

ABUSIVE SUPERVISION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR: MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL OF BURNOUT AND ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY

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Abstract

Using the arguments of conservation of resources theory and social identity theory, this study investigates the impact of abusive supervision on organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) through the mediating effect of burnout. Simultaneously, the moderator effect of organizational identity on the relationship between abusive supervision and burnout is examined. The intention here is to examine whether organizational identity would increase the negative effect of abusive supervision on burnout and to test the underlying mechanism by which abusive supervision affects OCB, with the most affected parties. According to this, we aim to contribute to the literature on the potential effects of organizational identity on coping with workplace stressors. Also, this study aims to be contributive in terms of filling the gap in the existing literature due to the limited number of studies examining how and by which mechanisms abusive supervision affects OCB. Using the data collected from 256 full-time employees from hi-tech, banking and manufacturing industries, it is found that burnout fully mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and OCB. Moreover, it is seen that the negative effect of abusive supervision is stronger for employees with higher organizational identification, suggesting that suffering from abusive supervision can be more overwhelming for employees who see their organization as a vital aspect of their identity. According to the study findings, both theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Implications for Central European audience: The present research fills the gaps in the literature by revealing the “black box” that underlies the association between abusive supervision and OCB. Victims of abusive supervision may feel burnt out and possess fewer resources to engage in OCB. To eliminate the negative results of abusive supervision and increase positive work outcomes, organizations should emphasize delivering a code of conduct and organizational culture that stresses proper behaviours within the work environment. Implementing a zero-tolerance to deviant behaviour policy may also improve and generate a positive and deviant behaviour-free work environment.

Keywords: abusive supervision; burnout; organizational citizenship behaviour; organizational identity

JEL Classification: J24, M12

Introduction

First introduced by *Tepper (2000)*, abusive supervision is defined as “subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours, excluding physical contact” (*Tepper, 2000, p. 178*). Since *Tepper’s* seminal research, abusive supervision has received significant attention from scholars, and numerous studies have investigated the adverse impacts of abusive supervision on employees and organizations (for a review, see *Tepper et al., 2017*). Among other deviant workplace behaviours, abusive supervision is associated with most workplace mistreatment incidents (*Arshad et al., 2021*). Abusive supervision involves a wide array of examples, such as not sharing information with employees, consistently criticizing and scapegoating subordinates, taking credit for their achievements, ignoring them, mocking and humiliating subordinates, and invading their privacy (*Tepper, 2007; Tepper et al., 2017*). Compared to other types of deviant workplace behaviours, abusive supervision has certain significant characteristics that make it distinctive from deviant leader behaviour. Firstly, abusive supervision is a subjective construct, depending on the perceptions of the targets (*Tepper et al., 2007*). Secondly, instead of an occasional mistreatment incident, abusive supervision is based on employees’ strong perception that their manager’s intimidating behaviour is deliberate and persistent (*Tepper et al., 2007*).

In 2007, *Tepper et al.* argued that abusive supervision affects almost 14 per cent of employees and costs billions of dollars per year to US firms. In addition to its financial costs, abusive supervision leads to numerous adverse consequences for organizations and employees, such as decreased job satisfaction (*Tepper et al., 2007*), organizational commitment (*Zang et al., 2021*), organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (*Zellars et al., 2002*) and job performance, and increased psychological stress, turnover intention (*Özkan, 2022*) and workplace deviance (*Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007*).

While abusive supervision is not a new phenomenon, recent research has emphasized examination of the underlying mechanisms between abusive supervision and work-related outcomes (*Fischer et al., 2021*). This opens up a new area of research to investigate how and through which mechanisms abusive supervision influences employees’ work-related outcomes. Relying on the prior research, this study presents survey-based self-reported data, which are collected from different time periods, and aims to enhance our knowledge about the underlying mechanisms through which abusive supervision may influence OCB. This is a relatively less examined outcome of abusive supervision in terms of the mediating and moderating mechanisms that influence the relationship between these two concepts. To answer this question, relying on the conservation of resources (COR) theory (*Hobfoll, 1989*), burnout is examined as a possible intervening variable in the relationship between abusive supervision and OCB. Another research question in this study is based on understanding who is more affected by abusive supervision. To do so, drawing on social identity theory (*Richter et al., 2006*), we examined organizational identification as a moderator of the mechanism between abusive supervision and burnout to understand on whom abusive supervision might have a greater impact.

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. The first contribution is based on examining the causal mechanism through which abusive supervision may influence OCB. According to *Zhang et al. (2019)*, the existing literature has not reached a consensus as to

why abusive supervision influences OCB and argues that the number of studies examining how and through which mechanisms abusive supervision affects OCB is comparatively limited. The authors also emphasized that it would be beneficial to go beyond studying direct effects and investigate mediators, moderators and boundary conditions of the influence of abusive supervision on OCB. In terms of abusive supervision, previous studies used a tit-for-tat approach (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) as the underlying mechanism between abusive supervision and OCB, arguing that the victims of abusive supervision may retaliate against the instigator or their organization by decreasing their OCB efforts (Rafferty & Restubog, 2011). However, previous studies noted that the tit-for-tat approach might not be applicable to abusive supervision, contrary to the arguments of reciprocity theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), because of the power asymmetry between supervisor and subordinate (Lord, 1998). In particular, retaliation is unlikely to cease the abuse and may even generate more severe hostility on the instigator's part (Wei & Si, 2013). Moreover, Lyu et al. (2016) found that abusive supervision decreases targets' customer-related OCB, which is unrelated to the incident, through decreased work engagement. Hence, relying on the prior studies, it can be argued that targets of abusive supervision may decrease their OCB for several reasons. Therefore, further research is essential and required to enhance our knowledge about the other potential mechanisms through which abusive supervision affects OCB. To address this issue, we employ the conservation of resources (COR) theory to investigate the mediator role of burnout, which refers to a chronic psychological state of resource depletion, in the relationship between abusive supervision and OCB. A fundamental tenet of the COR theory is that individuals seek to enhance and defend their own resources (Hobfoll, 2001). Furthermore, the COR theory suggests that individuals experience anxiety and distress when resources are threatened or lost and when resources are not regained or recovered after significant resource investment (Taylor et al., 2017). Given this reasoning, we use the COR theory to explore how and why abusive supervision influences employees' extra-role behaviour towards customers who are unrelated to the abusive incident. By examining this relationship, we aim to enhance the existing understanding of abusive supervision and the OCB relationship and provide a more complementary picture of the question why targets of abusive supervision show less extra-role behaviour.

