

# IMPACT OF ABUSIVE SUPERVISION ON JOB SATISFACTION AND TURNOVER INTENTION: ROLE OF POWER DISTANCE AS A MODERATOR

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## ABSTRACT

*Abusive supervision has been highlighted through research a lot over the past decades as it remained the topic to be highlighted because of its negative consequences. Due to abusive supervision many unwanted behavior among employees is shown, which really damages both the moral and productivity of employees and the employer. Negative consequences like low job satisfaction and high turnover intention have been related with abusive supervision, which are harmful for organization in terms of many consequences e.g. replacement cost, work disruption and negative effects on other employees too. Moderator like high power distance in culture can really play an important role in understanding the impact of abusive supervision on job satisfaction and turnover intention. Hence, the purpose of the study is to find out the moderating role of power distance in the relationship of abusive supervision on job satisfaction and turnover intention. Regression analysis and correlation was used to assess the data collected from 216 employees in private sector organizations which include health sector (Quaid-e-Azam International Hospital and Al-shifa Hospital), education sector (SZABIST, MAJU and Bahria University) and NGOs (Water Aid, WHO, UNICEF, World Vision and UNDP) to address the variables abusive supervision, job satisfaction, turnover intention and power distance. All the hypothesized relationships covering the negative effects of abusive supervision on job satisfaction, positive relationship with employees turnover intention as well as the significant moderating effect of power distance on employees job satisfaction and turnover intention were found significant. The study presents valuable implications for practitioners and future research directions.*

**Keywords:** Abusive supervision, job satisfaction, turnover intention and power distance.

## INTRODUCTION

The wide research on abusive supervision shows that it affects the desired outcome of workplace and damages it e.g. (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). The effects of abusive supervision may not be as much as physically harmful but it is more likely to leave long lived wounds (Harris, Harvey, Harris, & Cast, 2012). When it comes to abusive supervision, an image of dictatorial boss comes to mind who humiliate those who report to him/her (Ash-forth, 1994). The effects of abusive supervision are very important and organization should understand it well on time as frontline employees perceive it to be

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harmful for their performance. According to Tepper (2000), abusive supervision have effects on turnover intention, individuals suffering from it are more likely to leave their jobs. On the other hand, good leadership and supervision have got positive effects on employees overall behavior. Due to good and ethical leadership and supervision, employees and subordinates feel motivated and committed to the organization.

Literature also evidence that culture does play important role particularly in organizations in developed part of the world compared to developing countries. Culture has different dimension including power distance, masculinity and femininity, individualism, uncertainty avoidance and long and short term orientation (Hofstede, 1980). Among these dimensions, one of the important one is power distance. Power distance can be defined as the acceptance of power by less powerful peoples of the organization, institutions or societies and they expect that power is unequally distributed. Power distance varies from culture to culture and may be from organization to organization. Power distance in developed countries or societies is low, where as power distance is high in societies, countries or culture which is still developing. Literature on organization and management sciences indicates that every organization has its own norms, values, culture and different environment. Hence the employees of organizations operating in the high power indexed states will be having greater distance from their boss or the boss is more likely to exercise undue power over the employees.

Previous studies on abusive supervision and its effects on employee job satisfaction and turnover intention suggest that abusive supervision has got negative effect on job satisfaction and Turnover Intention (Tepper, 2000; Zapf & Gross, 2001; Liu, Wu & Lin, 2009). More recent studies have found that in culture where there is high power distance; supervisor is usually respected by their subordinates, even if he/she is involved in abusive supervision (Kernan, Watson, Chen & Kim, 2011). That may be due to the reason that whenever power distance is high element of respect comes in between supervisor and subordinates. This statement was also supported previously by Hofstede (2005) when he suggested that power distance brings the element of respect between subordinates and supervisors. Here comes the element of confusion since Tepper (2000) state that abusive supervision lead to employee's negative behavior and hence low motivation, less job satisfaction and hence greater turnover intention. If Kernan et al. (2011) point of view is been taken into account, then in the case of abusive supervision, the power distance is the element which brings respect for supervisor due to which subordinates obey their supervisor and fulfill instructions given to them. This view is also supported by Loh, Restubog and Zegencyk (2010). These authors are of the view that when there is low power distance, work place bullying will be increased, which will result in low job satisfaction. Hence if on one side previous findings on the role of power distance are contradictory, on the other side it shows the significant positive effects of power distance in an organizational culture.

