

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Buffering the Effects of Abusive Supervision on Employee Performance in Banking Sector

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Abstract

Abusive supervision is a detrimental leadership style that negatively impacts employee performance, particularly in high-stress industries such as banking. This study explores the role of emotional intelligence (EI) as a moderating factor in mitigating the adverse effects of abusive supervision on employee performance. Drawing from psychological and organizational behavior theories, this paper examines how employees with high EI navigate toxic work environments more effectively and maintain performance levels despite abusive supervision. This study explores the intricate relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and abusive supervision in organizational settings. Emotional intelligence has been increasingly recognized as a key factor influencing employee resilience and well-being. Conversely, abusive supervision, characterized by sustained hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors from superiors, has detrimental effects on employees' psychological health and job performance. This paper examines how EI influences the perception and impact of abusive supervision and whether individuals with higher EI exhibit better coping mechanisms in response to such toxic leadership. The study utilizes a mixed-method research approach, incorporating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Findings indicate that employees with high EI are less affected by abusive supervision, demonstrating greater adaptability and psychological resilience. These results underscore the importance of integrating EI training into workplace development programs to mitigate the negative effects of abusive leadership.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Abusive Supervision, Workplace Stress, Leadership, Employee Resilience*

I. Introduction:-

The banking sector is characterized by high-pressure environments, rigorous performance expectations, and intense interpersonal dynamics, making it particularly susceptible to issues of leadership behavior and employee well-being. Abusive supervision, defined as persistent hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors directed at subordinates, has emerged as a critical concern within this context, negatively impacting employee job satisfaction, mental health, and overall organizational performance (Tepper, 2000). Research indicates that employees subjected to abusive supervision experience increased stress levels, decreased motivation, and heightened turnover intentions, which can lead to detrimental outcomes for both individuals and organizations (Tepper et al., 2006; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010).

Emotional Intelligence (EI), which encompasses the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and others, has gained prominence as a potential protective factor against the adverse effects of abusive supervision (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Employees with high EI are better equipped to navigate challenging interpersonal relationships, manage stress, and maintain a positive outlook despite the negative influence of abusive behaviors (Lopes et al., 2006). By leveraging emotional competencies such as self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, individuals can mitigate the harmful impacts of toxic leadership styles and enhance their job satisfaction (Joseph & Newman, 2010).

The banking industry presents a unique context for exploring the interplay between Emotional Intelligence and abusive supervision. Employees often interact with clients and colleagues in high-stakes situations, requiring strong emotional management skills. However, the prevalence of abusive supervision in this sector raises concerns about employee morale and satisfaction. Understanding how EI functions as a buffer against the negative consequences of abusive supervision is crucial for developing effective organizational interventions aimed at enhancing employee well-being and job satisfaction. This study seeks to explore the dynamics between Emotional Intelligence, abusive supervision, and job satisfaction among banking employees.

By examining these relationships, the research aims to contribute to the existing literature on workplace dynamics and provide practical insights for banking organizations to foster healthier work environments.

II. Literature Review:-

This paper reviews studies concerned with abusive supervision and provides a constructive revision of Tepper's 2007 model. As a result of our review of the recent research, we revised the 2007 Tepper model and added additional variables and casual paths to increase its explanatory potential. The model we propose distinguishes between abusive supervisory behavior and abusive supervisory perceptions, suggesting that each of these variables needs to be studied separately until we know more about how they are related (Lian et al., 2012). The revised model also explicitly recognizes possibilities for reverse causation and stresses the importance of subordinates' individual differences such as attribution style, negative affectivity, and implicit work theories, which have the potential to account for significant variability in subordinates' perceptions of abuse. Suggestions for future research based on the original relationships identified by the Tepper review as well as the variables and causal paths suggested in the revised model are provided (Martinko et al., 2013). Then we conducted a meta-analysis and empirical review of abusive supervision research in order to derive meta-analytic population estimates for the relationships between perceptions of abusive supervision and numerous demographic, justice, individual difference, leadership, and outcome variables. The use of psychometric correction enabled us to provide weighted mean correlations and population correlation estimates that accounted for attenuation due to measurement error and sampling error variance. Also, we conducted sensitivity analyses that removed the effects of large samples from analyses. (Mackey et al., 2015) Then, we conducted subgroup analyses using samples drawn from the United States to provide population correlation estimates that corrected for attenuation due to measurement error, sampling error variance, and indirect range restriction. Finally, we examined measurement artifacts resulting from various adaptations of Tepper's abusive supervision measure. The results reveal that although the associations between perceptions of abusive supervision and outcome variables appear to be universally negative, the magnitude of the relationships between perceptions of abusive supervision and antecedent and outcome variables varies according to the design features of studies. Contributions to theory and practice, strengths and limitations, and directions for future research are discussed. (Kemper, 2016)