The second contribution of this study, noticing the call of Fischer et al. (2021) for a keen focus on using moderators to better grasp the nature of abusive supervision, is based on examining the moderating effect of organizational identification, which seeks to answer the question who is more affected by the adverse consequences of abusive supervision. Relying on social identity theory, organizational identity is conceptualized as a particular form of social identity that refers to how a person identifies himself or herself as a member of a specific organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). When people identify themselves as belonging to an organization, they tend to develop a sense of their values and expectations of their role in the organization (Huang & Lin, 2017). Such identification causes them to place greater psychological demands on their expectations. Previous research has shown that organizational identity interacts with employee perceptions to regulate altruistic and prosocial behaviour (DeConinck, 2011; Huang & Lin, 2017). In other words, organizational identity can strengthen employee responses when confronted with workplace deviations (Evans & Davis, 2014). According to social identity theory, people with higher levels of organizational identity are more sensitive to the social norms of their organizations. More specifically, employees with high organizational identities have a strong desire to be treated fairly and respected to remain

psychologically connected to their organization (Shropshire & Kadlec, 2013; Huang & Lin, 2017). We argue that organizational identification will have a moderator role in this mediated relationship. Specifically, high levels of organizational identification will increase the adverse impact of abusive supervision on burnout, and customer-oriented OCB is lower than when organizational identification is high. Thus, our aim is not only based on proposing and testing the underlying mechanism by which abusive supervision influences OCB but also based on examining who is most affected. Such findings may contribute to the literature about the potential influences of organizational identification in dealing with workplace stressors, such that employees with higher identification levels are more vulnerable to workplace stressors and more likely to suffer a decrease in their positive work outcomes, such as OCB.

1 Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

1.1 Abusive supervision

Studies on deviant workplace behaviour and aggression within the workplace have attracted researchers' interest since the late 1980s (Neall & Tuckey, 2014) and gained significant popularity during the 1990s (Hershcovis, 2011). The studies have yielded numerous constructs, including bullying, mobbing, workplace incivility, social exclusion and abusive supervision. Even though abusive supervision has similarities with other counterproductive workplace behaviours, it has significant characteristics that make it distinctive from other workplace deviant behaviours, which show variation in terms of intensity, intent and frequency (Fischer et al., 2021; Bhattacharjee & Sarkar, 2022). Firstly, according to Tepper's (2000) definition, distinct from other types of negative workplace behaviours, abusive supervision is based on continuous or long-term demonstrations of a supervisor's hostility. In particular, incidental hierarchical abuse is not considered abusive supervision. The continuation of abusive supervision can be attributed not only to the defenceless patience of subordinates but also to the superior's strong place in a two-way relationship (Lyu et al., 2016). Secondly, abusive supervision, unlike workplace aggression, constitutes hostile behaviour that excludes physical contact. Rather, it reflects non-physical hostility, such as emotional neglect or verbal assault. Thirdly, abusive supervision is based on the subjective evaluation of mistreated targets. As a result, subordinates may perceive the same abusive behaviour differently (Lyu et al., 2016). Since its first introduction, abusive supervision and its negative impact on employees and organizations have been progressively examined (see Tepper et al., 2017). Enduring exposure to abusive supervision has a variety of undesirable consequences, including decreased employee engagement and creativity (Arshad et al., 2021), increased retaliation against offenders (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007) and service sabotage (Park & Kim, 2019).

1.2 COR theory and abusive supervision

The COR theory provides an inclusive structure to comprehend the stress process. The COR theory proposes that stress is stimulated by damage to valued resources (Hobfoll, 2001; Whitman et al., 2014). According to the COR theory, individual resources are limited, and individuals try to obtain, keep and conserve their physical, emotional, social and psychological resources to achieve their goals, such as improving individual well-being or work performance, and have the propensity to obviate resource deprivation, particularly in undesirable occurrences (Hobfoll, 2001). The COR theory classifies four types of resources:

objects (shelter or clothing), conditions (status at work), personal characteristics (self-esteem or occupational skills) and energy resources (time or knowledge). If these resources are jeopardized, vanish or are not satisfactorily replenished, people are more likely to experience negative mental conditions, such as increased stress, perceived risk of resource loss, sadness or even hostility (Lyu et al., 2016).

Furthermore, according to the COR theory, social relationships can also be identified as unique resources that can deliver and drain the resources described above (Hobfoll, 2001). Specifically, abusive supervision is a detrimental workplace stressor, and the COR theory can be used to understand how employees react when their supervisor threatens their resources. Employees under abusive supervision may experience an actual loss of valuable resources or find that resources may be lost due to abuse or hostility from their managers (Lee et al., 2018). For instance, insulting behaviours of managers, such as yelling, intimidating employees with unemployment risks and social exclusion, can make subordinates perceive a loss of control and even an actual loss of resources (Lee et al., 2018). Accordingly, abusive supervision, which is a comparatively major form of social hassle and a form of destructive leadership, can drain employees' emotional and mental resources and significantly affect an individual's well-being in the long term as these aggravations accumulate over time (Bormann & Gellatly, 2022). For instance, victims of abusive supervision may perceive the situation as a risk to their well-being or to their social status within the work environment, and they are more likely to experience stress and anxiety (Halbesleben et al., 2014). In the case of abusive supervision, persistent hostile behaviour by managers shows that valuable employee resources can be lost at any moment. To circumvent additional resource deprivation, employees may withdraw from accomplishing their workplace responsibilities because abusive supervision is mentally and emotionally demanding (Holmgreen et al., 2017). Previous studies have provided empirical support for this argument, such that abusive supervision negatively influences personal well-being and is positively related to burnout (Li et al., 2016). In addition, abusive supervision is both cognitively and mentally demanding and stressful, so employees need to invest time and energy to cope with abusive supervision by taking the limited resources devoted to work-related tasks (Arshad et al., 2021).