Previous studies on abusive supervision, job satisfaction and turnover intentions have been much instrumental in explaining their phenomenon. However as earlier stated that the power distance plays important role in the management of organizational practices along with the conflicting views of Tepper (2000), Kernan et al. (2011) and Loh et al. (2010). As such the issue of abusive supervision, job satisfaction and turnover intention needs to be reinvestigated in the light of power distance as a moderator as it differs in organizations and different cultures. This study addresses this issue by looking at the moderating role of power distance in the relationship of abusive supervision on job

satisfaction and turnover intention.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Abusive Supervision:*

Abusive supervision concept had been initiated by Tepper (2000), who says that the amount to which employees in organization feel that their supervisors are involve in aggressive behavior with them, which can be both verbal and non-verbal, and it excludes physical aggression.

It is usually supposed that ill-treatment to subordinates should experience eminent mental sufferings, i.e. nervousness, sadness, occupational stress and suffer exhaustion (Tepper, 2007). Though, Since, Tepper (2007) renowned, all the subsidiaries could not be manipulated equally by the insulting management e.g. rising protection policies to subsidiaries could create abusive administration or few intimidations toward themselves (Tepper, Moss, Lockhart, & Carr, 2007)

Moreover, perceptions of abusive supervision have also been connected to significant livings and occupational results, i.e. job approval (Tepper, 2000), managerial promise (Duffy & Ferrier, 2003), employment pulling out (Chi & Liang, 2013), living pleasure (Tepper, 2000), family unit disagreement (Hoobler & Hu, 2013), and family's responsibilities fulfilment and performance (Carlson, Ferguson, Perrewé, & Whitten, 2011). In conclusion, worker discernment of obnoxious supervision also have destructive results for associations i.e. harmful effects on proper workout assessments (Harris, Kacmar, & Zivnuska, 2007), mission presentation (Xu, Huang, Lam, & Miao, 2012), and organizational citizenship behaviour (Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). Summarizing these consequences, Schyns and Schilling (2013) offered a review of meta-analysis results linked with awareness of abusive supervision.

According to literature when employee suffers from abusive supervision, it prevents him from doing well to other and helping them. In order to keep balance abusive employee will treat other employees and subordinates negatively. Liu et al. (2010) suggested that due to abusive supervision interpersonal deviance can occur. It can also affect job performance (Harris et al. 2007). Subordinate in working environment want to be treated fairly and want to be encouraged by their supervisor. For this they work hard, honestly and also treat other with respect and consideration. If they are not treated good and fairly and they are abused, they will involve in negative behavior at workplace. They will be less productive and will show negative attitude toward other, also they will be frustrated.

### Abusive Supervision and Job Satisfaction

According to Lambert, Hogan and Barton (2002), job satisfaction refers to feelings which an individual has from his/her job, whether his/her needs are satisfied from the job or not. Literature suggests that in social sector especially service sector job satisfaction is achieved through job enrichment (Herzberg, 2003). Because in such sector satisfaction to the job is not brought by paying them more, rather one can satisfy their workers by non-financial means, for example, creating good working environment, good relation with their supervisors, bringing creativity to their jobs and also bringing variety to their jobs. According to Smith and Shield (2013), in social service sectors employees are more satisfied with their jobs, more motivated and they have the potential to develop employees who are more committed and capable of doing

work properly in order to serve their nation. According to Mitchell, Mackenzie, Styve and Gover (2000), if employees are highly satisfied from their jobs, they will have positive outcomes like employee retention and their performance will increase. On the other hand low job satisfaction has got negative outcomes, increased absenteeism and high turnover (Paoline, Lambert & Hogan, 2006). Schaufeli and Peeters (2000) associate it with employee burnout and also illness like psychosomatic problems. Keashly, Trott and MacLean (1994) noted that less job satisfaction is found among employees who suffered from abusive supervision. According to Richman, Flaherty, Rospenda and Christensen (1992) findings on medical students, supervisory abusing was related with dissatisfaction. Abusive supervision affects job satisfaction negatively and it lowers job satisfaction (Tepper, 2000). This leads to the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Abusive supervision negatively affects job satisfaction

