

Examining the Moderating Role of Conscientiousness on Abusive Supervision and Emotional Exhaustion Leading to Employee Creativity

Habiburrahman Abed, Habib Gul, & Abdul Basir Azimi

Abstract

This study investigated the moderating effect of conscientiousness between the relationship of abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion. Moreover, this study also adds to the existing body of workplace stressor such as abusive supervision by examining the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion and employee creativity. Using conservation of resource theory, trait activation theory and effective events theory the researcher will develop a model analyzing the relationship among abusive supervision, conscientiousness, emotional exhaustion and employee creativity. By using data from the manufacturing sector of Afghanistan. The researcher expects that Abusive supervision decreases the employee creativity. We expect that emotional exhaustion at study partially mediate the relationship because at that time the level of conscientiousness will be high compared because the literature suggests that with the passage of time the personal resources of human being will be depleted. Implications of the results, limitations, and recommendation for future research will be discussed later on.

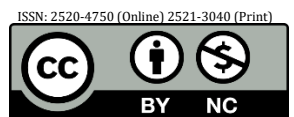


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1. Introduction

Over the past decade, "dark side of leadership behaviors" in organization has remained an important area of interest among researchers (Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007; Lee, Yun & Srivastava 2013; Melinda et al., 2016). Abusive supervision, particularly "subordinate's perception of the extent to which their supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000: 178), that has detrimental effects on organizational and individual's outcomes. The notion that abusive supervision as a workplace stressor, is capable to reduce an employee's resources (Restubog, Scot, & Zagenczyk, 2011; Tariq et al., 2023; Haggard et al., 2011). Numerous studies supported this assertion, positive relationship, between perception of abusive supervision and stress-related outcomes, such as anxiety (Malik et al., 2022; Tepper et al., 2007), psychological distress (Gallegos, Guàrdia-Olmos, & Berger, 2022; Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002; Tepper, 2000), employee job burnout (Lian et al., 2012; Carlson, et al., 2012; Wu et al., 2019). Moreover, one common unfavorable outcome of abusive supervision is emotional exhaustion which is the core element of burnout and is associated with reduction in job performance, high turnover intention (Witt, Andrews, & Carlson, 2004; Lee et al., 2013), lost in productivity (Tepper et al., 2006; and feedback avoidance (Whitman et al., 2012).

Emotional exhaustion is defined as "a chronic state of physical and emotional depletion that results from excessive job demands and continuous hassles (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998, p. 486). Lee and Ashforth (1996) and later on Wright and Hobfoll (2004), suggested that emotional exhaustion emerge when employee experience that they do not have the right type of resources to handle the stressful situation confronted with. In addition, according to Aryee et al. (2008) "abusive supervision constitutes a form of resource loss in terms of leadership support and taxes the capability of individuals to respond to that demand" (p.396). As suggested, in previous studies emotional exhaustion is negatively related with organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior and lower turnover intentions (Cropanzano, Rupp & Byrne, 2003; Solkhe, & Singh, 2020; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). Moreover, stress literature also proposed that high level of stress such as, emotional exhaustion can effect on individual's psychological and physical health while moderate level of stress can be helpful to enhance individual behaviors at workplace (Melamed et al., 2006; Cohen, Janicki-Deverts, & Miller, 2007; Zhao & Jiang, 2021) Organizational behavioral researchers have found both individual and organizational factors as antecedents of burnout and suggested that some employees are feeling more exhaustions then others (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Edú-Valsania, Laguía, & Moriano, 2022). Despite the call for future research into individual traits that may add to abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion relationship, personality characteristics has been ignored to a greater extent.