Using the framework discussed above, in this study, we first propose that abusive supervision is positively associated with burnout. Drawing on this relationship and previous studies related to abusive supervision and OCB, we then propose that burnout plays a mediator role in the relationship between abusive supervision and OCB. Finally, we propose that the strength of organizational identification moderates this relationship.

1.3 Abusive supervision and burnout

The conservation of resources theory provides a beneficial structure to comprehend how employees react to habitual workplace strain. One of these reactions, specifically, is burnout, which is defined as an emotional state of repetitive resource loss without offsetting resource retrieval (Maslach et al., 2001). Traditionally, burnout is conceptualized in terms of three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2001). Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being depleted of one's emotional resources, and it is considered the fundamental individual stress element of the concept. Depersonalization refers to negative, disparaging or extremely

indifferent reactions to other people at work, and it embodies the interpersonal constituent of burnout. Finally, reduced personal accomplishment refers to feelings of decline in one's ability and efficiency and to one's reduced sense of efficacy, representing the self-evaluation component of burnout (Bresó et al., 2007). However, prior empirical findings have shown that emotional exhaustion is the core element of burnout (Johnson & Spector, 2007), and as a result, researchers have commonly concentrated on the emotional exhaustion facet due to the consistency in its relationship with organizational consequences (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Whitman et al., 2014). On the other hand, prior studies have frequently indicated that reduced personal accomplishment is not a core dimension of burnout (Bresó et al., 2007) and even argued that it is the weakest dimension of burnout in terms of its association with other variables (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). In particular, reduced personal accomplishment may be the result of negative emotional burnout rather than being a sub-dimension of burnout (Shirom, 1989). Based on these findings, Demerouti et al. (2001) ruled out reduced personal accomplishment as a dimension of burnout and integrated exhaustion and disengagement as two new dimensions of burnout. Moreover, the authors also extended the conceptualization and measurement of the exhaustion dimension in Maslach's (2001) initial burnout model by involving emotional, physical and mental elements of exhaustion in order to extend the applicability of the concept beyond service industry employees. In this study, we used this conceptualization and measurement of burnout. In particular, exhaustion refers to "intensive physical, cognitive, and affective strain", while disengagement refers to "distancing oneself from work in general, work object, and work content" (Demerouti et al., 2010, p. 210).

Drawing on the COR theory, it is possible to argue that individuals suffering from emotional exhaustion may also experience resource depletion due to prolonged stress and excessive work demands (Whitman et al., 2014). As a result, individuals who are emotionally exhausted may adopt a defensive position to protect or conserve remaining resources (Whitman et al., 2014). Focusing on conserving resources discourages taking advantage of opportunities to acquire resources and initiates a cycle of loss (Hobfoll, 2001). Therefore, disengagement may appear as a self-protective instrument that inhibits employees from draining additional resources (Demerouti et al., 2001).

In particular, the victims of abusive supervision are naturally discouraged, insulted and emotionally exhausted from the abusive confronts (Li et al., 2016). Once the subject's emotional resources are depleted, they are no longer able to keep them at the desired level. Therefore, subjects may experience burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). Additionally, individuals experiencing resource deprivation due to workplace stressors may attempt to conserve and regain resources through a variety of means, including withdrawal from work (Liu et al., 2021). As emphasized before, abusive supervision is a social hassle and the targets of the abuse may not be able to prevent themselves from future reoccurrences (Tepper et al., 2017). According to the workplace stress literature, managers have been emphasized as a significant source of workplace support (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Whitman et al., 2014). Supportive managers may deliver necessary resources and information that simplify job roles and task assignments that best match employee skills with job needs (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009; Whitman et al., 2014). On the contrary, abuse by managers can threaten many of the valuable resources identified in Hobfoll's (2001) extensive list of COR resources, such as "understanding from my employer/boss" and "status/security at work" (Whitman et al., 2014). To cope with such pressures, subordinates can reallocate valuable resources to deal with

abusive behaviour. Targets of abusive supervision may therefore feel that they need to step away or withdraw from their jobs in order to protect and restore their resources. Specifically, prior studies have shown that abusive supervision is associated with withdrawal (Chi & Liang, 2013), absenteeism (Carlson et al., 2012), moral disengagement (Valle et al., 2019) and turnover intention (Saleem et al., 2021).

Drawing on the above arguments, it is possible to argue that abusive supervision may drain the physical, affective and cognitive resources of the targets of the abusive behaviour, leading subordinates to experience burnout. Similarly, prior studies have demonstrated empirical evidence for the positive effect of abusive supervision on burnout (Carlson et al., 2012; Wu et al., 2018). Therefore, in this study, it is proposed to replicate this formerly confirmed relationship and then use this relationship as the basis for our proposed mediation relationships. The first hypothesis is thus formulated as follows:

H1: Abusive supervision will positively affect burnout.

1.4 Abusive supervision and OCB

OCB is defined as “individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1988, p. 4). Higher OCB is desired by organizations due to its contribution to creating a constructive work atmosphere and increased employee performance (Organ et al., 2005). However, employees may respond with lower OCB when exposed to unpleasant workplace encounters. In particular, employees who experience more workplace stressors, such as abusive supervision and workplace bullying, were less likely to engage in OCB (McAllister et al., 2018), according to studies of other workplace mistreatment characteristics (e.g., Lyu et al., 2016). Abusive supervision, which is identified as a workplace stressor (Tepper et al., 2017), may cause psychological distress and emotional strain for employees (Wheeler et al., 2013; Priesemuth et al., 2022). According to prior research, experiencing abusive supervision may negatively influence employees' attitudes towards their organization and their performance (Hobman et al., 2009; Malik et al., 2021). Specifically, Bormann and Gellatly (2022) argue that employees with unfavourable exchange relations are more likely to refuse to exceed minimum performance criteria or go above and beyond their responsibilities. Furthermore, employees confronted with mistreatment from their supervisors in the workplace have been demonstrated to be more hesitant to engage in these extra-role behaviours (Zhang et al., 2019). Taken together, we develop the second hypothesis as follows:

H2: Abusive supervision negatively affects the OCB of employees.