***Turnover intention:***

When employees of organization move beyond the boundaries of organization it refers to employee turnover (Rahman and Naz, 2013). There are three essential parts of the word turnover intention in the withdrawal cognition process, first one refers to when employees have thoughts of quitting the job, second is when employee intent to search for different jobs and the last one is when they intent to quit the job (Carmeli & Weisberg, 2006). Literature suggest that cost incur by organization due to employees turnover is very high, as according to Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski and Erez (2001), the cost related to turnover is very high especially in service providing industries, as they have to incur orientation and training cost too. It suggests that employee retention in service industry is even more important. Turnover intention has been extensively studied and we can find bulk of literature on it. As according to Dawley and Andrews (2012), employee's turnover has got negative effects on effectiveness of organization and it is very important for organization to have limited turnover.

Turnover intention is said to be important because organization have to incur replacement cost and work disruption otherwise (Addae, Parboteah & Davis, 2006) said that turnover intention should be considered to be an aware and conscious determination to leave the organization. This statement suggests turnover intention has negative effects on organization and organization performance as according to Addae et al, (2006) the intent to leave has direct effects on turnover decision. The decision of employees to leave or intention to leave has is unwanted outcome for organization (Rahman and Naz, 2013), that's why the predictors of turnover intention is important to know (Low, Cravens, Grant & Moncrief, 2001).

Employees' turnover intentions have been of major interest in the management literature. After enduring a negative experience in the workplace (abusive supervision), employees may evaluate the situation and question whether to remain in the employment relationship (Turnley & Feldman, 1999). It is likely that if they perceive injustice in the relationship after an abusive supervisory experience and contemplate future mistreatment of the same kind, they will look for employment elsewhere. According to Zapf and Gross (2001), abusive supervision develops and intensify as time goes on. It may start from a conflict between two persons and then reach at high point of intensification. Also he suggests that the abuse behavior change over time. Most of the

abused start with a strategies to solve the conflict in constructive manner, then the strategy may change several times and finally the abused try to quit and leave the organization. Also according to Liu et al. (2009) abusive supervision affects OCB and task performance negatively, while it relates positively to emotional exhaustion and employee turnover. According to Tepper (2000) abusive supervision has got negative effects on turnover intention, mean those employees who experienced abusive supervision more likely to leave the organization. More the abusive supervision more will be turnover intentions. We can hypothesize that,

**H2:** Abusive supervision positively affects turnover intention

***Power Distance:***

According to Hofstede (1980) power distance is the amount to which workers in organizations and in institution agrees that power is unequally distributed. Also power distance is a measure of influence or power perceived by employees which exists between subordinates and a supervisor. Individuals in high power distance culture show that they are afraid of questioning from supervisor and disagreeing with them, while individuals from low power distance culture believes in minimizing the power inequity more. Referring to the level of power distance which exists in society or culture, Farh, Hackett and Liang (2007) suggest that power distance in a society is a tool which shows that how a leader will behave and how he/she will use his/her authority. According to Atwater, Wang, Smither and Fleenor (2009) employees in such culture think that copying manager's behavior is not good and they do not ask for any information from their bosses. Thus according to Farh et al. (2007), employees in high power distance culture do not communicate with their supervisors and hence maintain social distance from their supervisors. On the other hand employees in low power distance culture are equalitarian (favoring social equity) and do not accept authority that much (Lam, Schaubroeck & Aryee, 2002). They perceive that their managers in term of job responsibilities and work experience should be more close to them. As stated by Kirkman et al. (2009), in such case openly and timely communication is expected and preferred from managers or supervisors by employees or subordinates. Power distance is very important dimension of culture as it influences behavior of employees and processes and organization structure. Nagandhi and Prasad (1971) state that: "For me is to say yes to whatever my supervisor asks me to do, rather what I achieve for my company" (P58). It shows the kind of relationship held between supervisors and subordinates in a high power distance culture. Hence, in a culture characterized by high power distance, abusive supervision will be high compared to low power distance cultures.

