

Cultural Roots: Investigating Personal Identification Mechanisms between Work Life Conflicts and Abusive Supervision

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Abstract

Abusive supervision has become a problematic issue in Pakistan and across the world. The victims of abusive supervision adversely affect their wellbeing and self-worth. Thus, this study has measured the effect of abusive supervision on work family conflict, work life conflict, surface acting, and the effect of work-life-conflict on family satisfaction. The theoretical grounding of the developed conceptual framework is based on past literature. The scale and measures of the constructs used in the study have been adapted from the earlier developed scales. The scope of the study was restricted to the textile sector. The sample size for the study was 397 and the response rate was 95%. All the four developed hypotheses were accepted. The strongest effect of abusive supervision was on work family conflict, followed by work life conflict and surface acting. The effect of family-work-conflict on family satisfaction was the lowest.

Keywords: *Abusive Supervision, Work-Family-Conflict, Work-Life-Conflict, Surface Acting, Family Satisfaction*

Introduction

In the modern world, abusive supervision at the work place has become a bitter reality. According to an estimate, about 14% of the workforce in the US is a victim to it (Farh & Chen, 2014). Studies found that abusive supervision at work place adversely affects job dissatisfaction and increases workplace deviance (Henle & Gross, 2014; Tepper, Simon, & Park, 2017). Researchers on the

effects of abusive supervision found that internal factors within the organization also increase family abuses. For example, early research on this issue found subordinates who are victim to abusive behavior will show hostility towards their family member (Mackey, Frieder, Perrewé, Gallagher, & Brymer, 2015). Abusive supervision not only affects subordinates marital relationship but also affects family bonding (Mackey et al., 2015). Furthermore, studies on the

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relationship of abusive supervision with work family conflict found that abusive supervision not only increases work to family conflict but it also leads to an imbalance in the family life of both partners (Derks, Bakker, Peters, & van Wingerden, 2016; Marchand et al., 2016). However, prior studies have not adequately explored the effects of destructive supervision on work-family struggle (i.e., work to-family and family-to-work) and the effect of abusive supervision on emotional labor and burnout (Demsky, Ellis, & Fritz, 2014a).

Surface acting does not reflect the on-screen characters and actual sentiments of employees. However, in case of profound acting employees they express the feelings that are normal outcome in their occupation (Nixon, Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2017). Surface acting has been found to bring adverse effects on work life, work fulfillment and wellbeing and positive effects (Andrews et al., 2016; Yoo & Arnold, 2016). In addition, surface acting is emphatically connected with family to work and from work to family struggle (Boucher, 2016; Carlson, Hunter, Ferguson, & Whitten, 2014). Surface acting not only creates disharmony in the feelings of employees but it also triggers passionate reactions (Yoo & Arnold, 2016).

Therefore, the aim of this study is to measure the effect of abusive supervision on work family conflict, family life conflict and surface acting. Additionally, this study will also measure the effect of work family conflict on family satisfaction.

Theoretical Grounding

The following sections contain discussions on the relationships shown in the conceptual frame work depicted in Figure 1.

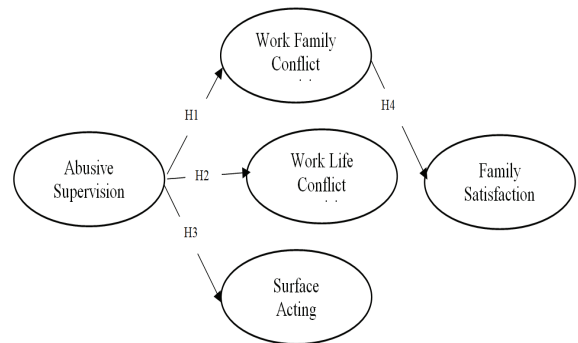


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Abusive supervision

Abusive supervision refers to the “subordinates impression of the degree to which pioneers take part in the managed show of threatening verbal and nonverbal practices, apart from physical contact” (Tepper, 2000, p. 178). Effects of abusive supervision are discourteousness, including fits of rage, open feedback, and rude activity (Frieder, Hochwarter, & DeOrtentiis, 2015). Abusive supervision along with environmental animosity causes stress-related effects on subordinates (Palanski, Avey, & Jiraporn, 2014; Wheeler, Halbesleben, & Whitman, 2013). Studies have found that negative supervision affects disposition, worker resistance, mental misery, hostility, aberrance, execution of commitments, and family prosperity (Tepper, 2007; Tepper et

al., 2017; Vogel et al., 2015). Thus, negative supervision affects subordinates life both at work and outside work (Hoobler & Hu, 2013). Research shows that destructive supervision and its effect on victims is enormous. It not only changes the life of the victims but they also lose self-confidence and self-esteem. Consequently, they take out their anger on family members (Vogel et al., 2015). Abusive supervision also effects work-family-conflict, work-life-conflict, and surfacing acting. These relationships are discussed in the following sections.

