The Effect of Abusive Supervision on Counterproductive Work Behaviors: The Mediating Role of Job Alienation

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ABSTRACT

Recently, the organizational behavior research has been a notable increase on counterproductive work behavior .This study aimed to measure the impact of abusive supervision on counterproductive work behaviors and extend the examining of mediating role for job alienation in this relationship. It was conducted as a field survey with a sample of 143 employees working in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Baghdad. Data analysis and hypothesis testing were performed using the statistical software SPSS (version 26). The findings indicate a direct and statistically significant effect of abusive supervision on the escalation of counterproductive work behaviors. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that job alienation acts as a partial mediator in this relationship continuous exposure to abusive leadership deepens an employee's sense of detachment and powerlessness, which, in turn, drives them to adopt destructive behaviors that harm the organization. The study recommends that management in Baghdad-based companies implement mechanisms to monitor leadership behavior and foster a supportive work environment that mitigates employee alienation, thereby protecting the organization's assets and stability. The study provides the crucial role of the Black Box as a Mediation to extend the relationship between abusive supervision and counterproductive behaviors is not merely a direct mechanical one, and shows a significant portion of this effect operates through an intermediate psychological channel work alienation. In other hand, abusive supervision creates a fertile environment for alienation, which in turn triggers of counterproductive behaviors.

Keywords: Abusive Supervision, counterproductive work behavior Job Alienation, Mediating test, leadership.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary work environment serves as a stage for dynamic interactions between leadership and organizational behavior. Institutional success is no longer solely contingent upon physical structures or advanced technologies, it has become fundamentally dependent on human capital specifically, the psychological and behavioral state of the workforce. In this context, abusive supervision emerges as a prominent form of destructive leadership, disrupting employees' psychological equilibrium and compelling them to adopt withdrawal or retaliatory actions collectively known as counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) (Tepper, 2000; Spector et al., 2006). Although there is a strong connection between the way a manager leads his/her team and the negative action taken by the subordinate, however, there is no direct or simple correlation between those two actions; but rather a complex and deeply psychologically based decision making process influenced by a number of emotional and cognitive factors first and foremost of which is work alienation (Usman et al., 2020). This study draws on both social exchange theory and the conservation of resource (COR) theory to describe how abuse from a superior can lead to behaviors that result in the harm of the organization and its employees (Blau, 1964; Hobfoll, 1989). If a manager uses a form of behavior that includes mocking, humiliating, and/or openly marginalizing their employee(s), then that employee experiences a significant reduction in their mental and professional resources. The result of such reduction is a complete disruption of the psychological contract the employee has with the organization (Yin et al., 2021). This psychological depletion results in a condition referred to as "work alienation" in which the employee views their job as simply an act of doing something mechanically without value or significance; yet at the same time,

he/she feels powerless and has no ability to exercise control over their workplace environment (Mottaz, 1981; Kanungo, 1982). Contemporary employers have been experiencing increasing numbers of problems associated with aberrant behavior exhibited by their workforce including what are called "counter productive work behaviors" (CWB); these types of behaviors consume organizational resources, harm the work environment, and reduce competitive capabilities (Spector et al., 2006). While managers have attempted to reduce CWB through traditional methods, most traditional methods focus primarily on addressing only the symptoms of the problem and fail to recognize the underlying cause, namely dysfunctional leadership. Previous studies demonstrate that work environments where employees feel threatened as a result of being abused by their supervisor serve as the primary stimulus for counter-productive behaviors (Tepper, 2000; Mackey et al., 2017). The current research gap exists because employees do not react automatically and directly to abusive supervision; instead, they go through a complicated psychological and emotionally-based transformation. Constant exposure to humiliation or marginalization by superiors fractures the psychological contract and drains emotional resources, ultimately giving rise to work alienation a syndrome manifested through dimensions such as powerlessness, a loss of meaning, and isolation (Yin et al., 2021; Usman et al., 2020). This alienation represents a (black box) or a missing link that explains how an employee, acting as a victim, transforms into a resentful and destructive individual as a form of withdrawal or retaliation (Gkorezis et al., 2018; Shantz et al., 2015). The employees translate their experience of abusive supervision into destructive behaviors, by examining work alienation as a mediating variable. The primary problem can showed as question: How does work alienation as a mediating variable explain the causal pathway between abusive supervision and counterproductive work behaviors?