In this study, the authors examine the relationship between abusive supervision and employee workplace deviance. The authors conceptualize abusive supervision as a type of aggression. They use work on retaliation and direct and displaced aggression as a foundation for examining employees' reactions to abusive supervision. (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007) The authors predict abusive supervision will be related to supervisor-directed deviance, organizational deviance, and interpersonal deviance. Additionally, the authors examine the moderating effects of negative reciprocity beliefs. They hypothesized that the relationship between abusive supervision and supervisor-directed deviance would be stronger when individuals hold higher negative reciprocity beliefs. The results support this hypotheses. The implications of the results for understanding destructive behaviors in the workplace are examined. (Lian et al., 2012; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007)

Leadership styles have direct impact on employee commitment and may influence organizational sustainability. Previously the positive aspects of leadership are highlighted, and negative aspects still need to bring to light. This study aims to examine the relationship of abusive leadership and organizational commitment of bank employees where in employee's emotional intelligence acts as a mediator. A sample of 255 bank employees was selected and their responses were gathered through closed-ended questionnaires. PLS—SEM was used for analysis by using SmartPLS Ver. 3.0. The (Bin Jabbar et al., 2020) results show that the abusive behaviors disrupt organizational commitment of bank employees. Despite the fact that emotional intelligence mediates the relationship but could not turn organizational commitment to positive due to strong negative intensity of abusive leadership (Liu & Wu, 2023). This study therefore recommends that employee commitment is likely to be achieved when the negative effects of abusive leadership can be weakened through using emotional intelligence by the bank employees. The paper selected a sample from banking sector from a developing country and tested a model empirically. The findings are novel to highlight the presence of abusive/toxic leadership in the banks. (Bin Jabbar et al., 2020)

This empirical research built the theoretical model through the integration of existing literature, and then we explored the impact of abusive supervision on employees' counter-productive work behavior and tested the moderating effects of emotional intelligence. After the statistical analysis of 181 valid data by using correlation analysis and hierarchical regression method, we drew conclusions that: (a) abusive supervision could have a significant positive correlation with employees' counter-productive work behavior; (b) emotional intelligence could play a regulatory role on employees' counter-productive work behavior. On the basis of the conclusion of the study, we proposed some management controls to the organizations those could be involved in the facts of abusive supervision, which would help to relieve the contradictions of labor and create a healthy workplace atmosphere (Pradhan & Jena, 2017). The purpose of this paper is to explore how leaders' emotional intelligence