Abusive supervision and work–family conflict

Continuous work stress including harsh supervision forces subordinates to spend more of their time and energy at work, as they are afraid of losing their jobs and being mishandled by their supervisors. Consequently, they lose enormous amount of energy and spirit while balancing the demand of work and family (Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhawe, & Christian, 2015).

This loss of energy and spirit while balancing the demand of work and family results in undue arguments and clashes at home and at work place (Tepper et al., 2017). Individuals generally recuperate from the stress of outside world by interacting with family members but if it is too severe, it will have adverse effect on family dynamics in short and long run (Greenbaum, Quade, Mawritz, Kim, & Crosby, 2014). Earlier studies have argued that the intensity of abusive supervisor also determines the level of struggle a subordinate has to do for balancing

work-family conflict (Hoobler & Hu, 2013; Tepper et al., 2017). Several studies have found that the level of abusive supervision proportionally affects work family conflict (Eschleman, Bowling, Michel, & Burns, 2014; Hoobler & Hu, 2013; Vogel et al., 2015). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H₁: Abusive supervision will positively affect work-family conflict.

Abusive supervision and work life conflict

Studies on abusive supervision have found that abused subordinates will undermine the self-esteem and self-worth of their family members (Hoobler & Hu, 2013; Mackey et al., 2015). Thus, negative aggression at work place leads to a negative interaction at home (Gabler & Hill, 2015; Restubog, Scott, & Zagenczyk, 2011a). Studies have found that accumulated stress due to abusive supervision disturbs family dynamics (Barnes et al., 2015; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011). This change in family interaction and dynamics due to abusive supervision also adversely effects the victims behavior at work and as well as at home. Several studies have validated the effect of abusive supervision on work life conflict (Carlson, Ferguson, Hunter, & Whitten, 2012; Restubog, Scott, & Zagenczyk, 2011b). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H₂: Abusive supervision will positively affect work life conflict.

Abusive Supervision and Surface Acting

Surface acting refers to hiding those negative emotions at work place, which are not appropriate to display openly (Grandey,

2003). Employees working in service industry generally have a stronger tendency to hide their emotions despite rude behavior of customers. (Rupp & Spencer, 2006). Thus, employees in the service industry respond to customers negative behavior through surface acting (Demsky, Ellis, & Fritz, 2014b). Similarly, subordinates at work place despite the abusive behavior may restrain their negative emotions including anger, resentment and frustration (Yagil, Ben-Zur, & Tamir, 2011). Employees subjected to abusive supervision are likely to engage themselves in emotion labor in order to display only those emotions that are acceptable to the supervisor and culture of the work place (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Carlson et al., 2012). In the service industry employees are explicitly told to control their emotions despite the abusive behavior of the customers. However, in other sectors employees are told to implicitly control their emotional behavior due to the aggression of supervisors and coworkers. Employees learn surface acting by observing the behavior of their coworkers (Grandey, 2003). Due to the norms and culture of the work place the victims of abusive behavior control negative emotions including, slamming of door and yelling. The reasons for this surface acting could be that the victims are afraid of losing their job and other negative consequences (Hoobler & Brass, 2006). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H₃: Abusive supervision will positively affect surface acting.