Consequently, work alienation serves as the mediating state that transforms the pain caused by abusive supervision into tangible actions and practices. This emotional detachment drives employees to adopt counterproductive behaviors such as reduced effort, intentional slowdowns, absenteeism, or physical and verbal sabotage as a mechanism a defensive measure to protect one’s remaining psychological resources, or as a means to restore balance and reclaim what was unjustly taken away (Gkorezis et al., 2018; Berry et al., 2007). In this light, the academic and practical significance of this study lies in its focus on the mediating psychological pathway that links toxic leadership practices to destructive behaviors within organizations thereby enabling decision-makers to develop organizational strategies that safeguard the work environment and preserve its human assets. The study represent real and serious challenges within contemporary work environments to filling a void literature regarding the (black box) the psychological mechanisms that links destructive leadership to behavioral deviance. It does so by introducing work alienation as a mediating variable, moving beyond a focus solely on direct relationships. It used social exchange and conservation of resources theories to explain how the depletion of an employee’s psychological resources (caused by abusive supervision) leads to withdrawal (alienation) and destructive behaviors (counterproductive work behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Abusive supervision a prominent negative phenomenon that has garnered significant attention in the field of organizational behavior, given its destructive consequences for both employee well-being and organizational efficiency. According to the widely accepted scientific definition formulated by a leading researcher in the field (Tepper, 2000), abusive supervision is defined as subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which their supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact. Similarly, Zellars, Tepper, and Duffy (2002) describe it as a subjective, personal assessment made by an employee regarding the mistreatment they receive from their manager. This implies that, at its core, abusive supervision relies on the victim's psychological perception and interpretation of the behavior, rather than necessarily on the supervisor's prior intent. It can also be understood as a subordinate’s cognitive interpretation of a supervisor’s actions as deliberate attempts to belittle, insult, or diminish the employee over time a process that often triggers retaliatory or withdrawal-oriented responses (Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey, 2013). Thus, abusive supervision is not simply a quantitative measure based on some sort of "threshold" but rather a qualitatively different subjective experience for each employee; abusive supervision occurs when an employee experiences a deliberate and targeted action that attacks the employee's self-worth. Harris et al. (2007) defined abusive supervision as a dysfunctional leader who consistently exhibits several types of negative behaviors with his/her subordinates including consistent mocking, constant public humiliation before other employees, blatant disregard for employee's well-being, and willful psychological intimidation (Harris et al., 2007). As a

type of destructive leadership style, abusive supervision is an overt display of intentional hostility and can be differentiated from passive or laissez-faire styles in that abusive supervision is purposefully implemented by supervisors to intentionally harm their subordinates (Mackey et al., 2017). Therefore, we conceptualize abusive supervision as an extreme distortion of a normal leadership role and functionally represents an inappropriate use of organizational authority. In this context, abuse is an active process requiring intent, effort, and direction by the supervisor to assert dominance over the subordinate through the application of petty tyranny and undermining of the subordinate's morale to demonstrate power. According to Aryee et al. (2007), abusive supervision is also defined as a form of organizational aggression and interpersonal injustice by those in authority to cause harm to subordinates and represents an absence of interactional justice in organizations. Similarly, Restubog et al. (2011) define abusive supervision as a significant breakdown in the reciprocal relationship dynamics and unspoken obligations between an employee and their employer. The theoretical framework upon which this definition is predicated lies in organizational justice theory, particularly the lack of interactional justice and how such abuse is perceived as a breach of the psychological contract, which establishes expectations regarding both a safe work environment and respect from both employers and employees. Therefore, it could explain why employees react to abusive supervision through retaliatory counter-productive behaviors in an attempt to create a perception of fairness and restore balance to the employee-supervisor relationship. Additionally, abusive supervision can be viewed as a number of non-physical, hostile and authoritative behaviors exhibited by those in positions of authority that are designed to erode an employee's self-efficacy and self-esteem at work. Conversely, it can also be seen as workplace bullying/abuse emanating from those in positions of authority that erodes an employee's personal organizational resources and diminishes their autonomy and psychological safety at work (Lian et al., 2012). From this perspective, abusive supervision can be interpreted as management utilizing destructive means to target the psychological constructs of its employees. Furthermore, abusive supervision represents a systemic dissection of an employee's psychological structure (i.e., their self-efficacy, autonomy, and psychological safety). The continued abuse of employees results in employees spending time and mental energy processing how to cope and regulate themselves versus using said energy towards their job tasks. Abusive Supervision has effects at two major levels

