

The effect of abusive supervision on employee deviant behaviors: an identity-based perspective

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Abstract:

Drawing on the identity perspective, we investigate the roles of organizational and moral identification in the relationship between abusive supervision and subordinates' organizational deviance. By conducting a multiwave study of 182 subordinate–supervisor dyads, we found that organizational identification partially mediated the relationship between abusive supervision and subordinates' organizational deviance after controlling for perceived leader social support as an alternative mediator. In addition, we demonstrated that organizational identification interacted with moral identification in affecting organizational deviance in the workplace and that moral identification moderated the indirect effect of abusive supervision on organizational deviance *via* organizational identification. However, we did not find a mediating effect of moral identification, and we call for future studies to explore the impact of more specific facets of identities in abusive supervision situations. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: abusive supervision | moral identification | organizational deviance | organizational identification | perceived leader social support

Article:

Introduction

A considerable amount of leadership research has focused on positive leader behaviors that may lead to favorable outcomes (e.g. high work motivation and performance among employees and leader effectiveness [Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Tepper, 2007]). Recently, however, more research is paying attention to the dark side of leadership, and many scholars have studied the concept of abusive supervision (e.g. Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002; Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey, 2013; Tepper, 2000; Yam, Fehr, Keng-Highberger, Klotz, & Reynolds, 2016). Recent studies have revealed that abusive supervision has affected the mental well-being of approximately 13.6% of US workers (Schat, Frone, & Kelloway, 2006), and it costs US

companies \$23.8 billion annually (Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006). As abusive supervision leads to severe detrimental consequences in organizations, it demands further inquiry. Previous studies have studied abusive supervision from the perspectives of control (Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002), injury initiation (Tepper et al., 2006) and social exchange (Thau, Bennett, Mitchell, & Marrs, 2009; Lian, Ferris, & Brown, 2012). Many of their findings have contributed to our understanding of the effects of abusive supervision. However, little attention has been paid to how abusive supervision affects victims' self-identification process, which has multiple paths. It is critical to understand victims' reactions to it because behavior is guided by the multiple identities embedded in a person (Burke, 1991). Thus, the following question remains: How do different types of identification interplay and affect the relationship between abusive supervision and organizational outcomes? Our study attempts to answer this question and explore how abusive supervision leads to negative organizational outcomes by including multiple paths of the self-identification process in the theoretical model.

Abusive supervision is defined as a sustained display of nonphysical hostility (including verbal and nonverbal behaviors such as loud outbursts or belittling) enforced by managers against their subordinates (Tepper, 2000). In the past two decades, researchers have studied various consequences of abusive supervision and found that a leader's abusive behaviors not only affect work-related outcomes but also may have spillover effects on nonwork areas (e.g. work–family balance or work–family conflicts). In the workplace, abusive supervision is shown to reduce victims' justice perception, satisfaction, commitment, psychological well-being and performance and increase their psychological distress, role conflict, burnout, intention to quit and resistance to meet supervisors' requests (e.g. Duffy et al., 2002; Martinko et al., 2013; Tepper, 2000, 2007; Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011). Previous research has also found that abusive supervisory behavior demotivates employees to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g. Zellars et al., 2002) and generates more aggressive and deviant behaviors (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Martinko et al., 2013). In nonwork areas, Carlson, Ferguson, Perrewé, and Whitten (2011) and Carlson, Ferguson, Hunter, and Whitten (2012) found that employees' perception that their supervisors are abusive is positively associated with ratings of work–family conflict and tension in their family relationships. The perception of abusive supervision could easily make subordinates feel burnt out and experience more emotional labor to cope with abusive supervision, which leads to more work–family conflict (e.g. Carlson et al., 2012). In addition, people who are abused by their leaders are viewed as less effective partners in their personal relationships.