Work-to-Family Conflict and Family Satisfaction

Family satisfaction is an individual's concern about the wellbeing of his family (Heyland et al., 2002). It refers to the "degree to which one is generally satisfied with one's family of origin and the constituent relationships embedded therein" (Carver & Jones, 1992, p. 72). When an employee feels the strain of work-family conflict, this adversely affect the wellbeing at home (Carver & Jones, 1992; Greenhaus, Bedeian, & Mossholder, 1987). Thus, employees with the strain on work family conflict will have less energy and spirit for their family. They will also have lesser interaction with family members, participate with lower spirit in family festivals and be less satisfied with the family (Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000; Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson, & Andrey, 2013; Michel, Kotrba, Mitchelson, Clark, & Baltes, 2011). Prior research has found that work-to-family conflict provokes hostility at home and adversely affects family satisfaction (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Judge, Scott, & Ilies, 2006). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H₄: Work-to-family conflict will negatively affect family satisfaction.

Methodology

Sample and procedures

In this study, we measured the effect of abusive supervision on work family conflict, family life conflict and surface acting. We also measured the effect of work-family conflict on family satisfaction. The study was restricted to the textile sector in Karachi

and male employees only. The sample size for this study was 397 with a response rate of 95%. The average age of the respondents was 30 years. Average work experience of the respondents was 8.5 years. Most of the respondents were single (57%) and the rest (43%) were married.

Scale and Measure

All the adapted constructs used in this study had established reliabilities. The adapted constructs were converted to 5 points Likert scale. One showing a very high disagreement and five showing a very high agreement. The details about the adapted constructs are presented in the following section.

Surface Acting Scale

The surface acting scale used in this study has four items all adapted from the scale developed by Brotheridge and Lee (2003). The Cronbach's Alpha for this scale on the present set of data was 0.74.

Work-Family Conflict Scale

The work family conflict scale in this study has four items all adapted from the scale developed by Carlson, Kacmar and Williams (2000). The Cronbach's Alpha for this scale on the present set of data was 0.84.

Abusive Supervision Scale

The Abusive Supervision scale in this study has four items all adapted from the scale developed by Tepper, (2000). The Cronbach's Alpha for this scale on the present set of data was 0.79.

Work-Life Conflict Scale

The Work-Life Conflict Scale in this study has four items all adapted from the scale developed by Carlson et al. (2000). The Cronbach's Alpha for this scale on the present set of data was 0.77

Family Satisfaction Scale

Family Satisfaction Scale in this study has four items all adapted from the scale developed by Caver et.al (1992). The Cronbach's Alpha for this scale on the present set of data was 0.88

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis containing the mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis

	Mean	Std. ¹	Sk. ²	Kr. ³
Abusive Supervision	3.84	1.42	.146	-.837
Work Family Conflict	3.86	1.49	-.055	-.865
Work Life Conflict	3.94	1.43	-.036	-.892
Surface Acting	4.19	1.37	-.172	-.695
Family Satisfaction	3.20	1.67	-.032	-.884

1. Std. Deviation, 2. Skewness, 3. Kurtosis

Table 1 shows that surface acting (Mean=4.19, SD=1.37, SK=-.17) has the highest Skewness followed by abusive supervision (Mean= 3.84, SD=1.42=.146), work family conflict (Mean= 3.86, SD=1.37,

SK= -.055), work life conflict (Mean= 3.94, SD=1.43, SK=-.036) and family satisfaction (Mean= 3.20, SD=1.67, SK=-.032). Kurtosis on the other hand was as high as (KR=-.892) for work life conflict (Mean= 3.86, SD=1.37) and as low as (KR=.695) for surface acting (Mean= 4.19, SD=1.37). The Kurtosis and Skewness values ranged between ± 2.5 which indicates that the adopted constructs have no issue with univariate normality (Hair Jr., 2015).

Reliability Analysis

The aggregate reliability of all the constructs measured through Cronbach's Alpha are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

	Alpha	Std. Alpha	Mean	Std.
Abusive Supervision	.792	.791	3.84	1.42
Work Family Conflict	.845	.844	3.86	1.49
Work Life Conflict	.775	.776	3.94	1.43
Surface Acting	.748	.747	4.19	1.37
Family Satisfaction	.882	.881	3.20	1.67

The reliability values as shown in Table 2 are as high as ($\alpha=.881$) for family satisfaction and as low as ($\alpha=.747$) for surface acting. All the Standardized Cronbach's Alpha values are greater than 0.7, indicating acceptable reliability (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2015).