1.5 Mediating role of burnout

While the literature on the negative consequences associated with abusive supervision has been growing, there are still theoretical matters that must be tackled before fully examining and understanding the way abusive supervision influences employee outcomes (Mackey et al., 2017). Specifically, the contemporary abusive supervision literature has been criticized for been limited to investigating the direct influence of abusive supervision instead of examining the underlying mechanism and surrounding effects (Tepper et al., 2017; Mackey et al., 2017). Furthermore, Zhang et al. (2019) noted that even though some studies have concluded that the consequences of abusive supervision are influenced by moderators (for

reviews, see Martinko et al., 2013), more work is needed to identify boundary conditions. As Tepper et al. (2017, p. 134) emphasized, *“Do certain mechanisms have more explanatory power under specific circumstances or with respect to specific outcome variables? Studies that address questions such as these would help scholars and practitioners make better sense of the considerable body of research that has accumulated since 2000”*. The present study notices this call for a keen focus on examining the indirect effects and boundary conditions of other variables to better grasp the underlying nature of abusive supervision.

Individuals often start a new job feeling engaged rather than burned out, according to Maslach et al. (2001). Work that is pleasing and significant might, nevertheless, become unrewarding and insignificant under stressful circumstances. Accordingly, based on the COR theory tenets, current research considers abusive supervision as a resource-draining incidence, and the targets of abusive supervision may experience increased levels of burnout due to the resource-depleting consequences of the abusive behaviour. Once employees' resources are threatened or depleted, consequently, they may look for alternative ways of preserving and returning those resources (Hobfoll, 2001). One of the common ways of getting even or coping with the adverse effects of mistreatment is to decrease extra-role behaviour. Disengaged employees, who are separated from their job, are not fully concentrated on their work, and they are unlikely to see their work worth investing in extra effort and may not have a broad understanding of their duties (Lyu et al., 2016). Therefore, the targets of abusive supervision, with little commitment and enthusiasm for their work, may hesitate to engage in discretionary citizenship behaviour. Furthermore, compared to in-role behaviours, OCB requires more energy and resources due to its discretionary nature (Christian et al., 2011). When an employee has used up resources because of coping with abusive supervision, it is highly likely that the employee may experience tough reactions such as exhaustion. Targets of abusive supervision, who experience burnout, may lack energy and struggle to perform even their in-role obligations, even if they would like to do so (Bormann & Gellatly, 2022). Thus, going the extra mile beyond the boundaries of job responsibilities may be less likely for employees who experience burnout because they lack such immersion and passion for the effective execution of duties resulting from abusive supervision (Gilbert et al., 2010). Similarly, prior studies have supported this argument by claiming that burnout is negatively associated with OCB (Chiu & Tsai, 2006; Liu et al., 2019).

Drawing on the COR theory and the above-mentioned studies, we argue that abusive supervision will increase the level of burnout due to resource depletion, resulting in a lower level of OCB because of the lack of resources.

H3: Burnout mediates the negative relationship between abusive supervision and OCB.

1.6 Moderator role of organizational identity

In addition to the examination of burnout as a mediator in the relationship between abusive supervision and OCB, we also argue that organizational identification will moderate this intervening effect, examining the question who is more affected by the negative consequences of abusive supervision. Organizational identity, derived from the theory of social identity, is understood as a particular form of social identity related to how one defines himself or herself as a member of a particular organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Employees that identify themselves with the organization feel a unity between themselves and the organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Liu et al., 2019). The organizational content of

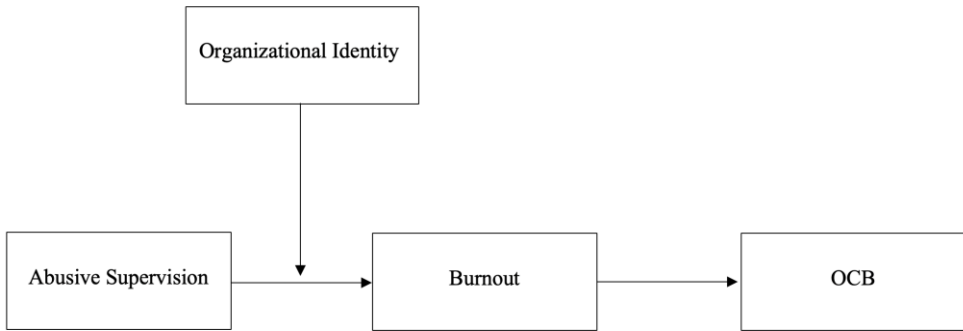
the self-concept becomes prominently central when individuals strongly identify with their organization (Xu et al., 2019). Organizational identification occurs when individuals align their goals with organizational goals, promoting motivation, extra-role behaviours and other favourable work behaviours (Xu et al., 2019). Prior studies have found that organizational identification has a significant impact on workplace stress processes because it functions as a base for obtaining social support from other members (Haslam & Reicher, 2006). According to Xu et al. (2019), prior studies have found support for the buffering effect of organizational identification on responding to workplace stressors (see Yang et al., 2013). For instance, Wegge et al. (2012) performed an experiment with 96 call centre employees to understand how organizational identification can function as a valuable resource in coping with stressors and reported that the negative effects of stressors became stronger for participants with lower organizational identity than people with high organizational identity, arguing that organizational identification functioned as a buffer against stress. Similarly, Decoster et al. (2013) suggested that employees' organizational identification and abusive supervision interact with employees' perceived cohesion with their work group and their tendency to gossip about their leader. The authors found that individuals who experienced higher levels of abusive supervision had greater cohesion and engaged less in gossip when they had higher levels of organizational identification, suggesting that organizational identification acts as a buffer for those facing an abusive supervisor.