Among these outcomes, deviant organizational behaviors – defined as voluntary actions performed by employees toward the organization (e.g. theft, lateness, damaging company property or absenteeism that violates organizational norms [Robinson & Bennett, 1995]) – can result in a great cost for organizations (Schat et al., 2006; Tepper, Henle, Lambert, Giacalone, & Duffy, 2008). Employees' deviant behaviors, as specific types of unethical behaviors, are becoming more common in the workplace, with increased media reports of sexual harassment (Ilies et al., 2003) or workplace incivility (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001), which have drawn attention among many organizational scholars. Previous research has explored the relationship between abusive supervision and deviant behaviors from various perspectives. Scholars have also searched for other potential psychological variables to explain the relationship between abusive supervision and deviant behaviors, such as basic need satisfaction, injustice

perception and affective commitment (e.g. Lian et al., 2012; Tepper et al., 2008). For instance, individuals within an organization prefer fairness in decision procedures and outcome distribution (Tepper, 2000) and seek favorable work relations (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), both of which are harmed by abusive supervision. The negative perception and psychological experiences induced by leader abuse translate into destructive work behaviors. To date, most studies have suggested using a social exchange perspective in examining the relationship between abusive supervision and organizational deviance (e.g. Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Thau et al., 2009). In particular, abusive supervision decreases the social exchange quality with the leader or the organization; people holding negative reciprocity beliefs engage in deviant behaviors as revenge for abusive supervision.

However, the cognitive effects of abusive supervision on deviant behaviors remain unclear, and further investigations are desperately needed. Few studies have examined self-identities in the relationship between abusive supervision and deviant behaviors. The self is reflexive; that is, it not only takes itself as an object but also can categorize or name itself distinctly from other social categories (Stets & Burke, 2000). In the process of identification or self-categorization, one's identity is formed (Hogg & Terry, 2000). The identities embedded in oneself correlate with specific meanings and expectations, which could form standards that guide one's behavior (Burke, 1991). Much of the meaningful or deviant organizational behavior is governed by one's identity. Hunter (2012) highlights an identity perspective in studying the consequences of dysfunctional leadership. In keeping with this recently advocated view on abusive supervision research, and to address the research gap regarding self-identities in the abusive supervision/deviant behavior area, the current study focuses on how different self-identities combine to affect deviant behaviors as responses to abusive supervision (Figure 1). By controlling for perceived leader social support as an alternative mediator, we make a unique contribution to the psychological mechanism of identification processes in the abusive supervision/deviant behavior relationship.

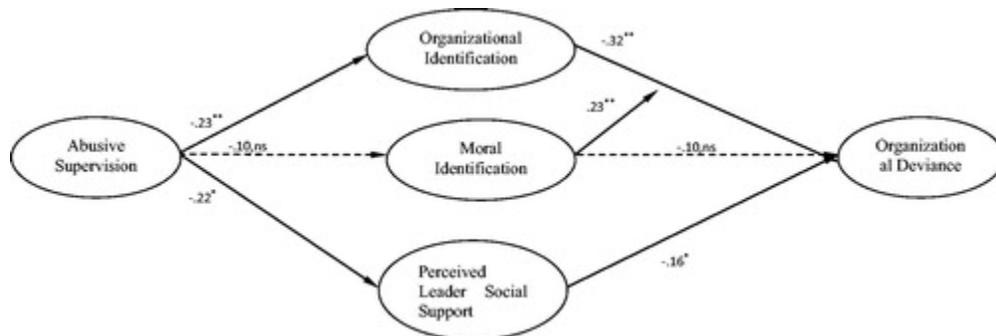


Figure 1. Results of structural equation modeling. Note. $N = 182$; $*p \leq .01$; $*p \leq .05$ (two-tailed). This is a simplified version of the actual model. It does not show the indicators, error terms, exogenous factor variances or correlations between the exogenous factors. For the control variables, only significant paths are shown. As none of the control variables is significant, the control variables do not appear in the conceptual model. Standardized solution results are provided.

Identity plays several critical roles in the abusive supervision/deviant behavior relationship. First, the defining characteristics of abusive supervision involve interpersonal mistreatment, which usually directly fosters a negative self-identity in victims (Tedeschi, 2001). Supervisory abuse, as a form of antisocial behavior, weakens followers' self-concept and threatens their identity

(Aquino & Douglas, 2003). Second, identities refer to the way that individuals define and categorize themselves and perceive which groups they belong to. When a person's identity is threatened, he or she is likely to engage in antisocial or deviant behaviors to maintain consistency with the identity standard (Aquino & Douglas, 2003). Following this logic, abusive supervision is likely to influence deviant organizational behavior by crippling abused subordinates' identities. However, to our knowledge, few studies have explored the mysterious and important role of self-identities. Among the different forms of self-identity, our study focuses on organizational identity and moral identity.