(EI) influences subordinates' trust and to examine the roles played in the process by abusive supervision (a negative leadership) and leader-member exchange (LMX) (a positive leadership). Design/methodology/approach: According to revelations in the case of Foxconn's jumping events and LMX theory, this paper argues that low levels of leaders' EI affect their subordinates' perception of abusive supervision and tends to cause their mistrust of employers in return, further damaging the employer-employee relationship. Tension will develop or be intensified among such relationships as time evolves and relationship length extends. A superior-subordinate matching questionnaire survey was conducted among enterprises in Shenzhen, China. About 202 valid samples were eventually collected. The data were analyzed through correlation analysis, regression analysis, CFA, EFA and SEM using SPSS and LISREL. (Jin & Chen, 2016) Findings: The EI of superiors has a significant positive impact on the personal trust between subordinates and superiors, in which both abusive supervision and LMX play a partial mediating role; and the relationship length of superiors and subordinates plays a moderating role between LMX and affective trust. Practical implications: The paper advises that when selecting leaders, more emphasis should be placed on EI, and managers should be trained to improve their emotional skills. (Heffernan et al., 2008) The paper extends the research on the antecedent and consequence variables of abusive supervision in Chinese enterprises, discussing both positive and negative leadership. © Emerald Group Publishing Limited. abusive supervision (an interpersonal stressor) and subordinate's intention to quit and to focus on the moderating role of subordinate's emotional intelligence as a neutralizer in curbing the pernicious effect of abusive supervision on subordinate's intention to quit. The participants of this study were 353 healthcare professionals working in a large Indian hospital chain having all India presence. The authors have collected data on our predictor and criterion variables at two time points with a separation of three to four weeks for reducing common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). At Time 1, participants rated the perception of their supervisor's abusiveness and answered few demographic questions. At Time 2, participants completed measures of intention to quit and their emotional intelligence. The finding of this study corroborates the assertion that subordinates who perceive their supervisors to be abusive have higher intention to quit organization. But surprisingly, this study reports that the moderating effect of emotional intelligence showed stronger relationship between abusive supervision and intention to quit when emotional intelligence is high than low. Practical implications: Organization should take serious note of supervisors or managers that are abusive or are perceived to be abusive by their subordinates (Hu, 2012). As it is impossible to completely eradicate abusive and deviant supervisory behaviors at workplace, these toxic behaviors can be checked at several levels like hiring people high on emotional intelligence and through imparting emotional intelligence training and counseling to both the accused and the victim. Originality/value: The study finds support to the relationship between abusive supervision and intention to quit in Indian context. The finding of this study fails to empirically corroborate the assumption that emotional intelligence will act as a neutralizer in mitigating the pernicious effect of abusive supervision on subordinates' intention to quit. (Pradhan & Jena, 2018)

Current study has been conducted to examine the inherent mechanism of abusive behavior of supervisors and its effects based on Leader Member and Social Exchange Theories. The interactions among abusive leadership and counterproductive work behaviors, intent to leave a job, and emotional exhaustion with the moderating influence of emotional intelligence have been investigated.

The information was gathered from 472 people employed in banks of Punjab, Pakistan. The research used SPSS 22 and AMOS 24 to analyze the information and conduct statistical analysis. Findings from this research show that abusive supervision has a positive correlation with emotional exhaustion of employees, their behaviors that are contrary to the values of the organization and their plan to leave the organization while emotional intelligence did not act as a moderator with the concerned variables in this study. Literature, however, has shown that emotional intelligence is a valuable source for workers to transcend the negative effects of abuse. The current study concludes that firms need to understand the damaging impacts of the abusive behavior of managers and must try to prevent such behaviors by implementing ethical leadership and devising HR policies to support the subordinates, reduce stressful situations and maltreatments among employees (Abbas et al., 2021). Employee emotional intelligence (EI) was examined in relation to how it influences perceptions of abusive supervision (ASP), psychological distress (PD), and emotional labor burden (ELB). The sample consisted of 372 frontline bank employees in Taiwan. It was found that PD fully mediated the relationship between ASP and ELB, and EI moderated the relationship between ASP and ELB, weakening the relationship between ASP and ELB for employees with higher EI. PD also partially mediated the interaction of ASP and EI in the prediction of ELB. Practical implications, limitations, and directions for future research are identified and discussed. (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Pradhan & Jena, 2017). In a competitive environment organizations are turning towards an important internal wealth, their employees. Because satisfied employees are considered to perform and stay loyal, the present paper examines the viewpoints in the literature regarding job satisfaction and delimits the need to address the variables which influence and explain the high and low satisfaction for the specific Romanian labor market. Additionally, the authors aim to discuss the variable differences between the

public and the private sector. The Grounded Theory methodology was chosen due to its ability to extract theory from data. The qualitative research focused on 14 in-depth semi-structured interviews with professionals from the Romanian public and private sector. After a thorough analysis, six main job satisfaction variables emerged with sub-elements. All 36 determinants were included in a new honeycomb model of job satisfaction variables which offers a strategic perspective for human resource management strategies.(Ramos et al., 2020)

Leadership – From Constructive to Destructive in Abusive Supervision

Leadership styles exist on a spectrum, ranging from constructive to destructive. Constructive leadership is characterized by support, motivation, and ethical behavior, which fosters employee growth and engagement. However, when leadership becomes abusive, it transitions into a destructive form that undermines employee well-being. Factors such as workplace stress, lack of leadership training, and organizational culture can contribute to this shift. Understanding how leaders transition from constructive to abusive behaviors can provide insights into intervention strategies and leadership development programs.