Moreover, previous studies also suggest that personal characteristics of an employee can influence the detrimental effect of negative work stimuli on employee's outcomes (Perrewe et al., 2004; Zhang, Wang, & Li, 2023; Lin, Ma & Wang, 2014). Hence, individual characteristics may prevail that serve to weaken the positive relationship between subordinate's perception of abusive supervision and employee's unfavorable outcomes. As, Tepper (2000, 2007) suggested the positive relationship between abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion can be vary on individual differences such as, personality and contextual factors. Conscientiousness, an element of big five personality model (Costa & McCrae, 1988), is consider the most important factor among personality dimensions to cope with stress (Vollrath & Torgersen, 2000; Roberts, Chernyshenko, Stark, & Goldberg, 2005; Lin, Ma, Wang, & Wang, 2014). Because, conscientiousness is consisting of components that might play a role to mitigate employee's ultimate reaction to external stressors. For example, competence; an

individual ability to interact their environment effectively, dutiful; an individual propensity, self-disciplined; individuals are intrinsically motivated and remain persistent, and striving for achievement; that pushes individuals to succeed (Barick & Mount, 1991; Horwitz, 2022). Hence we proposed that conscientiousness may be a potential moderator that may buffer this positive relationship between abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion. Additionally, personal characteristics of employee's will cope the stress related stimuli at workplace and this moderate level of stress will enhance creativity. Another alternate explanation for this proposed model may be that as abused subordinate may not retaliate either from their organization or supervisor in the form of low creativity because they know that leader have the important resources which is necessary for continued employment, promotion and other fringe benefits. Thus abused subordinates will exert more effort to improve creativity and will use it as a means to cope with abusive behavior of their supervisor and stress through their performance.

The relationship between stress and creativity have bring the attention of many scholars in organizational literature but this relationship is still inconsistent. For instance, Baer (1998) positive while, Amabile, Gold, & Brackfield (1990) found negative relationship between stress and creativity. Therefore, this ambiguous situation holds substantial promise for clarifying stressors particularly emotional exhaustion and employee creativity. Numerous studies suggest that employee creativity is vital for organizational success and competitive advantage (Woodman et al., 1993; Nonaka, 1991; Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004). As a consequence, scholars have focused on identifying the contextual and individual factors that can enhance employee creativity (e.g., Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004). Of the many factors that can influence on employee creativity, which they experience at their workplace, one is their leader behavior. For example, a plethora of research has been conducted on the main and indirect relationship between leadership styles and employee creativity like, transformational leadership (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009; Santoso, Elidjen, Abdinagoro, & Arief, 2019), ethical leadership (Chughtai, 2014), authentic leadership (Rego, Sousa, Marques, & Cunha, 2012) and abusive supervisor (Liu, Liao, & Loi). However, to our knowledge no empirical studies is yet conducted that examined the relationship between emotional exhaustion and employee creativity, particularly the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion between abusive supervision and employee creativity.

Our model contributes to the existing body of leadership, personality, stress and creativity literature in many ways. First, as previous studies suggest that highly conscientious individuals are more problem-solving, goal accomplishment and rarely allows stressors to affect at their work outcomes (Raja, John, & Ntalianis, 2004; Wang & Erdheim, 2007). In the stress literature, identifying to the lack of theoretical understanding of how conscientiousness influence to the detrimental effect of abusive supervision on employee's negative outcomes, Tepper (2007), called for future research to examine the personal characteristics of employees that may buffer this particular relationship. Furthermore, differential reactivity model of personality, also suggests that the impact of abusive supervision on follower's behaviors and cognition may affect differently (George & Brief, 2004). However, this particular relationship between abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion can be influence by individual's characteristics, conscientiousness, are often inferred but no empirically study have examined yet. This moderating effect advances the existing literature on abusive supervision. Second, to date little is known about the relationship between emotional exhaustion and employee creativity, and particularly how psychological mechanism, emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity? Although the detrimental consequences of emotional exhaustion have been the focus of many studies since last two