Correlation Analysis

Bivariate correlation analysis was conducted to ascertain uniqueness, distinctiveness and multi collinearity. The

results are summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Bivariate Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5
Ab. Supervision	1.00				
WFC	0.75	1.00			
WLC	0.76	0.78	1.00		
Surface Acting	0.72	0.66	0.76	1.00	
Family Sat.	0.67	0.66	0.60	0.59	1.00

Table 3 above shows that the highest correlation ($r=.78$) is between work life conflict and work family conflict. In addition, the lowest correlation ($r=.59$) is between family satisfaction and surface acting. As the correlations lie between 0.30 and 0.90, it indicates that the constructs used are unique, distinctive and have no issue of multicollinearity (Hair Jr & Lukas, 2014; Hair Jr., 2015).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

EFA was used to understand the underling structure of the constructs. The summarized results are presented in Table 4 below

Table 4: Exploratory Factor Analysis

	KMO ¹	BST ²	CFL ³	Items
Ab. Supervision	0.756	462.701	61.615%	4
WLFC	0.798	699.877	68.547%	4
WLC	0.810	688.703	69.75%	4
Surface Act.	0.762	351.667	57.12%	4
Family Sat.	0.839	816.385	73.53%	4

1. Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Test,
2. Bartlett's Sphericity Test
3. Cumulative Factor loading

The results based on Varimax Rotation shows that KMO test of each adopted construct is greater than 0.70, Bartlett's Sphericity test is significant and the cumulative factor loading is greater than 50%, which confirms that all the indicator variables explain the theoretical aspects of the constructs on the present set of data.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was examined to ascertain whether the results on the present set of data correspond with the adopted constructs or not. The summarized results are presented in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Convergent Validity

	Mean	Std. Dev	VE ¹	Reliability
Ab. Supervision	3.84	1.42	61.615%	.791
WLFC	3.86	1.49	68.547%	.844
WLC	3.94	1.43	69.75%	.776
Surface Act.	4.19	1.37	57.12%	.747
Family Sat.	3.20	1.67	73.53%	.881

1. Variance Explained

Table 5 shows that the reliability and variance explained for all the constructs are greater than 0.70 and 0.50 respectively. Thus, the results on the present set of data correspond to the original adopted constructs.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was carried out to examine whether the adopted constructs are unique and distinctive. The summarized results are presented in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Discriminant Validity

	1	2	3	4	5
Ab. Supervision	0.78				
WLFC	0.56	0.83			
WLC	0.58	0.61	0.84		
Surface Act.	0.52	0.44	0.58	0.76	
Family Sat.	0.45	0.44	0.36	0.35	0.86

Table 6 shows that square root of variance explained (diagonal line) are greater than square of each pair of correlation. This confirms that there is no issue of uniqueness and distinctiveness of the adopted constructs in the present set of data.

Hypothesis 1: Abusive Supervision and Work Family Conflict

The results of hypothesis stating abusive supervision will positively affect work family conflict was tested through simple regression. The regression results are presented in Table 7 below:

Table 7: Regression Results

Model	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		5.909	.000
Abusive Supervision	.747	22.251	.000

Dependent variable: Work Family Conflict, ($R^2=.557$, Adjusted $R^2=.556$, $F(1, 394) = 495.128$, $P < 0.05$)

The hypothesis that abusive supervision positively affects work family conflict was accepted (Refer to Table 7).

Hypothesis 2: Abusive Supervision and Work Life Conflict

The results of hypothesis stating abusive supervision will positively affect work life conflict was tested through simple regression. The regression results are presented in Table 8 below:

Table 8: Regression Results

Model	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		6.450	.000
Abusive Supervision	.759	23.143	.000

Dependent variable: Work Life Conflict, ($R^2 = .551$, Adjusted $R^2 = .550$, $F(1, 394) = 535.557$, $P < 0.05$)

The hypothesis that abusive supervision positively affects work life conflict was accepted (Refer to Table 8).

Hypothesis 3: Abusive Supervision and Surface Acting

The results of hypothesis stating abusive supervision will positively affect surface acting was tested through simple regression. The regression results are presented in Table 9 below:

Table 9: Regression Results

Model	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		4.470	.000
Abusive Supervision	.721	20.630	.000

Dependent variable: Surface Acting, ($R^2 = .520$, Adjusted $R^2 = .519$, $F(1, 394) = 425.594$, $P < 0.05$)

The hypothesis that abusive supervision positively affects surface acting was accepted (Refer to Table 9).