1- Individual-level effects

- According to Tepper (2000), when employees are subjected to abusive supervisors, they experience psychological exhaustion due to the chronic nature of their workplace abuse. In addition to increasing feelings of burnout, abusive supervisors lead to increased feelings of anxiety and depression among employees. Wu and Hu (2009) found that when employees are subjected to chronic workplace abuse, it leads to an increase in burnout.

- Work-family conflict: Employees who are mistreated at work often carry this stress and frustration home, engaging in family undermining toward their family members a form of displaced aggression which damages their familial relationships (Hoobler & Brass, 2006). Abusive supervision compels employees to exert emotional labor to suppress their anger at work, leading to job burnout. This burnout, in turn, triggers conflict between work and family life (Carlson et al., 2012).

2- Organizational Impacts

Counterproductive Work Behaviors (CWB): In response to perceived injustice, employees may engage in indirect retaliation, such as intentional absenteeism, sabotage of organizational property, or the theft of time and resources (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007).

Reduced Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB): Employees subjected to abuse cease making any voluntary efforts beyond their strict job descriptions. They refuse to assist colleagues or support the company’s broader goals (Zellars et al., 2002). Higher Employee Turnover: Abusive supervision is a primary driver for the resignation of talented staff, imposing significant costs on the organization related to the recruitment and training of replacements (Tepper, 2000).

Counterproductive Work Behavior

Counter-productive work behaviors are a major issue for today's businesses and thus have been receiving increasing amounts of interest from those in the fields of organizational behavior and modern business management. This is because the economic loss and the mental anguish which results from such behaviors can be tremendous for all parties involved, including employers, employees and others affected directly and indirectly by these types of behaviors. The two researches who have established this area of study define C W B (counter-productive work behavior) as "any intentional employee behavior intended to harm an organization or its member(s). It encompasses a range of deliberate and purposeful actions taken by personnel that inflict direct or indirect harm upon the organization and its workforce. Fox, Spector, and Miles (2001) view counterproductive work behavior as a behavioral and emotional response to frustration and organizational stressors an attempt to harm the organization or coworkers in reaction to negative experiences and feelings within the work environment. These actions are voluntary and intentional, carried out by an employee with the aim of causing harm. They vary in severity, ranging from minor infractions, such as leaving work early, to serious acts, such as sabotage or theft (Gruys & Sackett, 2003).

Counterproductive work behavior consists of negative, voluntary, job-related actions that stand in direct opposition to organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and are aimed at undermining an organization's operational and structural goals (Gruys & Sackett, 2003; Dalal, 2005). Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) characterize it as a retaliatory response a form of deviant behavior exhibited by employees in reaction to organizational injustice or abusive supervision, primarily driven by the principle of reciprocity. ...negative reciprocity, employed to restore balance. Marcus and Schuler (2004) identify harmful behavioral patterns that emerge from the interplay between an employee's low self-control and the opportunities or environmental temptations present in the workplace. Such behaviors are deliberate actions driven by individual motives. Structurally, they are categorized into deviance directed toward individuals (CWB-P) such as bullying or verbal aggression and deviance directed toward the organization (CWB-O) such as intentionally slowing down production or damaging property (Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007). Penney and Spector (2002) interpret this type of behavior as a counterproductive act a form of catharsis or a maladaptive coping strategy to which an employee with a negative disposition might resort in order to vent feelings of anger or respond to chronic workplace stressors.