decades, however the question remains the same as to how emotional exhaustion effect on employee creativity as previous studies suggests that some workers report more anxious and exhausted while others flourish in the organization. Third, beside the theoretical contribution in the present study, as Tsui, Nifadkar, and Ou (2007) also described that, of organizational theories majority are developed in western context, these theories cannot be generalizing unless we test them in eastern context. In addition, the researcher integrated theory building, because various factors of leadership phenomena and subordinate happen simultaneously, such as context, individual agents and dynamic interaction (Avolio, 2007). Therefore, a relevant paucity of interdisciplinary treatment is needed. So the researcher integrated conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989), trait activation theory (Gardner & Cummings, 1988), and effective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Fourth, we test our hypothesized model in a large manufacturing organization. As the manufacturing industry play a critical role in the country economy. So it is important to identify the key factors that can boost organizational success and competitive advantage through employee creativity. The previous studies in this sector showed that manufacturing sector workers are facing more psychosocial stress and mental health problems (Naji et al., 2020; Neilson et al., 2013; Lian et al., 2016). However, to our knowledge there is still lack of research about the individual factors that can reduce stressors relationships and untimely influence individual's creativity. Moreover, in a high power distance culture of Afghanistan, where power is expected and accepted as distributed unequally, (Hofstede, 1980), it is expected that abusive supervision are likely to be occur. Because, this type of leadership is preferred in such culture for performance-oriented organization. Therefore, we predict that, this moderate level of abusive supervision may lead employee creativity for organizational effectiveness.

2. Theory and hypothesis

2.1 Abusive supervision and creativity

Employee creativity refers to " the production of novel and useful ideas in any domain" (Amabile (1996, p.1155). Given the significance of employee creativity, numerous studies have strived to identify contextual and individual factors that either enhance or hinder creativity (Mostert, 2007; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Nandkeolyar et al., 2014). One such contextual factors that has frequently studied in this literature is the leadership styles such as, authentic leadership (Rego, Sousa, Marques, & Cunha, 2012) ethical leadership (Chughtai, 2014) and abusive supervision (Whitman et al., 2012), employee experience at work.

Abusive supervision, as a workplace stressor relates to emotional exhaustion (Aryee et al., 2008). Prior studies suggested that emotional exhaustion is the key element of job burnout (Harvey, Stoner, Hochwarter & Kacmar, 2007; Brewar & Shapard, 2004). Emotional exhaustion take place when an individual feel that emotional demands exceeds what is affordable during interpersonal interactions at workplace (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). When an employee continue work under stress for a prolong period of time, emotional exhaustion further result in emotional overextension, thus individual will exert more psychological resources to beat the stress and no longer capable to cope with their own tasks (Maslach, 1982; Harvey et al., 2007; Halbesleben & Leon, 2014). According to conservation of resource theory (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989), individual have the basic motivation to protect, obtain and retain their resources. So linking COR theory (1989) within the context of abusive supervision where abused subordinates will exert more effort to handle the interpersonal conflict to conserve their resources. As a consequence, the psychological resources of employee will decrease and that will ultimately lead to emotional exhaustion.

The association between abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion was empirically supported in various studies. For example, Keashly and Harvey (2005) found that subordinate's perception of mistreatment from supervisor such as public criticism, rudeness and inconsiderate action leads to frustration and humiliation. In addition, Tepper (2000) found that the more subordinate's perception of abusive supervision the more employee will face anxiety, depression and emotional exhaustion.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion.

2.2 Mediating role of emotional exhaustion

In addition, other theories of stress such as, distraction arousal theory, described that stressors decrease creative performance (Teichner, Arees, Reilly, 1963), and decrease job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (Cropanzano et al., 2003). People have limited kind of cognitive resources and they strive to cope with stress and thus leaving fewer resources to handle other tasks. Hence, cognitive resources are likely to decrease to overcome the stressors effects and as result they compromise on creating novel and useful ideas (Baron, 1986). Still there are some studies which supports the assertion that stress increases creativity. They argue that stressors enhance arousal, which evoke the use of novel ideas and motivates consistently towards determining strategies in problem-solving solutions (Anderson et al., 2004; Bunce & West, 1994). But the effect of stressors on creativity have still contradictory results, a recent meta-analysis on stressors and creativity relationship found, curvilinear, positive and negative relationship (Byron, Khazanchi, & Nazarian, 2010). Their meta-analysis found that several evaluative stress motivates individuals to be more creative, whereas too much or too little reduces creativity. Although stressors are usually considered as having detrimental effects on individual outcomes (Gilboa, Shirom, Fried, & Cooper, 2008). However, in the literature contrary to negative outcomes some empirical studies have also found positive impact on personal initiative (Fay & Sonnentang, 2002). Thus, we suggest:

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between emotional exhaustion and employee creativity.