Hypothesis 4: Work Family Conflict and Family Satisfaction

The results of hypothesis stating work family conflict will negatively affect family satisfaction was tested through simple regression. The regression results are presented in Table 10 below:

Table 10: Regression Results

Model	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)		12.734	.000
Abusive Supervision	.664	17.593	.000

Dependent variable: Family Satisfaction, ($R^2 = .441$, Adjusted $R^2 = .439$, $F(1, 394) = 309.530$, $P < 0.05$)

The hypothesis that work family conflict will negatively affect family satisfaction is not supported by the results (Refer to Table 10).

Discussion

Abusive Supervision and Work Family Conflict

The hypothesis that abusive supervision positively affects work family conflict was accepted (Refer to Table 7). Continuous work stress including harsh supervision forces subordinates to spend more time and energy at work, as they are afraid of losing their jobs and mishandled by their supervisors. Consequently, they lose enormous amount of energy and spirit while balancing the demand of work and family (Barnes et al., 2015).

Earlier studies have argued that the intensity of abusive supervisor also determines the level of struggle a subordinate has to do for balancing work-family conflict (Hoobler & Hu, 2013; Tepper et al., 2017). Several studies have found that the level of abusive supervision proportionally affects work family conflict (Eschleman et al., 2014; Hoobler & Hu, 2013; Vogel et al., 2015).

Abusive Supervision and Work Life Conflict

The hypothesis that abusive supervision positively affects work life conflict was accepted (Refer to Table 8). Studies on abusive supervision have found that abused subordinates will undermine the self-esteem and self-worth of their family members (Hoobler & Hu, 2013; Mackey et al., 2015). Thus, negative aggression at work place leads to a negative interaction at home (Gabler & Hill, 2015; Restubog et al., 2011a). Studies have found that accumulated stress due to abusive supervision disturbs family dynamics (Barnes et al., 2015; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011). This change in family interaction and dynamics due to abusive supervision also adversely effects the victims behavior at work and as well as at home. Several studies have validated the effect of abusive supervision on work life conflict (Carlson et al., 2012; Restubog et al., 2011b).

Abusive Supervision and Surface Acting

The hypothesis that abusive supervision positively affects work life conflict was accepted (Refer to Table 9). Employees subjected to abusive supervision are likely to engage themselves in emotion labor in order to display only those emotions that

are acceptable to the supervisor and culture of the work place (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Carlson et al., 2012). In the service industry, employees are explicitly told to control their emotions despite the abusive behavior of the customers. However, in other sectors employees are told implicitly to control their emotional behavior due to aggression of supervisors and coworkers. However, they learn surface acting by observing the behavior of their coworkers (Grandey, 2003). Due to the norms and culture of work place the victims of abusive behavior control negative emotions including, slamming of door and yelling. The reason for this surface acting could be that the victims are afraid of losing their job and other negative consequences (Hoobler & Brass, 2006).

Work-Family Conflict and Family Satisfaction

The hypothesis that work life family conflict negatively affects family satisfaction was not supported by the results (Refer to Table 10). When an employee feels the strain of work-family conflict at work, this adversely affect the wellbeing at home (Carver & Jones, 1992; Greenhaus et al., 1987). Thus, employees with the strain on work family conflict will have less energy and spirit for their family. Consequently, they will have lesser interaction with family members, participate with lower spirit in family festivals and be less satisfied with family (Carlson et al., 2000; Hilbrecht et al., 2013; Michel et al., 2011). Prior research suggests that work-family conflict provokes hostility at home and adversely affects family satisfaction (Allen et al., 2000; Judge et al., 2006).

Conclusion

The conceptual framework adequately explained the respondents' attitude in the context of abusive supervision and its effects on work-family-conflict, work-life-conflict, and surface acting. It also explained the effect of work-family-conflict on family satisfaction. Most of the hypotheses were accepted and the results were consistent with earlier studies. The strongest effect of abusive supervision was on work family conflict, followed by work life conflict, and surface acting. The effect of family-work-conflict on family satisfaction was the lowest.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was restricted to one city. Future studies could be extended to other cities of Pakistan. The supervision aspect may also vary from one domain to another. Future studies could also perform a comparative analysis of different domains. This study has only considered male respondents. The effect of abusive supervision may vary according to age, gender and profession. Future studies could incorporate these aspects as well.

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