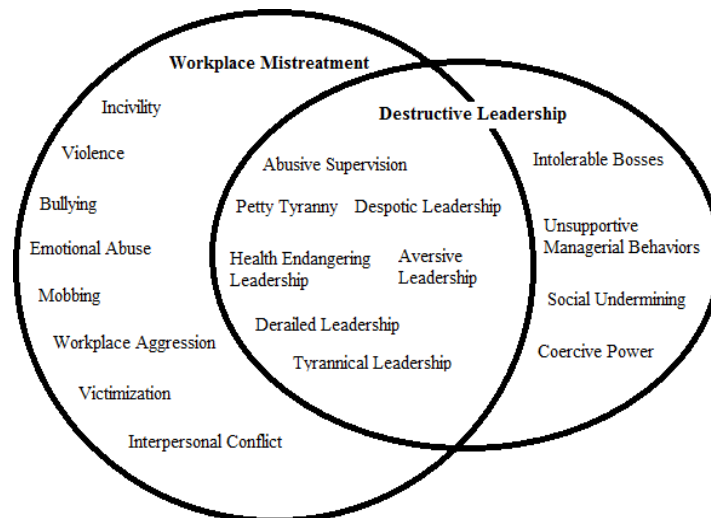
Emotional Intelligence as a Coping Mechanism

Emotional intelligence, conceptualized as the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), plays a crucial role in how employees handle workplace challenges. Individuals with high EI exhibit better emotional regulation, enabling them to navigate workplace stressors more effectively. Studies suggest that high-EI employees are less likely to internalize negative interactions and more likely to employ constructive coping strategies when dealing with abusive supervisors.

Leveraging emotional intelligence (EI) as an adaptation strategy is essential for navigating an ever-changing world. Emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1995), enables individuals to manage emotions effectively and respond to challenges with resilience. By recognizing and controlling their emotions, emotionally intelligent individuals remain composed under pressure, enhancing their ability to make informed decisions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). In high-pressure situations, EI helps prevent impulsive reactions, allowing for balanced and thoughtful choices that consider multiple perspectives (Boyatzis, 2006). Furthermore, strong emotional intelligence fosters effective communication and collaboration, making it easier to work in diverse teams, embrace different viewpoints, and resolve conflicts constructively (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). It also encourages a growth mindset, where challenges are seen as opportunities for learning and self-improvement rather than obstacles (Dweck, 2006). In times of change, individuals with high EI can manage transitions with confidence, maintaining a positive outlook and helping others cope with uncertainty (Bar-On, 2006). To develop EI for adaptability, individuals can practice self-awareness by reflecting on their emotions and triggers, improve emotional regulation through mindfulness and cognitive reframing (Siegel, 2007), enhance empathy by actively listening to others, strengthen communication skills, and embrace change with an open mindset. Ultimately, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in helping individuals remain resilient, adaptable, and successful in both personal and professional settings, ensuring they can navigate uncertainties with confidence and ease.

The Interaction between Emotional Intelligence and Abusive Supervision

Several studies have explored the interplay between EI and workplace stressors. Employees with high EI tend to interpret negative supervisory behaviors with greater objectivity, reducing their emotional and psychological impact. Additionally, EI fosters effective communication and conflict resolution skills, which may help mitigate the consequences of abusive supervision.



Source:- [https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.248\(page-11\)](https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.248(page-11))

As shown in Figure 1 above, workplace mistreatment is a broad concept comprised of a variety of constructs. Destructive leadership falls mostly within the domain of workplace mistreatment, but also has its own set of related constructs that may exist outside of the workplace mistreatment domain. Abusive supervision is a form of workplace mistreatment, but is more specifically defined under the category of destructive leadership because it requires the direction of abuse to be from the supervisor to the subordinate.