While the majority of the studies on organizational identification yield positive work outcomes (He & Brown, 2013), it can trigger employee responsiveness when faced with workplace deviation (Evans & Davis, 2014), and instead of acting as a buffer between mistreatment and work outcomes, organizational identification may magnify the negative consequences of the workplace stressors. According to social identity theory, employees who have higher levels of organizational identification are more conscious of the collective norms of the organization that they identify with (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), which makes the influence of abusive supervision on burnout more salient. Specifically, some scholars argue that organizational identification may strengthen the consequences of stressors as more identified employees invest more and become equated with the organization (Evans & Davis, 2014; Huang & Lin, 2019). In particular, to maintain their emotional affiliation with the organization, employees with greater organizational identification are more eager to be treated and valued fairly (Epitropaki, 2013; Huang & Lin, 2019). Accordingly, when employees encounter mistreatment from their supervisors, which violates the collective norms of the organization that they identify with, their emotional reaction – burnout – might be more severe. In contrast, because employees with a lower level of organizational identity lack the sense of oneness or unity with the organization, they might be less sensitive to mistreatment, causing a reduced impact of abusive supervision on burnout. Therefore, the following hypothesis is generated:

H4: Organizational identification will moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and burnout such that the negative effect of abusive supervision will be stronger when organizational identification is high compared to when it is low.

Figure 1 demonstrates the model developed in the study.

Figure 1 | Research model



Source: authors

2 Method

2.1 Procedure and participants

To minimize common method bias, data were collected through two surveys at two different times (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

We used a cross-sectional design to test the proposed theoretical model. Using personal and official contacts, such as university-industry collaboration offices at the authors' universities, potential respondents in the target organizations were reached by both authors. At Time 1, an e-mail invitation was sent to 1126 employees in the hi-tech, banking and manufacturing industries in Turkey, requesting them to contribute to an anonymous online survey. In the e-mail, we included a cover letter and an informed consent form. Moreover, the following information is also provided to the participants: (1) a statement that emphasizes that participation in the survey is totally voluntary and all the results will be recorded as anonymous, and (2) a statement that the information provided will be used for research purposes only and will be reported in aggregate form only. Out of the total, 566 e-mails were returned as non-deliverable, and 117 participants did not complete the survey, which resulted in 343 possible subjects for the study, yielding a response rate of 30.4%. In the first survey, participants were asked to provide information related to demographics, social desirability, abusive supervision and organizational identification. Furthermore, the participants were requested to provide their e-mail addresses to facilitate the second survey to be sent straight to them by e-mail. In the second wave of the survey, Time 2, four weeks later, participants were asked to evaluate OCB and burnout through an online survey, including their e-mail addresses as well to enable matching. Both questionnaires were combined using the e-mail addresses of the participants to make sure that the same participants' responses were matched. In the second survey, 256 people participated, yielding a 74.6% response rate. The sample consisted of 52% female respondents (133), the average age was 37.9 years ($SD = 7.6$), and the average organizational tenure was 7.1 years ($SD = 3.3$).

2.2 Measurement

During the data collection, Brislin's (1970) translation-back-translation technique was performed to translate all the survey items from English into Turkish.

Abusive supervision. To measure perceived abusive supervision over the past year, a 15-item scale of Tepper (2000) was used. Sample items include "My immediate supervisor ridicules me" and "My leader puts me down in front of others". Participants were asked to evaluate the items using a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree" ($\alpha = 0.91$)).

Organizational identification. To measure organizational identification, a six-item OI scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992) was used. The participants rated each statement on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree"; 5 = "strongly agree"). A sample item is "When someone criticizes my company, it feels like a personal insult" ($\alpha = 0.85$).

Burnout. To measure burnout, a 16-item scale developed by Demerouti et al. (2010) was used. Specifically, this scale involves two core aspects of burnout: exhaustion (physical, cognitive and affective) and disengagement from work. The participants rated each statement on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree"; 5 = "strongly agree"). A sample item is "It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way" ($\alpha = 0.91$).

Organizational citizenship behaviour. To measure OCB, we used a 10-item scale developed by Spector et al. (2010). Participants rated the items using a 5-point frequency scale (1 = "never"; 5 = "every day"). A sample item is "Gave up meal and other breaks to complete work" ($\alpha = 0.88$).

Control variables. The participants' tenure was controlled because of its possible link with task OCB and deviant workplace behaviour (Ng & Feldman, 2010). We also measured age and gender as control variables because previous studies have demonstrated that the gender of the targets of abusive supervision might have an influence on their vulnerability to deviant behaviour (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000).

Lastly, even though Chen and Lin (2014) suggest that examination of interaction effects (moderator role of OI in this study) may alleviate the common method bias (CMB) threat, we still included social desirability as a control variable to avoid any potential CMB threat. During the data collection, because some of the constructs included in this study were measured with sensitive questions, such as on abusive supervision, the participants' anonymity and confidentiality were ensured and emphasized both in the e-mail and on the survey cover page. To measure social desirability, we used a 4-item scale developed by Fisher (1993). The participants rated each statement on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree"; 5 = "strongly agree"). A sample item is "I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable" ($\alpha = 0.78$, mean = 2.52, SD = 0.61). Following Grappi et al. (2013), we performed a one-sample *t*-test analysis and compared the sample mean and the value mean of the scale (3). It was found that the respondents showed low levels of social desirability (-2.13 , $p < 0.01$). Means, standard deviations and correlations of the variables are given in Table 1.

Table 1 | Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	37.9	7.6	1							
2. Gender	0.52	0.49	0.09	1						
3. Tenure	7.1	3.3	0.56**	0.07	1					
4. Social desirability	2.52	0.61	0.02	0.08	0.04	1				
5. Abusive supervision	2.56	0.89	0.09	0.37**	-0.02	0.02	1			
6. Burnout	3.51	0.96	0.04	0.11	0.09	0.09	0.19**	1		
7. OCB	3.60	1.04	0.06	0.8	0.04	0.04	0.49**	0.28**	1	
8. Organizational identity	3.70	0.89	0.05	0.10	0.03	0.08	0.25**	0.17**	-0.22**	1

Notes: N = 256. Gender was coded as 1 = female, 0 = male. Tenure and age were measured in years. OCB refers to organizational citizenship behaviour.

