & Dollard, 2008; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This study has measured employees’ perception towards job demand. The scale used in the study was adapted from the scales and measures developed by Karasek Jr (1979). This part of the questionnaire has five items all based on five points Likert scale. The reported reliability of the scale ranged from 0.85 to 0.90 (Schaufeli, 2004; Karasek Jr, 1979). A high mean score reflects a higher perception towards job demand.

**Supervisor’s Narcissism Scale**

Narcissist individuals are highly energetic, extrovert, have high self-esteem, and perceive themselves as superior to others. Consequently, they have a high expectation from others (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006). This study has measured employees’ perception of their supervisor’s narcissist behavior from the scales and measures developed by Ames, Rose, & Anderson (2006). Its reported reliability in earlier studies ranged from 0.78 to 0.86 (Brightman, 1984; Meier & Semmer, 2013). A high mean score reflects a higher perception towards the supervisor’s narcissism.
Subordinate Neuroticism

Neuroticism refers “to a dispositional tendency toward negative emotionality such that individuals high in neuroticism show worrying and insecure, self-conscious, and temperamental behaviors” (Park, 2012). This study has measured employees’ perception of their subordinates’ neurotic behavior from the scales and measures developed by Park (2012). Its reported reliability in earlier studies ranged from 0.75 to 86 (Tepper, Duffy, & Shaw, 2001; De Hoogh, & Den Hartog, 2009).

Structure of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire has two sections. Section one is related to demographics, and it is based on a nominal scale. Section two has five constructs, and each construct has five items adapted from the scale developed from earlier studies. It is based on five Point Likert Scale, one showing a low level of agreement and five showing a high level of agreement. Since English is the medium of communication in Pakistan’s corporate world and public sector, therefore, the questionnaire was developed and administered in the English language.

Data Analysis

Initially, the shape of the distribution, reliability, and validity of the adapted instruments were assessed on the present data set. Subsequently, multi-stage SEM analysis was used for meeting the objectives. SEM analysis was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, CFA for all the constructs was conducted separately. In the second stage, CFA for hypothesized models was carried out. The fit indices used for SEM in this study are presented in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit Indices</th>
<th>χ²</th>
<th>χ²/df</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>GFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>&lt; 5.0</td>
<td>&gt; 0.9</td>
<td>&gt; 0.9</td>
<td>&gt; 0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results and Analysis

Descriptive and Reliability Analysis

Descriptive analysis was carried out to measure the consistency (through Cronbach’s Alpha) and univariate normality of the adapted constructs. Results are summarized in Table 2 below.
Table 2

**Reliability, Skewness and Kurtosis Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abusive Supervision</td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>-0.889</td>
<td>-0.580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Family Conflict</td>
<td>0.883</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>-0.870</td>
<td>-0.470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Demand</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-0.461</td>
<td>-0.832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors’ Narcissism</td>
<td>0.741</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>-0.149</td>
<td>-0.913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinates’ Neuroticism</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>-0.491</td>
<td>0.636</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above analysis shows that the adapted constructs have acceptable internal consistencies as all the Cronbach’s alpha values are greater than 0.70 (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2014). Additionally, all Skewness and Kurtosis values ranged between ± 1.5, indicating that adopted constructs fulfill the requirements of univariate normality (Looney, 1995).

**Bi-variate Correlation**

Correlations analysis was used to measure the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the constructs. The results below are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3

**Correlations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>ABS</th>
<th>WFC</th>
<th>JD</th>
<th>SNRC</th>
<th>SNTM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abusive Supervision</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Family Conflict</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Demand</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors’ Narcissism</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinates’ Neuroticism</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show that each pair of correlation ranges between (r=0.53 to r= 0.75). Since each pair of correlation ranged between 0.60 to 0.90 therefore, it is concluded all the adapted constructs are unique and distinct (Sekaran, 1999).

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

The SEM analysis adopted in this study is based on multi-stage analyses. Therefore, initially, CFA of all the constructs was carried out separately, and subsequently CFA of the hypothesized model.
Results relating to CFA of adapted constructs are presented in Table 4, below.

Table 4  
CFA of Adapted Constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$\chi^2$/df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abusive Supervision</td>
<td>31.618</td>
<td>3.104</td>
<td>.960</td>
<td>.962</td>
<td>.991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work family Conflict</td>
<td>6.462</td>
<td>3.231</td>
<td>.991</td>
<td>.958</td>
<td>.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Demand</td>
<td>15.509</td>
<td>7.754</td>
<td>.979</td>
<td>.997</td>
<td>.974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors' Narcissism</td>
<td>31.618</td>
<td>15.809</td>
<td>.960</td>
<td>.998</td>
<td>.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinates' Neuroticism</td>
<td>12.144</td>
<td>6.072</td>
<td>.985</td>
<td>.923</td>
<td>.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>&lt; 5.0</td>
<td>&gt; .90</td>
<td>&gt; 0.9</td>
<td>&gt; 0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above CFA analyses, each construct was treated as a unique model and was tested separated with all the indicator variables in each variable. Thus each model above had one latent variable and five indicator variables. The results show that most of the fit indices are with the prescribed limits, except $\chi^2$/df values of job demand, supervisor’s narcissism, and subordinates’ neuroticism, which came within the limit when the overall model was tested.

Hypothesized Model

The hypotheses model fitted very well, and all the indices are within the prescribed criteria. The model is depicted in Figure 2 and Table 5 below.