Hypothesis 3: Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity.

2.3 Moderating effect of conscientiousness

Conscientiousness is the most studied variable of big-five personality dimensions in organizational settings. Conscientiousness is consisting of individual dependability characteristics such as, responsible, dutiful, deliberation and cautiousness. Conscientiousness also include a volitional characteristic like, preserving, hardworking, achievement-orient, competence and self-discipline (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Some characteristics of high conscientious individuals particularly self-disciplined, are critical to emotional exhaustion because these individuals are intrinsically motivated and remain persistent. In addition, employees high in conscientiousness are more likely task-oriented, even if they face high level of stress, as compared to low conscientiousness individuals (Bowling & Eschleman, 2010). Previous studies suggest that the relationship between abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion vary in type and severity, which depends on individual's abilities to cope with stress (Tepper et al., 2000). Several studies have examined the possible role of personality in abusive supervision context. For example, Hu (2012), found that employees high in emotional intelligence have weaken the relationship between subordinate's perception of abusive

supervision and emotional labor burden. Most recently, Chi and Liang (2013), examined the relationship between abusive supervision and work withdrawal and found that emotional exhaustion mediated only when individuals engaged in high level expressive suppression or low-frequency cognitive reappraisal. In addition, highly conscientious individuals are responding to abusive supervision in a more constructive way than low conscientious individuals (Tepper et al., 2001). As a workplace stressor, abusive supervision includes, belittling subordinates, blaming subordinates for incompetence, assigning them work overload and discouraging for initiative (Tepper, 2007). So, we predict that the impact of abusive supervision on emotional exhaustion can be mitigated by conscientiousness. When such stress occurs at moderate level individual will exert more effort for creative behavior because "humans are driven to preserve the social self and are vigilant to threats that may jeopardize their social esteem and status" (Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004, p.357).

As mentioned earlier, according to differential reactivity model, abusive supervision effect subordinate's cognition and behaviors differently (George & Brief, 2004). Consistent with these findings subordinate's perception of abuse will depend on individual characteristics. In the stress literature, the positive impact of abusive supervision on emotional exhaustion was empirically supported (i.e. Burton & Hoobler, 2006; Wu & Hu, 2009; Whitman et al., 2012). For example, numerous studies suggest that subordinate's perceptions of mistreatment results in psychological discomfort such as, anxiety and hostility (Richman, Flaherty, Rospenda & Christensen, 1992). Similarly, Tepper (2000) described that as the level of mistreatment from their supervisor increases, so too the level of discomfort like, anxiety and emotional exhaustion. So, in order to reduce the detrimental effect of abusive supervision on employee's attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, many studies recommended conscientiousness, that may play a protective role by reducing stress-based response to abusive supervision. Conscientiousness has a constant buffering effect, predicting externalizing problems, decreasing risk for internalizing problems and substance use problems (Malouff et al., 2007). Other studies found a negative relationship between conscientiousness and subordinate's perception of mistreatment (Fallon et al., 2000), and a positive relationship with task accomplishment and greater academic achievement (Organ & McFall, 2004; Steel et al., 2008). We predict that high conscientious individuals will be less likely go for emotional exhaustion under abusive supervision, hence we expect that subordinate's use of high conscientiousness may influence the abusive supervision on emotional exhaustion to maintain their creativity.