Moral identity and organizational identity are the basis for social identification that individuals use to construct their self-identities. We choose to study organizational identity and moral identity because these two important self-identities are highly correlated with organizational deviance and may be harmed by abusive supervision. Researchers have consistently found that receiving poor treatment can harm one's self-identity because a moral being deserves fairness, consideration and respect (Aquino & Douglas, 2003; Lind & Tyler, 1988), and it can also harm an employee's social identity as an organizational member (Lind, 1997). By incorporating these two identities, our study can advance our understanding of how abusive supervision leads to organizational deviance from an identity-based perspective.

The main purpose of the current study is to extend the identity perspective on abusive supervision *via* a time-lagged research design. By doing so, the paper makes two unique contributions to the existing literature. First, we incorporate organizational identification (OI) and moral identification into the theoretical model of abusive supervision and deviant behaviors, and we adopt the identity-based perspective to explore the underlying explanation of why employees engage in deviant behaviors as responses to supervisory abuse. In addition to extending the research on abusive supervision to an identity perspective, this study contributes to research on identity and deviant behavior. Second, by exploring the moderating role of moral identification on the relationship between OI and deviant behaviors, the current study decodes the role of a multiplicity of identities on deviant behaviors as reactions to abusive supervision. In addition, as a key indicator of employees' unethical behavior (Jennings, Mitchell, & Hannah, 2015), moral identification helps us clarify the relationship between abusive supervision and deviant behavior and provides important practical insight to foster a moral organizational climate. By considering the mediating and moderating roles of these identifications in the same model, the current study deepens our understanding of the complex effects of identities in the abusive supervision/deviant behavior relationship.

Theoretical overview and hypothesis development

Abusive supervision and deviant organizational behavior

Abusive supervision is characterized as interpersonal mistreatment, and abusive leaders are those who ridicule, depreciate, intimidate and humiliate their employees (Keashly, 1997). Abusive supervision often involves dissatisfaction, antagonism, rudeness and injurious words. According to social exchange theory and the reciprocity principle, individuals are inclined to reciprocate the benefits they receive in the workplace (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). However, social exchange theory also suggests that people may decide to enact revenge and retaliate

depending on how they are treated (i.e. negative reciprocity exists). Experiencing supervisory abuse makes subordinates more likely to develop negative reciprocity in the form of deviant behaviors. For example, Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) found that when individuals hold stronger negative reciprocity beliefs, they are more inclined to engage in interpersonal deviance (e.g. gossiping or sexual harassment) and organizational deviance (e.g. shirking hours).

Deviant organizational behavior is intentional workplace behavior that violates organizational norms (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Organizational deviance is performed toward the whole organization (e.g. stealing company property, intending to be late or absent, and withholding information that is critical to the organization). Interpersonal deviance refers to deviant behaviors directed toward individuals (e.g. sexual harassment). In our study, we investigate only organizational deviance for the following three reasons. First, though the victims of supervisory abuse may hold a grudge toward the perpetrator, they may not directly revenge a leader who abuses them because they are afraid of further retaliation from the perpetrator, who may have more power and authority (Dollard et al., 1939); that is, unless they are determined to quit, they do not easily engage in reprisals (Tepper et al., 2009). In addition, because of traditional Eastern values that maintain that people with high status deserve respect or honor while people with low status must be humble, subordinates tend to endure harm leaders (Liu, Kwong Kwan, Wu, & Wu, 2010), and they redirect their resentment or aggression toward the organization. Lastly, the 'Ren-qing' culture in China makes employees highly concerned about interpersonal relationships; thus, they are likely to engage in organizational deviance rather than retaliate against an abusive supervisor directly in order to follow the social norms in a Chinese workplace.