It can further be argued that that in Pakistani culture where there is high power distance, supervisors will normally involve in abusive supervision. Following the argument of Tepper (2000), job satisfaction and turnover intention is negatively affected by abusive supervision. We can argue that the relationship among abusive supervision, turnover intention and job satisfaction will be moderated by power distance.

Loh et al. (2010) recently provide some support for the study when they compare the impacts of workplace bullying culture having low power distance in Australia and comparatively high power distance culture in Singapore and found that job satisfaction

is negatively affected by workplace bullying and it is higher in Australia rather than Singapore. According to Hofstede (1980), Pakistan has high power distance culture. In high power distance culture, subordinates normally respect their bosses and it has positive effects on job satisfaction and negative effects on turnover intention. Moreover in such culture if there is abusive supervision, subordinates will normally ignore such behavior and it will not affect their job satisfaction and turnover intention behavior, because the element of respect come in between subordinates and supervisors which is due to the high differences of the power between them. So subordinates normally respect their supervisors and if they are abused or if they are not treated well the subordinates do not take it negatively rather they ignore such behavior. From the above discussion we derive the following hypotheses.

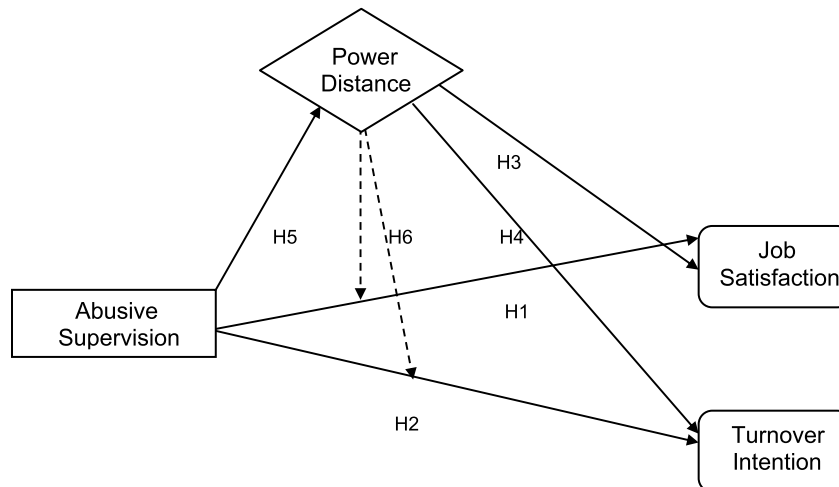
**H3:** Power distance has a significant positive effect on Job satisfaction

**H4:** Power distance has a significant negative effect on turnover intention

**H5:** Power distance moderates the relation between abusive supervision and job satisfaction

**H6:** Power distance moderates the relation between abusive supervision and turnover intention

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



### RESEARCH DESIGN

#### *Population and Sample Organizations:*

To check the affects of abusive supervision on job satisfaction and turnover intention in the light of Power distance as a moderator, this study was conducted in organizations of three different sectors (Education, Hospitals, and NGOs) having varying level of organizational cultures. These included SZABIST, MAJU, Bahria university, Quaid-e-Azam international hospital, Al-Shifa international, Water Aid, WHO, UNICEF, World Vision and UNDP.



### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Questionnaires were distributed among the mid level and supervisory level management of the sample organizations. Abusive supervision was measured through fifteen questions on a 5 point likert scale adopted from Tepper (2000). The Job satisfaction was measured through five questions on a five point likert scale developed by Wright and Cropanzo (1998). Employees Turnover Intention was measured through 3 item scales developed by Irving, Coleman and Cooper (1997). The scale had 3 questions and respondents had to respond on 5 point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). To measure the power distance, the scale developed by Organ (1988) was used. The scale had 5 questions and respondents had to respond on 5 point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The collected data was analyzed using regression as the appropriate statistical tool.