Gaps in the Research

Although an extensive amount of research has been conducted on the negative consequences of abusive supervision at both the individual and organizational level, there is still much to learn about the phenomenon. As reported above, multiple researchers have pointed out that the responsibility falls on the shoulders of the organization to identify and prevent abusive supervision. I was unable to identify any studies conducted that tested any potential prevention strategies at the organizational level. There has been some research done on coping strategies on the individual level, but only a handful of suggestions have been offered as coping strategies for organizations. Part of the reason this gap exists is because employees often become silent and do

not come forward when they are being abused by their supervisors. This is mainly because they are dependent on their supervisors for desirable resources such as continued employment and advancement opportunities (Tepper, Moss, Lockhart, & Carr, 2007). They tend to have some sort of avoidant or passive coping strategy that involves distancing themselves from the sources of the stress and attempting to avoid feedback from their supervisor (Tepper et al., 2007).

Research has demonstrated the broad range of negative consequences associated with abusive supervision, but very little research has focused on its antecedents. Of the scant evidence available, relational dynamics such as a contract breach, organizational injustice, and perceived leader-subordinate dissimilarities predict abusive supervision as do certain leader and subordinate characteristics (Hoobler et al., 2006; Tepper et al., 2006; Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011). A majority of the data in early research on abusive supervision was from single sources, usually the subordinate, and almost all of the research designs were cross-sectional (Tepper, 2007). The majority of research has taken place within the United States (Tepper, 2007), meaning that there is still much to learn about how the homological network of abusive supervision might differ across cultures (Martinko et al., 2013). Research has also suggested that organizational norms and organizational climate might promote or attenuate abusive tendencies in supervisors, but this is another aspect of abusive supervision that has received little attention (Tepper, 2007). The industry effects of abusive supervision also remain unstudied (Martinko et al., 2013).

These gaps in the current research represent areas in which future studies should be concentrated. Prior research has been driven by a considerable interest in the consequences of abusive supervision, which is an important aspect of abusive supervision research, but it should not be the only consideration. The literature on abusive supervision has shown evidence of various negative consequences, which should be enough to persuade organizations that this is a serious problem. Researchers can now turn to the more neglected segments of this literature – such as understanding the experiences of the supervisor that correspond to the enactment of abusive behaviors toward subordinates – in order to shift the focus from understanding abusive supervision to preventing it.

III. Research Methodology:-

To gather the information necessary to achieve the goals of this paper, I conducted a literature search for prior studies on abusive supervision using a computer-based search of electronic databases, a manual search of selected journals, and a manual search of the reference lists of articles. I searched for articles and studies published between the years 1985 and 2024 on databases such as PsycINFO, GoogleScholar, and other ProQuest databases. My search terms included abusive supervision, destructive leadership, workplace bullying, workplace aggression, and workplace violence. I also manually searched journal publications in the Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, Journal of Management, Personnel Psychology, The Leadership Quarterly, and within Elsevier Science Journals. This journal publication and database search was conducted during a two-week time period, and 85 articles were retained. Keywords that were required to be present in these articles include abusive supervision, destructive leadership behavior, workplace aggression, or workplace bullying. I then searched the reference lists of those 50 articles for additional relevant articles.

In total, 50 articles were included in this paper. My decision to retain and use these articles was based on their respective originality and/or seminal nature, and with respect to literature reviews or syntheses, their comprehensiveness. Articles were required to relate to abusive supervision in an organizational context where the supervisor and the subordinate are both adults, as opposed to a situation where abusive supervision is being inflicted upon children. However, the retained articles were heterogeneous in terms of sample size, location of the study, sample size, demographic of participants, jobs held by participants (i.e. blue collar, white collar, military), and the duration and design of the study. Articles that contributed new findings to the literature regarding the relationship between abusive supervision and another variable (e.g., work withdrawal; Chi & Liang, 2013; workplace deviance; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; work-family conflict; Carlson, Ferguson, Hunter, & Whitten, 2012) were retained. Subsequent literature searches were conducted over a longer period of time, using the references listed by the authors in the first 50 articles, and provided a much more comprehensive and well-rounded body of literature. The relevant information found in these articles is summarized in the literature review in the following section.

IV. Results and Discussion

The findings suggest a strong negative correlation between abusive supervision and employee well-being. However, EI significantly moderates this relationship, with high-EI individuals reporting lower levels of psychological distress despite exposure to abusive supervision. Qualitative analysis further indicates that emotionally intelligent employees employ strategies such as cognitive reframing, seeking social support, and assertive communication to counteract the effects of abusive supervision.