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Source: own processing in IBM SPSS 26.0

As seen from Table 1, abusive supervision has a significant positive correlation with gender, meaning that women experience more abuse from their supervisors than men. Also, abusive supervision and burnout have a positive and significant correlation with each other. Surprisingly, abusive supervision has significant correlations with organizational identity and OCB, which suggest that the relationship between these variables might be more complicated, and abusive supervision may influence organizational identity and OCB through different contending mechanisms that we will explore below.

3 Analytical Approach

Before performing the primary analyses, to evaluate the factor structure of the study variables (abusive supervision, burnout, organizational citizenship behaviour and organizational identity), we first ran a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) by using AMOS version 24. The item parcelling method was used to build the model because of the concern about the item sample size ratio, which was recommended to be 1 : 20 by Kline (2014). Item parcelling, also known as partial decomposition modelling, is beneficial because it decreases the optimum sample size to a variable ratio and provides computational advantages such as higher commonality of parameter estimates, fewer errors and better-fitting results (Williams & O'Boyle, 2008; Evans & Davis, 2014). In the analysis process, following the recommendations of Williams and O'Boyle (2008), we randomly developed three parcels for each latent construct to confirm that every single variable was independently justified. The four-factor model revealed a good fit with CMIN/DF = 1.136; $\chi^2 = 54.550$, df = 48; p < 0.01;

IFI¹ = 0.996; TLI² = 0.994; GFI³ = 0.957; CFI⁴ = 0.996; AGFI⁵ = 0.946; SRMR⁶ = 0.035; RMSEA⁷ = 0.023.

3.1 Hypothesized structural model

We used PROCESS (Hayes, 2013), model 7 of the SPSS macro, which allowed us to examine both direct and indirect effects of mediation and moderated mediation models while running the bootstrap model, which provided 95% bias-adjusted confidence interval estimates for these models. PROCESS is an enhanced regression-based statistical instrument that utilizes conditional process analysis “to examine the extent to which the mechanism(s) by which an effect operates depends on or varies across a situation, context, stimulus, or individual differences” (Hayes, 2013). It is based on moderated mediation models and conditional indirect effect analysis through bootstrapping. In our model, we analysed the influence of abusive supervision on OCB through burnout. We also examined whether this effect is moderated by organizational identification. Latest developments in the statistical analysis of moderated mediation models suggest the application of conditional indirect effect testing in conjunction with bootstrapping procedures (e.g., PROCESS) instead of Baron and Kenny’s (1986) traditional multistep method as well as the Sobel (1982) test due to problems with the assumptions of the normal sampling distribution of indirect effects (Hayes, 2013). PROCESS does not make these assumptions and accounts for asymmetries in the sampling distribution by employing a bootstrapping procedure (Hayes et al., 2017).

3.2 Direct and mediated effects

The PROCESS macro model 4 (Hayes, 2013) was used to analyse mediation paths, as indicated by the unstandardized regression coefficients in Table 2. As can be seen from Table 2, abusive supervision was found to be negatively related to organizational citizenship behaviour ($b = -0.44$; $p < 0.001$), supporting hypothesis H1. According to the analysis results, abusive supervision was also found to be positively associated with burnout ($b = 0.47$; $p < 0.001$). The bootstrapped indirect effect of abusive supervision on OCB through burnout was -0.12 with a confidence interval of 95% and does not contain zero ($b = -0.20$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% $CI = [-0.2553, -0.1441]$). Burnout was significantly and negatively associated with OCB after controlling abusive supervision. Thus, our hypothesis H2, which argues that burnout mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and organizational citizenship behaviour, is supported. These results are consistent with our hypothesis that the negative effect of abusive supervision on organizational citizenship behaviour is mediated by burnout, as shown in Table 2.

¹ Incremental fit index

² Tucker-Lewis index

³ Goodness of fit index

⁴ Comparative fit index

⁵ Adjusted goodness of fit index

⁶ Standardized root mean square residual

⁷ Root mean square error of approximation

Table 2 | Direct and mediation analysis

Variables	b	SE	t	R-sq	Bootstrap 95% CI	
					LL (95% CI)	UL (95% CI)
Direct and total effects						
Abusive supervision → Burnout	0.47***	0.03	13.01	0.28		
Abusive supervision → OCB	-0.44***	0.05	-9.15	0.40		
Abusive supervision Burnout → OCB	-0.19***	0.03			-0.2553	-0.1441

Notes: N = 256; Model 4 (mediators) in the PROCESS macro. Bootstrap resample = 5000, b is a nonstandard regression coefficient, and SE is standard error, t is the t-statistic, R-sq is R square explained, and CI is a confidence interval.

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Source: Own processing in IBM SPSS 26.0

3.3 Moderated mediation analysis

Moderated mediation refers to the direction and the strength of mediation effects that are dependent on another moderator variable. In this study, hypothesis H2 is based on the fact that the impact of abusive supervision on organizational citizenship behaviour through burnout is dependent on employees' level of organizational identification. To understand how the intervening effect of burnout is moderated, we examined whether the strength of the relationship between abusive supervision and OCB, mediated through burnout, is significantly different when employees show different levels of organizational identification. In order to test mediated moderation, PROCESS macro model 7 was used, with 5000 bootstrap samples for bias adjustment and to obtain 95% confidence intervals (Hayes, 2013). Bootstrapping is beneficial because it provides the ability to predict the sample distributions of the moderated mediation model to generate confidence intervals without making assumptions about the shape of the sample distribution (Hayes et al., 2017). Prior to the analysis, as Toothaker et al. (1994) recommended, the predictor and moderating variables were grand mean-centred. Taking the recommendations of Preacher et al. (2007) into account, the bootstrapped conditional indirect effects of organizational identity were operationalized at three different levels: one standard deviation below the mean, the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean. Table 3 demonstrates how organizational identity moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and burnout, where the relationship is mediated by burnout, including bootstrap effects and confidence intervals. As presented in Table 3, abusive supervision has a statistically significant negative impact on organizational citizenship behaviour at 1 SD below the mean (indirect effect = -0.1470, 95% CI [-0.21, -0.08]), at the mean level (indirect effect = -0.1799, 95% CI [-0.24, -0.13]), and at 1 SD above the mean (indirect effect = -0.2127, 95% CI [-0.29, -0.15]). As depicted in Figure 2, the negative effect of abusive supervision on work engagement is higher for employees with higher organizational identity. Taking all these results into account, hypothesis H3 is supported.