### RESULTS

For the verification of all the six hypotheses mentioned in literature review, regression analysis was performed with each dependent variable differently, first with job satisfaction and then with turnover intention. More it was run in three steps for both the dependents variables. In the first step, the independent variables (IVs) were related with dependent variables (DV), in the second step, the moderating variables (MV) with DV and in third step IV and DV were related and then clicked next to relate IV\*MV. Detailed analysis along with the corresponding steps is shown in table 4 below.

To test the hypothesized relationship between abusive supervision and job satisfaction, this study also resulted the same findings that abusive supervision negatively affects job satisfaction as the value of  $\beta$  and its significance level from table given below shows it ( $\beta = -.26^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). So from this result hypothesis H#1 is accepted. Regarding hypothesis 2, it was hypothesized that abusive supervision affects turnover intention negatively is also accepted, as the value of  $\beta$  and its significance level given in table below shows it ( $\beta = .28^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The positive hypothesized relationship between power distance and job satisfaction was also tested using regression analysis. Results found a significant positive relationship between the two and the value of  $\beta$  and its level of significance confirms it ( $\beta = .28^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence hypothesis 3 is also substantiated. In the similar way, the negative relationship between power distance and employees turnover intention was also found significant ( $\beta = .71^{***}$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and hence the hypothesis is supported.

Hypothesis 5 stated a moderating influence of power distance on the relationship between abusive supervision on employees' job satisfaction. The Baron and Kenny (1986) analysis was performed to check whether power distance moderates the relationship of abusive supervision and employees' job satisfaction. Result confirmed a significant moderating influence of power distance between these two variables ( $\beta = .16^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and hence H5 was supported.

The last hypothesis, H6 is also accepted which has been hypothesized in literature review that power distance moderates the relation between abusive supervision and turnover intention such that higher the power distance more weak will be the direct relationship and it is confirmed from the value of  $\beta$  and its significance level given in the table below ( $\beta = -.7^{***}$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 4. Results of regression analysis

Steps	Job Satisfaction			Turnover Intention		
	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Step1 <b>Abusive Supervision</b>	-.26***	.11***	.11***	.28**	.04**	.04**
Step2 <b>Power Distance</b>	.28***	.1***	.09***	-.71***	.21***	.21***
Step3 <b>MOD</b>	.16**	.2**	.19**	-.7***	.4***	.39***

Note: N=216,

Step 1: Control variable

Step 2: Independent variables

Step 3: Mod: Product of abusive supervision (IV) and moderator power distance

## DISCUSSION

As it has been hypothesized in literature review and also according to Keashl et al. (1994), Richman et al. (1992) and Tepper (2000) found that abusive supervision is negatively related with job satisfaction and those employees who suffer from abusive supervision had low job satisfaction. Also in this study result is same as according to the past studies and also according to the hypothesis. The employees in organizations suffering from abusive supervision have low job satisfaction and inversely related to abusive supervision.

Liu et al. (2009), Zapf and Gross (2001), Turnley & Feldman (1999) and Tepper (2000) have found in their respective studies that abusive supervision has got positive effects on turnover intention. If abusive supervision in organization will increase and supervisors will get involve in abusing their employees it will affect turnover intention and employees will have the intention to leave the jobs and they will start looking for another jobs. The results of this study are also in accordance to the literature. In this study it has also been found that abusive supervision is positively and directly related to the turnover intention.

In literature review it was hypothesized that power distance will have positive effect on job satisfaction and will have negative effects on turnover intention and both of the hypothesis are accepted as it is evident from the above tables that there correlation and regression are significant. The result is according in the support of past study which shows that culture having high power distance subordinates usually respects those who are high in status (Kernan et al, 2011, Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, Loh et al, 2010). So if the power distance in culture or an organization is high, subordinates show strong respect to their bosses and supervisors which will to high job satisfaction and low turnover intention.