Future Implications

Future research would also benefit from focusing on implementing programs in organizations that both encourage employees to report abusive supervision in the workplace and also on preventing abusive supervision from happening in the first place. There is a lot of information available regarding the practical implications of this research and how it can be applied to organizations, but it would be beneficial to start testing these theoretical implications in a real-time organizational setting. Research on creating a mistreatment-reduction climate via aggression-preventive supervisor behaviors (Yang & Caughlin, 2016) and other existing programs that enhance positive organizational climate for reducing mistreatment (e.g., CREW; Leiter et al., 2011) can be used as a starting point for reducing abusive supervision in the workplace, as abusive supervision is a specific type of workplace mistreatment.

V. Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the significant interplay between Emotional Intelligence (EI), abusive supervision, and job satisfaction within the banking sector. As organizations increasingly recognize the importance of employee well-being, understanding the dynamics of these constructs becomes crucial for fostering a healthy work environment. This research demonstrated that abusive supervision negatively impacts job satisfaction, corroborating previous studies that highlight the detrimental effects of toxic leadership. Employees subjected to abusive behaviors reported lower levels of satisfaction, emphasizing the need for effective leadership practices in banking institutions. Conversely, higher levels of Emotional Intelligence were found to positively influence job satisfaction and negatively correlate with perceptions of abusive supervision. This suggests that employees equipped with strong emotional competencies are better prepared to cope with adverse supervisory dynamics, leading to enhanced job satisfaction. Additionally, Emotional Intelligence emerged as a significant moderator, buffering the negative effects of abusive supervision on job satisfaction. These findings underscore the potential of EI as a protective factor, enabling employees to navigate challenging work environments more effectively.

However, the study also acknowledges several limitations, including reliance on self-reported measures, the cross-sectional design, and potential cultural influences. Future research should explore longitudinal designs and consider diverse cultural contexts to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

In conclusion, promoting Emotional Intelligence within banking organizations may serve as a valuable strategy for mitigating the adverse effects of abusive supervision and enhancing overall employee satisfaction. Training programs focused on developing EI competencies could not only improve individual well-being but also contribute to creating a more positive organizational culture. As the banking sector continues to evolve, prioritizing the emotional and psychological well-being of employees will be essential for fostering engagement, reducing turnover, and ultimately driving organizational success.

Limitations

1. The study primarily relies on self-reported measures for assessing Emotional Intelligence, abusive supervision, and job satisfaction. Self-report surveys can be subject to biases, such as social desirability bias, where participants may respond in a manner they perceive as favorable rather than providing accurate reflections of their experiences (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This can potentially distort the findings and affect the validity of the conclusions drawn.
2. The research employs a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to make causal inferences about the relationships between Emotional Intelligence, abusive supervision, and job satisfaction. Although correlations can be identified, the temporal sequence of events cannot be established, leaving open the possibility that other unmeasured variables may influence the observed relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).
3. The sample is drawn from specific banking institutions, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other sectors or regions. The banking industry has unique characteristics that may not apply to other industries, potentially affecting the applicability of the results to a broader context (Bryman, 2016). Future studies should consider diverse settings to enhance external validity.
4. Emotional Intelligence and perceptions of abusive supervision may be influenced by cultural factors that were not accounted for in this study. Cultural differences can shape emotional expression, coping mechanisms, and attitudes toward authority, which may affect the dynamics of abusive supervision and its impact on job satisfaction (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Thus, the findings may not be universally applicable across different cultural contexts.
5. Variability in how Emotional Intelligence and abusive supervision are defined and measured can pose challenges to the study's conclusions. Different scales and instruments may capture different aspects of these constructs, potentially leading to inconsistencies in findings (Brackett et al., 2006). Future research should standardize definitions and measurements to enhance comparability across studies.
6. Emotional Intelligence, abusive supervision, and job satisfaction are complex constructs that may exhibit overlap in their dimensions. For instance, aspects of Emotional Intelligence could influence how employees perceive and respond to abusive supervision, complicating the interpretation of results (Schutte et al., 2007). It may be challenging to disentangle these relationships, and future studies should consider exploring these constructs using advanced statistical techniques to account for potential overlaps.

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