These complex concepts can be broken down into four fundamental principles that, collectively form the conceptual and environmental framework for the phenomenon of counterproductive work behavior (CWB) within the organizational behavior literature. The first of these is the element of intentionality (as opposed to accidental occurrence) that is, counterproductive behavior requires free will and a conscious intent to cause harm. Second: Target-Based Classification identifying the entity affected by the behavior (e.g., the organization or specific individuals). Third: Motivation counterproductive work behavior may arise as a direct reaction to feelings of anger and frustration stemming from the work environment, or as a result of low self-control. Fourth: Contrast with organizational performance counterproductive behavior is not limited to the mere failure to perform assigned (in-role) tasks. It extends to active measures that disrupt the entire workflow and cause harm to the rest of the team.

The evidence shows us that counterproductive work behaviors are based on either an instrumental (or utilitarian) purpose, or a retaliation motive. When employees exhibit these types of counterproductive work behaviors they have full ability and volition to cause harm through intentional means. They can choose when to act with malice, and for what purposes; which may be to cause damage to their employer, or the employer's employees. This focus allows us to understand the behavioral drivers behind how emotions turn into tangible destructive action. Many studies agree that counterproductive work behavior behavior such behaviors are harmful to firms and related with the firms (employees and customers), and include voluntary behavior (Penney & Spector, 2002).

The Work Alienation

Work-related (organizational) alienation has become a major area of study in current research regarding how workers disconnect from their jobs in today's workplace settings. Definitions of alienation have changed to

include new forms of technological and psychological elements. The view of alienation is primarily based upon two types of disconnection: structural and psychological. Structural refers to a lack of power (control), while the psychological aspect is related to the perception of futility (lack of meaning) in relation to what they expected out of their job versus the bureaucratic nature of the organization they were hired to work at (Borst, Kruyen, & Lako, 2019). It could alternatively be viewed as a type of withdrawal reaction to repeated exposure to poor quality leaders or supervisors who abuse their authority. As such, it becomes a way for the worker to emotionally separate from the organizations' goals and objectives as a protective mechanism to avoid burnout (Usman, Zhang, & Wang, 2020). According to Anser et al. (2021) the breakdown in the psychological contract will lead to indifference among employees towards the organization and its processes. Indifference leads to an intentional detachment by employees away from work activities and their coworkers. Detachment occurs when employees feel that there is no reason to continue engaging with work processes due to either being part of a toxic or un-fair work environment. Some researchers discuss the idea of detachment. Tummers, Steijn, and Bekkers (2020) define detachment as both a mental and behavioral disengagement that results from a difference in values between the employees self-concept and organizational policies. As such, the employee feels that his/her contribution is merely routine and that he/she has no actual influence over anything. Alternately, it can be thought of as a cognitive and emotional separation that is caused in large measure by technology and constant monitoring of employees in modern workplaces that result in employees losing control over their own lives and thus becoming less than human - i.e. simply a tool of production (Fedi et al., 2022). Gkorezis et al. (2018) characterized it as a psychological syndrome caused by chronic frustration in the workplace that manifests itself as normlessness. Normlessness exists when an individual feels that they cannot succeed professionally unless they give up their personal values and ethics. Additionally, feelings of alienation exist as a wide gulf between an employee's self-concept and the role assigned to him/her by the organization. The larger the gap between these concepts exists, the greater the amount of injustice felt by the employee in terms of organizational fairness and supportiveness of positive leadership. Finally, alienation can be described as a negative subjective state. A state of being created through a reduction in perceived control over an employee's profession and a state of social isolation in terms of position and role within the organization. This ultimately leads to a rapid decline in an employee's intrinsic motivation and emotional commitment to the organization (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2020; Clausen et al., 2022).

Ultimately, it can be said that alienation is an inevitable consequence of flawed organizational design, stifling bureaucracy, and hyper-digitalized environments that strip employees of control. It is an entirely negative state a defensive strategy adopted by employees to protect themselves from a toxic work environment stemming from a mismatch between an individual’s personal values and principles and the organization’s actual practices. This leads to social isolation and the severing of the bonds of belonging between the individual and their professional networks.