In the last two hypotheses it was hypothesized that power distance will moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and its effects on job satisfaction and turnover intentions and the results given in the above tables of correlation and regression show that, power distance does moderate their relationship. Both of the hypotheses of moderation in literature review have been accepted. The results of the past studies show that in high power distance culture subordinate normally respect their bosses. According Loh et al (2010) while comparing the results of workplace bullying in high



power distance Singapore with comparatively low power distance culture Australia found that it has got low impact on job satisfaction in Singapore as compared to Australia and when there will be job satisfaction then turnover intention will be low.

Also according to Kernan et al (2011) abusive supervision as compared to low power distance culture may be more in culture having high power distance and in such cultures subordinates then respect their bosses and it affect their job satisfaction positively and turnover intention negatively as it has been found in this paper. If the supervisors are involve in abusive supervision and that abuse their employees, still the factor of high power distance between them will play positive role and will affect the outcomes of abusive supervision such as job satisfaction and turnover intention. Employees will still respect their bosses and supervisors even if they are not treated well and are abused, Employees normally ignore such behavior then and show strong respect to their bosses and supervisors which will lead to positive results. Also according to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) in high power distance culture subordinates show strong respect to their bosses. So if there is abusive supervision and employees get suffer from it, still due to the element of the respect it will not affect their satisfaction level and turnover intention. In high power distance culture subordinates normally ignore such behavior and listen to and do whatever their supervisors, elders or those who have high status ask them to do.

#### **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study is also not free of limitations and there are few methodological limitations of the study. First this study was conducted only in sectors such as health; education and NGOs sectors only. Though it has a wider scope, however, in future it can be replicated by collecting data from different other sectors such as food sector, other service sectors etc. Also the study was conducted in the few organizations of mentioned sectors, to get more accurate and generalize results for the mentioned sectors data can be gathered from few more organizations in the sectors. The study was only conducted in private sectors which have comparatively more flat and low power distance organizations, while in future the study can be conducted public sectors organization where job natures are different and mostly have permanent jobs. More, sample size of the study was less, while in future it can be conducted with more sample size to make the data more accurate and reliable, so that we can generalize the results. This study was only conducted in organizations which are located in Islamabad, while in future the study can be extended to other cities of Pakistan especially KPK side, because as compare to Islamabad their tolerance is low. The sampling techniques used for the study was snow ball and convenient sampling technique, while in future it can be replicated with probability sampling. Also in future the moderator can be replace with Hofstede (1980) other cultural dimension such as individualism and collectivism, as in collectivist society people are highly dependent on other and they want to work in group.

#### **MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION**

The managers and supervisors in any organization should avoid abusive supervision and should not engage in any negative behavior with subordinates as it affects their job satisfaction and increase their turnover intention, which can lead to actual turnover then. To have proper atmosphere and good working environment managers and supervisors

should be friendly with their subordinates and should have friendly and proper environment to have more efficient and productive environment. More supervisors and managers should avoid such behavior because it can affect their relationship and can damage their long term relationship, although here in Pakistan culture due to high power distance subordinates ignore such behavior and respect their supervisors. Due to abusive supervision the relationship between subordinates and bosses can suffer. Supervisors and bosses should focus on long term relationship with their employees to have more productive, efficient organization and to have better workplace for all employees.

### CONCLUSION

Job satisfaction is very important factor, so for organization it is very important to create satisfaction in employees, so that they can give maximum output for the organization. Moreover, organizations have to take care of all those factors which can reduce employee's satisfaction. Also turnover intention is another important factor to be considered by an organization as according to literature it is the direct predictor of actual turnover. More it can cost organization badly in term of many factors such as it disrupts the work and also according to literature organization has to incur additional costs., so organization should retain their employees and should take care of those factors which positively affects turnover intention, one of those factors is abusive supervision which is studied in this study also. Pakistan has high power distance culture and in such culture those who are high in status, high in power and those who are elder are respected by their subordinate and those who are younger, it does has positive effects on job satisfaction and negative effects on turnover intention. In such culture job satisfaction is high and turnover intention is low due to power distance.

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