Hypothesis 4: *Conscientiousness moderates the effect of abusive supervision on employee emotional exhaustion such that the relationship is strengthen when conscientiousness is high rather than low.*

Hypothesis 5: *Conscientiousness moderates the indirect effect of abusive supervision on employee creativity (through emotional exhaustion), such that the mediated relationship will be weaker under high compared to low Conscientiousness.*

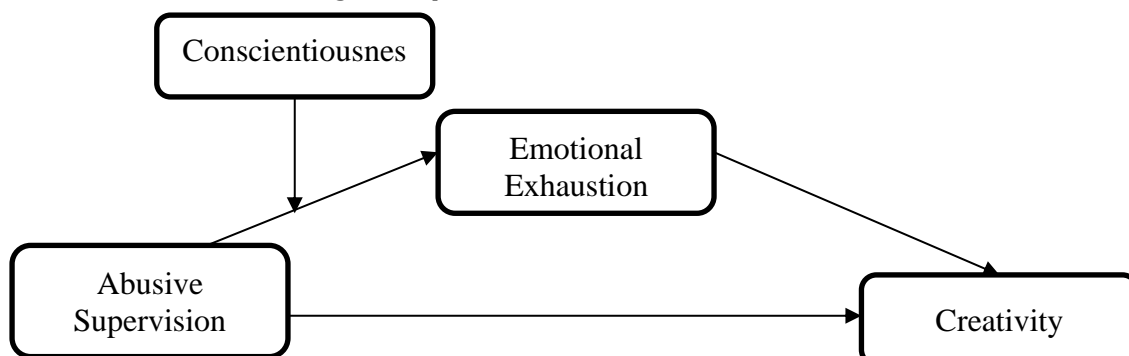


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

This study was held in manufacturing sector of Afghanistan. The researcher employed non-probability convenient sampling techniques for two reasons because, first we do not have access to such confidential data, second we also do not know the exact numbers of the population that will be taken for this study. The data was collected for this study from two sources: the subordinates and their immediate supervisor. The survey was self-administered and separate questionnaires was distributed to both the subordinates and their immediate supervisor, each supervisor fulfilled at least 10 subordinate's employee creativity. A cover letter was attached outlining the purpose and nature of the data required, and ensure them that their responses will be kept confidential. We used specific tracking numbers for the immediate supervisor and their subordinates at time 1. After analyzing the organizational structure of employees, at time 1 every supervisor was asked to evaluate the creative behavior of their 10 subordinates. One week later we will collect the data of employee conscientiousness and emotional exhaustion at time 2. Finally, again one-week later at time 3 each of the subordinates was handed over a questionnaire to respond their supervisor abusive behavior displayed at the workplace. Thus, avoiding common method biasness (Podsakoff et al., 2012) up to some extent. The researchers distributed 340 questionnaires to the immediate supervisor and 340 equally to subordinates at time-lagged series. After matching the supervisor-subordinate's dyad responses regarding abusive supervision, employee creativity and also employee response on employee emotional exhaustion and conscientiousness.

3.2 Measures

The researcher used seven-point Likert scale to assess their responses (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). All the questionnaires are adopted from previous studies. The measurement scale was in English, as English is the main source of white-collar employees at workplace in Afghanistan, in addition previous studies have also get responses in English (Gul, Usman, Liu, Rehman, & Jebran 2018). Therefore, English language was not an issue in our questionnaire design.

Abusive supervision. Abusive supervision was measured through Peng, Schaubroeck and Li (2014) abusive supervision 5 item scale. The questionnaires will be measured through seven point Likert-scale. The sample item includes "My supervisor ridicules me". The researcher will attach a cover letter explaining to think about their immediate supervisor's behavior last week.

Employee creativity. The researcher used employee creativity scale developed by Tierney and Farmer (2011), to evaluate the employee creativity by supervisor, or supervisor rated employee creativity. These are four-item scale, and the supervisor will be asked to assess their subordinate creativity on seven-item scale. A sample item includes "Identifies opportunities for new ways of dealing with work-related issues".

Emotional Exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion was measured through 4-item scale originally developed by (Wilk & Moynihan, 2005). A sample item includes " I feel burned out from my work".

Conscientiousness. This construct was assessed by using 10-item scale from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Goldberg, 1999). The sample item includes " I am always prepared".

4. Analyses and Results

The results of the Table 1 indicate that this study construct validity and reliabilities are according to the standard requirements. Thus, these results enable us to perform correlational analyses that are presented at Table 2. The results of Tables reveal that all the correlational

coefficients of all the studied variables are significant. These results further enable us to check the hypothesized relationships.