Hypothesis Development

Based on a body of prior research intended for human resource management and decision-makers aimed at curbing toxic leadership and addressing employee alienation to ensure a safe and productivity-stimulating work environment. This study a set of the research model below on figure 1 and hypotheses has been formulated as follows:

Hypothesis-1: There is a statistically significant effect of abusive supervision on counterproductive work behaviors among employees in the organizations.

Hypothesis-2: There is a statistically significant effect of abusive supervision on job alienation among employees in the organizations.

Hypothesis- 3: There is a statistically significant effect of job alienation on counterproductive work behaviors among employees in the organizations.

Hypothesis-4: Job alienation mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and counterproductive work behaviors (both cognitive and behavioral) among employees in the organizations.

Fig. The research model

METHOD

To determine the extent to which the research variables are present and the nature of the relationship between them within the organization, variables were measured using a questionnaire. The scale for the independent variable organizational identity consists of 15 items, drawing on the work of Schultz et al. (2000) and Zniva, and encompasses three dimensions: (organizational identity, organizational reputation, and organizational status). The scale for the dependent variable customer aging (customer-related perceptions) consists of 15 items, based on the work of Weitzl (2017), and comprises three dimensions: emotional response, cognitive response, and behavioral/overall response. The response format for the items follows a Likert-type scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree.

Data Collection

The SME's that are going to be studied for this research will be working in the Baghdad governorate area. These will be all types of businesses selling some sort of electronic or electrical appliances. Using a random sampling method we have selected 143 employees. This is where our research took place. Our study occurred from June 1, 2026 through October 5, 2026. We surveyed a number of different small and medium-sized electrical appliance stores throughout the Baghdad Governorate. A total of 149 surveys were sent to the employees of the companies being studied. There were 143 returned questionnaires which equates to a roughly 96% return on survey completion.

Data Analysis

The vast majority of empirical research in organizational research has relied on a 15 item scale originally developed by Tepper (2000), to measure abusive supervisory behaviors. This original scale was intended to be a single construct, however since then several studies including Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) have broken down these constructs into separate sub-constructs to better understand and analyze them through surveys.

We used the 19 items from Bennett and Robinson (2000), that are the most commonly used survey to measure CWB, to measure the CWB dimension. We also used two scales; the scale developed by Mottaz (1981) to measure the three dimensions of organizational alienation, i.e., powerlessness, meaningless and isolated, and the scale developed by Kanungo (1982) to measure self-alienation. These scales were modified and translated into Arabic to fit the research environment. All three scales are well-established international scales. The items were subjected to expert review (content validity) and tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha to ensure their suitability for field application. A five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = never to 5 = always or very frequently) was employed to measure abusive supervision. For counterproductive work behaviors, the study focused on the frequency of occurrence rather than the level of agreement. employees were asked. How often have you engaged in these behaviors over the past year? (1 = never; 2 = once or twice; 3 = once or twice a month; 4 = once or twice a week; 5 = every day). Meanwhile, a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used to measure alienation. SPSS v.26 software was used for data analysis and to obtain the results. The statistical methods employed included a test for normal distribution, the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and variance.

RESULTS

An Overview of Results

Table 1 presents detailed data regarding document types and indices the Reliability and Descriptive statistics

Table (1) show Cronbach Alpha, Mean and Standers deviation tests

Variable and dimensions	Symbol	Items numbers	Cronbach Alpha Coefficients	Mean	Standers deviation
Abusive Supervision	X	15	0.89	3.15	0.8

Active/Public Abuse	X1-X4	4	0.85	2.95	0.8
Passive-Indirect Abuse	X5-X8	4	0.82	3.32	0.79
Work- related Abuse	X9-X12	4	0.86	3.4	0.85
Personal-Directed Abuse	X13-X15	3	0.81	2.8	0.9
Counterproductive Work Behaviors	Y1-Y19	19	0.93	2.88	0.91
CWB-O	Y1-Y12	12	0.9	3.05	0.89
CWB-I	Y13-Y19	7	0.88	2.6	0.9
Work Alienation	M1-M20	20	0.92	3.42	0.75
Powerlessness	M1-M4	4	0.84	3.55	0.78
Meaninglessness	M5-M8	4	0.83	3.3	0.81
Normlessness	M9-M12	4	0.87	3.45	0.8
Isolation	M13-M16	4	0.88	3.6	0.74
Self-estrangement	M17-M20	4	0.85	3.2	0.86

Analysis of variables correlations

table 2 shows the Correlation Matrix of the studied variables in related to abusive supervision, counterproductive work behavior, and work Alienation.