Table 5  
CFA of Hypothesized Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$\chi^2$/df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>-CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesised Model</td>
<td>144.440</td>
<td>2.534</td>
<td>.964</td>
<td>.961</td>
<td>.964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>&lt; 5.0</td>
<td>&gt; .95</td>
<td>&gt; 0.9</td>
<td>&gt; 0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesized Results

Of the four hypotheses, three were accepted, and one was rejected. The results derived from SEM output is presented in Table 7 below.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesized Results</th>
<th>SRW</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>C.R.</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abusive Supervision &lt;--- Work_Fam_Conflict</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>2.503</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abusive Supervision &lt;--- Job Demand</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>2.532</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abusive Supervision &lt;--- Narcissism</td>
<td>.434</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>4.311</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abusive Supervision &lt;--- Neuroticism</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.255</td>
<td>.799</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Of the four hypotheses, three were accepted, and one was rejected. The findings along with their relevance to earlier studies are discussed in the following sections.
Work-Family Conflict and Abusive Supervision

The study found work-family conflict has a positive effect on abusive supervision (refer to Table 7). Employees are affected by both workplace and non-workplace factors (Che et al., 2017). Work family conflict generally occurs when the demand for both work and family are high which consequently results in a resource drain (Liang et al., 2016). This conflict plays a vital role in stimulating abusive behavior (Che et al., 2017). Studies while validating the effect of work-family conflict and abusive supervision found that this conflict leads to distress and anxiety in supervisors. As a result, they adopt obnoxious, insulting and offensive behavior towards their subordinates (Che et al., 2017; Wu & Cao, 2015). Studies while validating the effects of work-life-family on abusive supervision concluded that work-family conflicts arise due to behaviors, strain and time-based conflicts. (Dollard & McTernan, 2011).

Job Demand and Abusive Supervision

The study found job demand has a positive and significant effect on abusive supervision (refer to Table 7). High job demands exert excessive pressure and burden on employees which makes their behavior hostile towards other employees (Bakker et al., 2008; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Job demand has physical and psychological aspects. The former is quantifiable including workload and high work pace. The latter is related to task complexity, and role ambiguity (DeWall et al., 2016). Studies have found that both physical and psychological aspects individually, and collectively leads to mental strain and burnout which subsequently leads towards abusive and aggressive behaviors (Frieder et al., 2015; Mawritz et al., 2014).

Supervisors’ Narcissism and Abusive Supervision

The study found Supervisors’ narcissism has a positive and significant effect on abusive supervision (refer to Table 7). Narcissist people are energetic, extrovert and have high self-esteem. Consequently, they have high expectation from others in the context of self-accomplishment and success (Judge et al., 2006). Being charismatic they in the short term can increase the motivation and performance of their subordinates, but in the long run, their attitude and behaviors adversely affect their performance and commitment (Baumeister, 2002). Narcissists or so much pre-occupied in pursuance of their own goals that they ignore the collective interest of organizations and others (Judge et al., 2006; Maynard et al., 2015). Studies have found a positive association between narcissism and abusiveness and have concluded that narcissists have a high self-perception, and when they receive negative feedback from others, it hurts their egos and become abusive and hostile to them (Judge et al., 2006).
Subordinates’ Neuroticism and Abusive Supervision

The study found that subordinate’s neuroticism has an insignificant effect on abusive supervision (refer to Table 7). This finding is inconsistent with earlier studies. Studies have found that two mechanisms of neuroticism that are perception mechanism and stressor creating mechanism are closely associated with abusive supervision (Park, 2012). Highly neurotic individuals feel the effects of the stressful situation more severely as compared to others due to which they are more vulnerable to conflicts (Espejo et al., 2011). Additionally, they recall those even more often and get depressed frequently (Park, 2012). Negative affectivity (feelings and emotions) is highly associated with the perception of abuse. (Tepper et al., 2001). Others in this context are of the opinion that neuroticism being primary is more stable, while negative affectivity (Feelings and emotions) is secondary and is associated to mood state (Bamberger & Bacharach, 2006). Studies have also concluded that individuals who are emotionally unstable, or highly neurotic face more bullying from others including supervisors (Weaver, 2000). Victims of abusive supervision are generally less outspoken and less extravagant, and they portray themselves as submissive of provocative victims. Therefore it encourages others and supervisors to be more abusive towards them (McLaughlin et al., 2009).

Conclusion

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the Theory of social learning and Stress-Strain Model, which adequately explained the effects of antecedents on abusive supervision. Job demand and work-family conflict are based on stress strain model and have significant effect on abusive supervision. Reasons for this are job complexity and role ambiguity. The general practice across the world is to delegate the work who take initiatives. If organizations have cleared noncomplex jobs, and lesser role ambiguity it will not result in resource drain. Therefore, employees will take minor strain and will decrease the effect of abusive supervision. Narcissism and neuroticism in this study are based on social learning theory. Narcissism has a significant effect on abusive supervision whereas neuroticism has an insignificant effect. Both personal traits could be improved through continuous counseling. The contribution of this study is that the social learning theory and stress strain model have assimilated and helped in understanding the effect of antecedents towards abusive supervision.

Limitation and Future Research

This study was restricted to the banking sector of Karachi. Future studies could measure the effects of antecedents in other sectors as well. Effects of antecedents vary by demographic, which could also be explored in future studies. This study was quantitative, adopting mixed methodology will bring more insight into the issue. This study was restricted to antecedents of abusive supervision. Future studies incorporate consequences such as surface acting, employee cynicism, emotional exhaustion, burnout, gossip etc. This study has not incorporated the mediating roles of tendency to
gossip, emotional labor and burnout in the conceptual framework which in future studies may be incorporated.

References


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