Table 1: CFA

Constructs	Items	Loadings	α	AVE	CR
Abusive supervision (AS)	AS1	.833	0.88	0.63	0.89
	AS2	.813			
	AS3	.808			
	AS4	.755			
	AS5	.749			
Conscientiousness (CON)	CON1	.884	0.96	0.74	0.96
	CON2	.874			
	CON3	.869			
	CON4	.868			
	CON5	.868			
	CON6	.859			
	CON7	.856			
	CON8	.844			
	CON9	.825			
Emotional exhaustion (EE)	EE1	.902	0.95	0.79	0.94
	EE2	.891			
	EE3	.882			
	EE4	.881			
Creativity (C)	C1	.941	0.94	0.82	0.95
	C2	.940			
	C3	.878			
	C4	.851			

Note: All factor loadings are significant at the $P < 0.001$ level, α =Cronbach's alpha, AVE=Average Variance Extracted, CR=Composite Reliability.

Table 2: Mean, SD, Correlation, and Alpha (N = 413)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Gender	1.15	.36	1						
2 Age	2.08	.84	-.10*	1					
3 Education	1.90	1.04	.27**	.26**	1				
4 AS	4.17	.76	.07	-.01	-.06	(.88)			
5 CON	1.85	.76	.06	-.03	.15**	-.40**	(.96)		
6 EE	4.00	.87	.02	.02	.01	.37**	-.37**	(.95)	
7 Creativity2	2.10	.91	.06	.02	.05	-.24**	.14**	-.34**	(.94)

In order to examine hypothesized relationships (H1 to H4), analyses of linear regression were performed. The results are shown at Table 3. Our study H1 proposes that there is a negative relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity. Results confirmed that organizations practicing abusive supervision employee creativity ability decreases in those organizations ($\beta = -0.28$, $p = 0.000$). Hence, our H1 is accepted. H2 of our study proposed that there is a positive relationship between abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion. Results proved that organizations with higher level of abusive supervision practices also enhances emotional exhaustion of their employees ($\beta = 0.42$, $p = 0.000$). As a result, H2 is accepted. H3 proposed that there is a negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and employee creativity. Results shown at Table 3 reveals that H3 is also accepted ($\beta = -0.36$, $p = 0.000$).

Table 3: Regression results for hypotheses 1 to 4

Hypotheses	R	F	B	T	Sig.	Decision
1 AS \rightarrow C	0.24	24.86	-0.28	-4.99	0.000	Accepted
2 AS \rightarrow EE	0.37	64.64	0.42	8.04	0.000	Accepted
3 EE \rightarrow C	0.34	55.57	-0.36	-7.45	0.000	Accepted
4 AS + EE \rightarrow C	0.36	31.59	-0.15	-2.61	0.010	Partial Mediation
			-0.31	-6.02	0.000	

In order to examine the mediating influence of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity, we consider the suggestions of Baron and Kenney (1986) approach of establishing mediation. Baron and Kenney (1986) approach of establishing mediation suggest that as first step independent and dependent variables should have significant relationship. Second, there should be significant relationship between independent and mediating variables. Third, there should also be significant relationship between mediating and dependent variables. Fourth, the significant relationship between independent and dependent variables should be non-significant (full mediation) or the reduced significantly to lower value (partial mediation) after the inclusion of mediating variable in the model. Table 3 shows these four steps. Our mediating hypothesis (H4) proposed that emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity. The table 3 results regarding mediation reveal that when mediator emotional exhaustion is introduced in the model, the influence of abusive supervision on employee creativity decrease to lower value of -0.15 ($p < 0.01$) from -0.28 ($p = 0.000$). Consequently, our H4 is also accepted and it is suggested that emotional exhaustion partially mediates the relation between the abusive supervision and employee creativity.