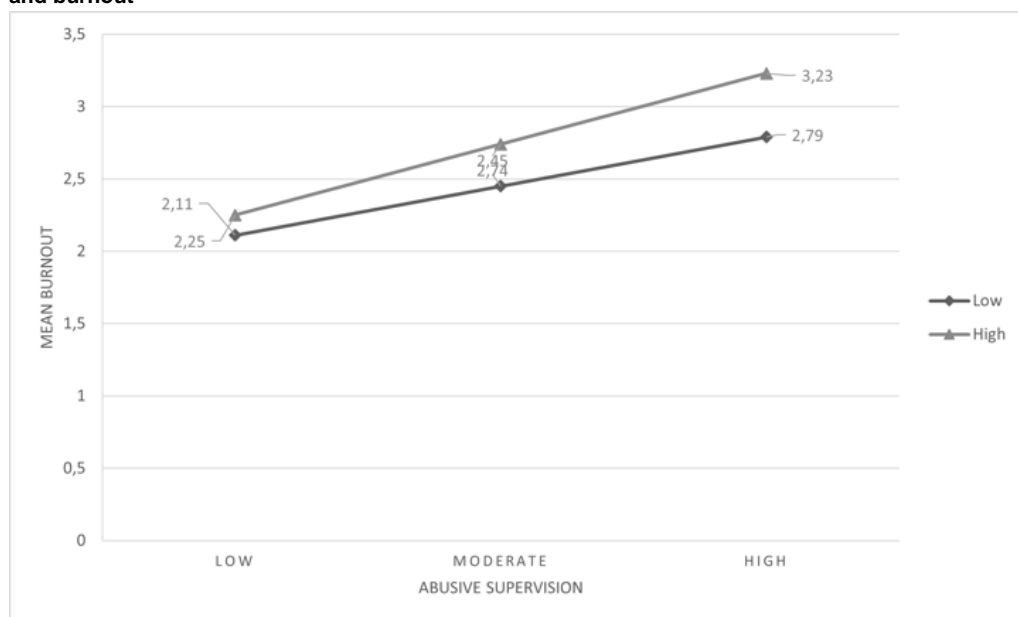
Table 3 | Moderated mediation for abusive supervision

Moderator: Organizational identity	Effect	SE	Bootstrap LLCI	Bootstrap ULCI
Dependent variable: OCB; Mediator: Burnout				
-1 SD	-0.1470	0.0325	-0.2102	-0.0825
Mean	-0.1799	0.0276	-0.2353	-0.1283
+1 SD	-0.2127	0.0357	-0.2870	-0.1468

Notes: Number of bootstrap samples = 5,000; level of confidence = 95%; SE = standard error; LLCI = lower level of confidence interval; ULCI = upper level of confidence interval.

Source: own processing in IBM SPSS 26.0

Figure 2 | Moderator role of organizational identity on relationship between abusive supervision and burnout



Source: authors

4 Discussion

Drawing on the arguments of the COR theory, this study intended to examine the mechanism between abusive supervision and OCB by examining the mediating and moderating mechanisms of this relationship. According to the results, it was found that abusive supervision affects employees' OCB by increasing their level of burnout, and this mechanism shows variation depending on the level of organizational identification.

4.1 Theoretical implications

These findings contribute to the literature in several ways. Firstly, this study examined the moderator role of organizational identification and the mediator role of burnout together to understand the effect of abusive supervision on OCB, which has not yet been examined. By doing so, we contribute to this research gap by concurrently examining the potential relationships based on the COR theory and social identity theory.

Secondly, current research also fills the gaps in the literature by revealing the “black box” that underlies the association between abusive supervision and OCB. While prior research has suggested that abusive supervision may be associated with reduced effort (Fischer et al., 2021; Tepper et al., 2017), it is also emphasized that the way and mechanisms through which abusive supervision affects extra-role behaviour has attracted relatively less attention (Mackey et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2019). Our results reveal a new process that illuminates the effect of abusive supervision on OCB. Victims of abusive supervision may feel burnt out and possess fewer resources to engage in OCB. Prior studies relying on the justice approach have argued that the negative relationship between abusive supervision and OCB is based on the targets’ aim to “get even” with the retaliator by decreasing their efforts (Colquitt et al., 2013; Wei & Si, 2013; Zhang et al., 2019). On the other hand, this study found that there might be another mechanism governing the relationship between abusive supervision and OCB, such that the targets of abusive supervision are emotionally too exhausted to engage in extra-role behaviours.