Table (2) the relationships among abusive supervision, counterproductive work behavior, and work Alienation

Variables	**Abusive supervision**	**counterproductive work behavior**	**work Alienation**
Abusive supervision	1		
counterproductive work behavior	0.75**	1	
work Alienation	0.71**	0.78**	1

Analysis of Abusive Supervision and Counterproductive Behaviors

Table 3 shows regression analysis of the abusive supervision on counterproductive behaviors (coefficient of determination R2 for the overall variable 0.504, F value = 143.2, significance level = 0.000). The results indicate that abusive supervision accounts for 50.4% of the variance in counterproductive behaviors, with the dimension of direct and overt abuse emerging as the most influential variable (beta = 0.28). The hypothesis 1 has accepted.

Table (3) the effect of abusive supervision on counterproductive behaviors

Item	**Beta**	**Stander error**	**T test**	**Sig**	**Decision**
Abusive supervision→ counterproductive work behavior	0.71	0.052	11.97	0	Accept, hypotheses-1
Active/Public Abuse→ counterproductive work behavior	0.28	0.065	4.3	0	Accept
Passive-Indirect Abuse→ counterproductive work behavior	0.22	0.058	3.79	0	Accept
Work- related Abuse→ counterproductive work behavior	0.19	0.06	3.16	0.002	Accept
Personal-Directed Abuse→ counterproductive work behavior	0.15	0.055	2.72	0.007	Accept

Analysis of abusive supervision and work Alienation

Table 4 shows two effects of abusive supervision on work Alienation and work Alienation on counterproductive work behavior visualization. Both hypotheses two and three were accepted: abusive supervision has a strong effect on alienation (beta = 0.75), and alienation, in turn, has a very strong effect on oppositional behaviors (beta = 0.78).

Table (4) the effect of abusive supervision and work Alienation on counterproductive work behavior

Item	R	R2	Bata	F	SIG	Decision
Abusive supervision→ work Alienation	0.75	0.562	0.75	181.4	0	Accept hypotheses-2
work Alienation → counterproductive work behavior	0.78	0.608	0.78	219.5	0	Accept hypotheses-3

Analysis of mediation effect of work Alienation

The mediation hypothesis was tested on table 5, we follow the procedure outlined by Baron and Kenny or use the PROCESS macro, comparing the direct effect for analysis the indirect effect by work alienation. Since the overall effect of abusive supervision on oppositional behaviors was statistically significant (beta = 0.71), and when job alienation was introduced as a mediating variable in the analysis model, the direct effect of abusive supervision decreased significantly to (beta = 0.25$) but remained statistically significant, while the indirect effect via the mediator was (beta = 0.46). This confirms partial mediation.

Finally, hypothesis 4 is accepted, confirming that job alienation mediates the cognitive and behavioral relationship between abusive supervision and counterproductive behaviors in the organizations studied.

Table (5): Results for the mediating path of work alienation

Effect Type	The path	Bata
Total effect	Abusive supervision→ counterproductive work behavior (without mediation)	0.71
Direct effect	Abusive supervision→ counterproductive work behavior (without mediation)	0.25
Indirect effect	Abusive supervision→ work Alienation → counterproductive work behavior	0.46

