

THE ANTECEDENTS OF ABUSIVE SUPERVISION: EVIDENCE FROM GARMENT FACTORIES IN SRI LANKA

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Within organizations, leaders often exercise significant power and influence over many aspects of their employees' work lives. While many leaders successfully provide substantial support to their employees, others fail to meet this standard for various reasons. The corrupt nature of power can lead some leaders to exploit and mistreat their followers, with increasing evidence of destructive leadership. Despite numerous studies on the negative consequences of leadership, the reasons behind abusive supervision remain poorly understood. This raises the question: why do supervisors abuse their subordinates? The nature of garment factories and hierarchical structures enable supervisors to exert dominance over vulnerable workers, often women or marginalized groups, who fear job loss and have limited employment alternatives. Hence, this study aimed to examine the antecedents of abusive supervision. Supervisor-related antecedents, including downward envy and psychological entitlement, and subordinate-related antecedents, such as organizational deviance and employee performance, were considered independent variables, with abusive supervision as the dependent variable. Additionally, the study examined the moderating effect of the supervisor's self-control on the relationship between supervisor-related antecedents and abusive supervision. The research primarily targeted employees working in garment factories across Sri Lanka, focusing on a population of 40,000 workers. The garments industry plays a significant role in the country's economy and employs a substantial portion of the workforce. Using convenience sampling, the study selected 224 respondents from this population. Primary data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire distributed between December 2023 and March 2024. By incorporating the dyad method, this research delved into the interpersonal aspects of abusive supervision, focusing on the dynamics between supervisors and their subordinates. The findings of the study reveal a significant, weak positive relationship between variables such as downward envy, psychological entitlement, organizational deviance, employee performance, and abusive supervision. Regression analysis indicates that downward envy, psychological entitlement, and organizational deviance significantly affect abusive supervision. Additionally, employee performance positively affects abusive supervision. Moreover, the results show that the supervisor's self-control does not

significantly moderate the relationship between supervisor-related antecedents and abusive supervision. Furthermore, the investigation into the moderating role of supervisor self-control adds a unique understanding of how individual differences among supervisors can influence the expression of the corrupt nature of power. Organizations should consider implementing training programs for supervisors that focus on emotional intelligence and self-regulation to mitigate the effects of downward jealousy and psychological entitlement associated with abusive supervision.

Keywords: Abusive supervision, Downward envy, Employee performance, Organizational deviance, Psychological entitlement, Supervisor's self-control