Table 4: Moderating role of conscientiousness

Factors	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	t-value	B	t-value	B	t-value
Gender	.060	.477	.008	.072	.086	.775
Age	.029	.542	.003	.067	.018	.391
Education	-.006	-.134	.051	1.248	.052	1.314
Abusive supervision (AS)			.300***	5.429	.351***	6.438
Conscientiousness (C)			-.314***	-5.599	-.337***	-6.173
AS_x_C					-.161***	-5.115
R				.446***		.498***
ΔR^2				.198***		.048***
R ²		.001		.199***		.248***
F statistics		.153		20.227***		22.259***

In order to check the moderating hypothesis (H5), that the emotional exhaustion can be determine by various factors, more explicitly whether conscientiousness moderates the relation between abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion. To test moderation hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed (Table 4). Model-1 in table 4 shows the results of control variables. Model-2 reveals the results when abusive supervision and conscientiousness were added to regression model-1. The variables of Model-2 were accounting for a significant proportion of variance in emotional exhaustion $R^2 = 0.199$ ($p = 0.000$). According to Aiken and West (1991) suggestions, abusive supervision and conscientiousness were centered in order avoid potential problematic high multicollinearity before creating interaction term between abusive supervision and conscientiousness. Subsequently in Model-3, interaction term between abusive supervision and conscientiousness (abusive supervision_x_conscientiousness) was included to the regression model. This model also accounted for a significant amount of variance in emotional exhaustion $R^2 = 0.248$ ($\beta = -0.16$, $p = 0.000$). As a result, H5 of our study is also accepted.

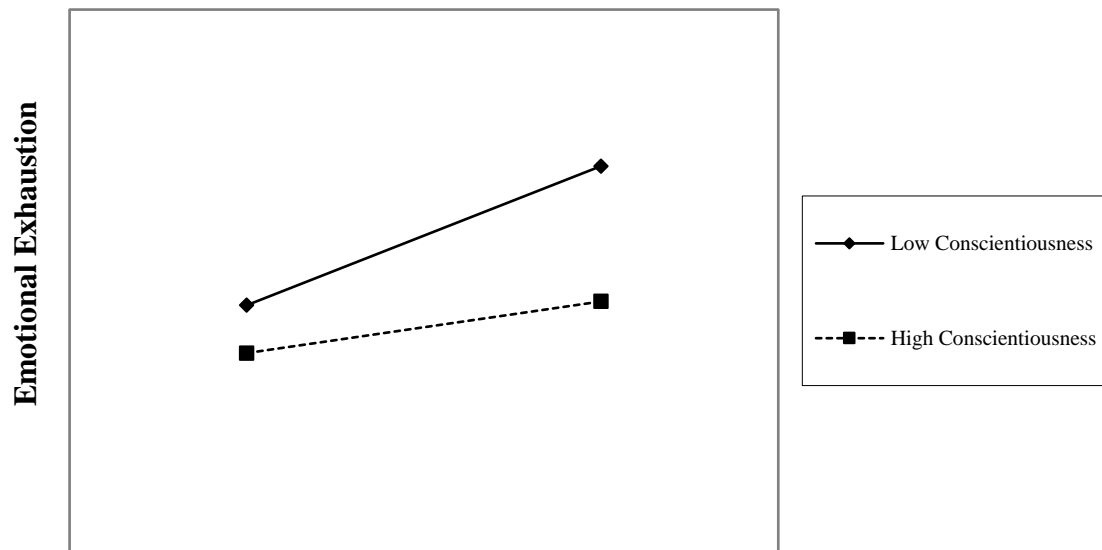


Figure 2: Moderating role of conscientiousness in the relationship of abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion

Figure 2 show that abusive supervision has a weaker and negative influence on emotional exhaustion when the conscientiousness was high ($\beta = -0.37, p = 0.000$) as compared to low ($\beta = 0.35, p = 0.000$), corresponding to H5 of our study. Accordingly, it is conformed that conscientiousness weakens the positive relationship between abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion.