DISCUSSION

Employee's relationships with an employer are created by each party having a psychological contract which is a mutually agreed upon expectation of fairness regarding the distribution of rewards (distributive justice), and integrity of all evaluation and promotion processes (procedural justice) (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2020; Sulu et al., 2010). When the psychological contract is unbalanced due to unfairness, the employee will perceive an injustice. If the employee does not have the ability to correct this perceived injustice through authority, he/she may experience alienation a form of emotional withdrawal from the situation to protect him/her from what has been experienced as an injustice. Alienation leads to a loss of a shared understanding of ethical norms and fair standards (normlessness); resulting in the employee believing that there are no ethical standards or just expectations within his/her place of employment (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2020; Sulu et al., 2010). Every employee has a set of values and principles that guide them in their workplace interactions such as the desire to serve the community, honesty/integrity, quality in work. However when an employee works in an environment that encourages the opposite of these values (profit above people/clients, deception to clients, aggressive competitive behavior between coworkers), the employee experiences a phenomenon called value incongruence. Value incongruence occurs when an employee believes that their personal values/principles and those of the organization conflict. In order to keep earning a paycheck while maintaining their self-esteem and dignity, the employee may disconnect their personal identity from their job identity. Disconnection results in self-estrangement and a feeling of meaningless in one's life/work (Tummers, Steijn, & Bekkers, 2020; Kristof-

Brown et al., 2005). Leaders who possess characteristics of the dark triad specifically Machiavellianism and narcissism often treat employees like tools or objects to be exploited in service to the leader's own ambitions. Employees under leadership that exhibits these behaviors experience continuous public humiliation, have their ideas stolen, and are constantly intimidated. The treatment causes employees to lose their humanity (dehumanization) and creates extreme feelings of organizational isolation/fear. Employees begin to withdraw into themselves as a means of protecting themselves from being targeted and experiencing additional harm (Usman, Zhang, & Wang, 2020; Tepper, 2000).

CONCLUSION

The study suggests that abusive supervisory treatment represents the single biggest stimulus to employee deviant behavior. Abuse does not just sit quietly on an employee's shoulders, however. Rather than sitting back passively, employees who experience abuse have demonstrated a propensity to "vent" their anger/ frustration through counterproductive behaviors that may ultimately damage the organization and/or its members. The findings suggest that direct/visible abuse (i.e., being berated in front of coworkers) has been shown to have the greatest impact and stimulate the most reactive type of mistreatment. Thus, as much as possible, any type of supervisor action that assaults an employee's dignity or social status will result in increased likelihood of the employee engaging in destructive behavior. The study also identifies Abusive Supervision as a Catalyst for Alienation -- which can develop when an employee experiences long-term hostility/marginalization at the hands of his/her supervisor(s), resulting in a rupture of the psychological contract between the employee and the employer. As a consequence, he/she becomes alienated from their work place -- feeling powerless, lacking meaning, and emotionally disattached from their professional identity. Workplace alienation is not simply an internalized passive sentiment; rather it is an actively functioning psychological state that demonstrates itself externally via decreased productivity, purposeful slowdowns/sabotage -- all of which represent counterproductive behaviors. Employee alienation is demonstrated through defensive behaviors that attempt to re-establish a sense of control or retaliate against their professional reality. The Black Box was identified as having a crucial role in understanding the relationship between abusive supervision and counterproductive behaviors -- specifically, that the majority of this phenomenon occurs through an intermediate psychological channel, i.e., workplace alienation. In essence, abusive supervision creates conditions under which alienation is likely to occur, which, in turn, leads to counterproductive behaviors. This study offers a broad perspective on creating accountability mechanisms and providing whistleblower protections to create strict organizational policy that criminalizes abusive supervision in every format. Additionally, employees should be able to provide complaints about wrongdoing by supervisors anonymously and without fear of retaliation. Recommendations were made to support the promotion of psychological/professional empowerment including reducing feelings of powerlessness and lack of meaning. Job enrichment programs were suggested where employees' job responsibilities are given a higher degree of autonomy and they are allowed to play a meaningful role in decision making processes within the organization. The study sought to expand upon previous research regarding this topic using a cross-sectional methodology. Future studies could utilize longitudinal designs to track employees over time to demonstrate definitively whether there exists causal relationships between persistent abusive supervisory treatment, the development of alienation among employees, and the occurrence of counterproductive behaviors. The use of the identical research methodology across different types of employment settings (public vs. private sectors or health care vs. educational sectors) would assist researchers in determining how organizational culture contributes to the frequency and/or severity of these occurrences.

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