Thirdly, our finding that the relationship between abusive supervision and extra-role behaviours relies on a boundary condition, namely organizational identity, extends the literature on the importance of the moderators of abusive supervision (Mackey et al., 2017; Tepper et al., 2017). Even though the targets of abusive supervision are discouraged by the mistreatment, their reaction to the abuse is affected by their evaluations of their organization. Specifically, employees who identify themselves more with the organization are more likely to experience burnout and decrease their OCB. Even though the positive consequences of organizational identity and its buffering role have been richly highlighted and documented (Haslam et al., 2009; Yang et al., 2013; He & Brown, 2013; Decoster et al., 2013), the results of this study emphasize that a higher level of organizational identity does not lessen the negative consequences of abusive supervision; instead, it strengthens those negative outcomes. This finding is interesting and important because, taking the tenets of the COR theory and social identity theory into account, it implies that the negative impact of abusive supervision is more detrimental to employees with higher levels of organizational identification as they see their organization as an important part of their individual identity. According to the study findings, dealing with abusive supervision may endanger the individuals’ willingness to show extra-role behaviour, especially for those with higher identification, since such employees are more sensitive to the internal dynamics of the organization and, thus, abusive supervision results in a reduction in their personal resources and making them emotionally exhausted. In other words, organizational identification, which is generally accepted as a beneficial concept for organizations (Ashfort et al., 2008; He & Brown, 2013), may backfire when a workplace stressor is at play. This argument is parallel to the findings of Chi et al. (2018) and Aryee et al. (2008), who argue that abusive supervision shifts the employee's attention from work by disrupting cognitive processes and hinders the personal resources assigned to job performance. Contrary to the previous research, which

has claimed that organizational identification may buffer perceived stress and advance emotional well-being (Decoster et al., 2013), the present study claims that organizational identification may make worse the consequences of abusive supervision instead of helping employees' tolerance. This argument is similar to Evans and Davis' (2014) argument that organizational identification can exaggerate employees' reactions when they encounter workplace deviance. Specifically, to maintain their identification with the organization, employees with higher levels of identification are more concerned about the way they behave (Liu et al., 2019). In contrast, our results indicate that employees with a low sense of attachment to their organization are less responsive to abusive supervision due to their lack of belonging to the organization, thus causing a lessened impact of abusive supervision on burnout.

4.2 Practical implications

Abusive supervision and workplace deviance are both widespread and costly to organizations (Priesemuth et al., 2022). According to Park et al. (2017), 13% of US employees experience mistreatment, causing billions of dollars in costs to businesses annually in terms of generating inefficiency and burnout. As a result, organizations are forced to eliminate abusive supervision, including any type of mistreatment as well, or at least keep it at a minimum. Moreover, our findings show that supervisor abuse of subordinates may cause subordinates to experience burnout and reduce their willingness to engage in extra-role behaviour, and this result is more intense for employees with higher levels of organizational identification.

Firstly, to eliminate the negative results of abusive supervision and increase positive work outcomes, organizations and managers should execute proactive policies to stop abuse before it happens. For instance, selection processes should be based on identifying and removing people with deviant behaviour predispositions. This can be accomplished by precisely checking applicants' references. Although it may seem like a laborious activity in the short term, it is highly likely to generate a positive gain in the long term through having a mistreatment-free work environment, where efficiency may increase and burnout may decrease. In particular, according to Pearson and Porath (2005), companies that have achieved generating a civil workplace claim that such a selection process is one of the best ways of eliminating hiring typical incivility initiators, which might be applicable to abusive supervision as well.

Secondly, once selected, organizations should emphasize delivering the code of conduct and organizational culture that stress proper behaviours within the work environment. Specifically, implementing a zero tolerance to deviant behaviour policy, which is consistently highlighted both verbally and in written format, may also improve and generate a positive and deviant behaviour-free work environment. As abusive supervision adversely influences both employees' well-being and OCB and reduces efficiency, it might be beneficial to think about abusive behaviour in performance evaluation as well (Guo et al., 2022). By doing so, the cyclical sequence of abusive treatment may diminish in the long term. This may generate significant gains because, as this research found that abusive supervision decreases OCB through increasing burnout, abusive supervision is not a concept that can be removed within a short period of time; instead, it demands a systematic and uninterrupted attempt.

Thirdly, organizations should deliver a clear-cut message to supervisors that any kind of abusive and destructive behaviour will not be tolerated. To achieve this policy and to prevent

abusive supervision in the work context, organizations should apply fair and reasonable guidelines and procedures as well as create a pleasant organizational climate for people to recognize a high level of support from the organization (Tepper, 2007; Li et al., 2016). In particular, as Li et al. (2016) suggested, when abusive supervision happens, particular communication and support instruments, such as employee assistance programs (EAP) or counselling and well-being seminars, should be accessible for targets of abusive supervision to get assistance and support.

4.3 Limitations and future research

This study has numerous limitations that should be highlighted. Firstly, our data were inevitably collected from a single source and through self-reporting, which may make the results of this study vulnerable to single-source bias. Nevertheless, as noted before, single source bias, as a CMB, is less likely to be a matter for the interaction effect. Additionally, even though it is suggested to gather other-reported OCB data (e.g., supervisor rating), Carpenter et al. (2014) noted that both self-reported OCB data and other-reported OCB data reveal similar correlation relationships with some common variables. Therefore, although we intended to declare these worries, future investigations may gather data from multiple sources (customers, colleagues or supervisors) or collect diary data or critical incidents to test our model again. Secondly, a further limitation of the present study is based on the generalizability of the results. Our study sample was 256 employees from three sectors, namely manufacturing, banking and high-tech industries. Therefore, we cannot be sure whether the study findings are applicable to other work environments or to other cultures. The generalizability of our study results and findings should therefore be assessed in further studies in different types of businesses and cultural settings as well. Lastly, in this study, we only investigated the relationship between individual employees' perceptions of their supervisors' abusive supervision and their burnout levels at the individual level. On the other hand, the latest studies have shown theoretical and practical evidence that abusive supervision can also happen at the group level (Aryee et al., 2007; Priesemuth et al., 2014). Therefore, further studies may investigate abusive supervision at the group level.

Conclusion

The intent of this study was to investigate the effect of abusive supervision on OCB through the indirect effect of burnout and for whom this influence is greater. Using the conservation of resources theory and social identity theory, we found evidence that abusive supervision has a significant negative influence on OCB, and this influence is mediated by burnout. Moreover, this indirect effect is stronger for individuals with higher levels of organizational identification. Taking the results into consideration, the study results highlight the adverse effect of abusive supervision on organizational citizenship behaviour through burnout and provide additional information about the importance of organizational identification in terms of strengthening the detrimental impact of workplace stressors instead of acting as a buffer between the stressor and work outcome.

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Data availability. The datasets generated and/or analysed during the present study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Ethical approval. All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed consent. Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in this study.

Conflicts of interest/Competing interests. The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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