5. Discussion

This study aims to examine the impact of workplace stressor such as abusive supervision on employee creativity through the mediating influence of emotional exhaustion under conscientiousness boundary condition. The results of the paper confirmed that hypothesized relationships of the conceptual model. Based on conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989) this paper confirmed that emotional exhaustion partially mediates the relationship of abusive supervision and creativity. In addition, based on trait activation theory (Gardner & Cummings, 1988), and effective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) the results further confirmed that conscientiousness weakens the positive influence of abusive supervision on emotional exhaustion, which has a negative effect on creativity.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This paper has several contributions. First, consistent with the prior literature (Akram, Ahmad, Akram, Asghar, & Jiang, 2022; Hussain et al., 2022) this paper affirms the negative influence of abusive supervision and creativity. Thus, it is concluded that following western context (Tsui, Nifadkar, & Ou, 2007), in the eastern context stressors, such as abusive supervision negatively influences employee creativity, particularly in the manufacturing industry. Second, this study adds to the psychological factor, such as emotional exhaustion detracts employee creativity. This finding are consistent with prior studies results that confirmed that negative psychological factors negatively influence employees' creativity (Jasmine, & Martdianty, 2022; Opoku, Kang, & Kim, 2023). Third, the study adds to the body of knowledge relating to leadership (Li, Ahmed, Syed, Khalid, & Muñoz Jr, 2022; Malik, Jawad, Shahzad, & Waheed, 2022)

by confirming that abusive supervision has a positive linkage with emotional exhaustion. Fourth, based on the conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989), this study adds to the literature by acknowledging the mediating role of emotional exhaustion as psychological process in the relationship between stressor, that is, abusive supervisor and employee creativity. Fifth, reacting to a research call (Tepper, 2007) of conducting future research to examine the personal characteristics of employees that may buffer abusive supervision on employee's negative outcomes, this paper confirmed that conscientiousness weakens the positive influence of abusive supervision on employees' emotion exhaustion, which further negatively influences employees' creativity. These findings are consistent with the findings of Srikanth, Thakur and Dust (2022), where they confirmed that conscientiousness has a moderating role in the linkage between abusive supervision and performance.

5.2 Empirical Implication

This paper theoretical model presents crucial implications for practice. First, the managers should understand the depletion state of emotional exhaustion process does matter, when it comes to abusive supervision and employee creativity circumstance. Second, managers should also understand that high level of conscientiousness is important as in such case the abusive supervision has a weaker negative influence on emotional exhaustion. At all, we should understand that under higher level of conscientiousness boundary condition the stronger positive influence of abusive supervision on emotional exhaustion can be mitigated, and thus employees can behave more creatively. The suppressor role of conscientiousness is important as it interact with stressor (abusive suppression) and depletes employees' emotional exhaustion. In such case employee creative can be boosted.

5.3 Limitations and future direction

Although the paper offers several prompting contributions to the literature and practice, hitherto few limitations are also reported. First, even though the researchers executed regression analyses to check the theorized relations to establish causality, so far due to the usage of the cross-sectional data, the results of the research should be generalized with attention. Second, examining a sample from collectivist society, i.e., Afghanistan, is one of the silent contribution of this paper; yet, care is desirable in generalizing the research findings to individualist society, that is, west. Therefore, the researchers commend future research to be conducted by comparing findings of west and eastern on the conceptual model of this work. Third, this research is also restricted to study only emotional exhaustion as a psychological mechanism. Upcoming research are suggested to use diverse psychological processes factors using different theoretical foundation to upsurge the explanatory power of this research work conceptual framework. Furthermore, future research work can also assume causal relations of the model through scheming an experimental intervention research scheme.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research work uniquely integrates stressor (i.e., abusive supervision), psychological process (i.e., emotional exhaustion) with employees' positive outcome, that is, creativity, under personality trait (i.e., conscientiousness) boundary condition. This paper developed and validate a conceptual model of abusive supervision and creativity. This model explains the mediating role of emotional exhaustion and moderating role of conscientiousness. Emotional exhaustion is recognized a crucial mediating mechanism in the relation of abusive supervision and creativity. In addition, higher level of conscientiousness is recognized as an important condition under which the positive influence of abusive supervision on emotional exhaustion can be decreased to boost employee creativity.

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