Abusive supervision may foster negative experiences that ultimately translate into organizational deviance by victims. For example, abusive supervision may harm individuals' basic need satisfaction and spur their desire to retaliate to engage in deviant behaviors (Lian et al., 2012). In addition, abusive supervision may decrease the quality of the social exchange between employees and the organization or leaders and cause employees to engage in deviant behaviors as payback against an abusive supervisor (Lian et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2012). Social exchange theory and the self-identity perspective help explain why abusive supervision positively affects organizational deviance. As indicated by social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), when individuals hold the view that it is appropriate to enact retribution for perceived mistreatment by a leader, they will counter abusive supervision by engaging in organizational deviance. In an interdependent workplace relationship, when employees are exposed to abusive supervision, they are more likely to have negative feelings toward the social exchange relationship with the leader or organization. According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the norms of reciprocity (negative reciprocity exists here), poor treatment by a supervisor indicates an imbalance that subordinates may seek to rectify by engaging in negative behaviors themselves. In addition, supervisory abuse could have a severe impact on subordinates' self-identity. To recover or adapt to the new situation, they may respond to abusive supervision with retaliation in the form of deviant behavior (Aquino & Douglas, 2003). As previously noted, when victims of abusive supervision cannot confront their leader or direct their aggression or deviant behavior toward other individuals, they will transform their anger, dissatisfaction or aggression toward the organization. Ample empirical studies have found a positive relationship between abusive supervision and organizational deviance; that is, supervisory abuse increases subordinates' organization deviant behavior (e.g. Duffy et al., 2002;

Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Thau & Mitchell, 2006). For example, Duffy et al. (2002) revealed that a leader's undermining (or abusive) behavior induced counterproductive (or deviant) behaviors among subordinates. Thau and Mitchell (2006) found that abusive supervision was positively related to organizational deviance and that distributive justice played a major role in this relationship. Following this line of reasoning, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 1: Abusive supervision is positively related to organizational deviance.

The mediating role of organizational identification and moral identification

According to social identity theory (SIT, Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), one's self-identity consists of personal and social identities. Personal identity is described as an individual's possession of unique attributes, whereas social identity involves the social context in which individuals seek to present their team attributes (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Erez & Earley, 1993). Social identity reflects an individual's relationship with others, groups or organizations and can explain why they belong to some groups but not others. As Tajfel and Turner (1986) implied, the central proposition of SIT is that social identity with a referent person or group could integrate a person's or group's norms and values into his/her self-concept. Individuals with high social identity in the workplace act more in the name of 'we' rather than 'I'. People tend to choose activities in congruence with their social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Thus, once an individual's social identity is harmed, it may negatively affect his/her self-concept, which will then be translated into organizational deviance. Previous researchers have used a negative self-identity perspective to interpret subordinates' reaction to abusive supervision, but they have not empirically tested or distinguished between different forms of identity (e.g. Aquino & Douglas, 2003; Bies & Tripp, 1998). In this study, we attempt to reveal the specific role of identity by incorporating moral identification and OI, which reflect the cognitive process of engaging in deviant behaviors, into our analysis.

OI, as a special form of social identity, refers to an individual's perception of belonging to an organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Mael & Tetrick, 1992). In other words, it refers to employees' subjective feelings of membership in an organization. As a critical construct, OI largely determines an individual's self-concept and personal behavior. Individuals undergo a sense-making process to position themselves into particular social classes, which subsequently influence their self-concept (Tajfel, 1982; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992; Turner, 1982). This may occur because of human beings' drive to satisfy the need to belong, and OI can fulfill this need. When OI is integrated into self-concept, individuals with high OI prioritize the organization's welfare and demonstrate more helpful behavior toward it (Priesemuth, Schminke, Ambrose, & Folger, 2014; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). To preserve a consistent social identity, individuals behave in accordance with their OI; that is, high OI leads to more helping behavior, whereas low OI leads to less helping behavior or even harmful behavior. In addition, when identifying themselves with a high level of OI, employees are more psychologically attached to their organization, feel more responsible for its fate and reputation, and share more common goals with it (Tolman, 1943). As individuals identify with the organization, they are likely to align their personal goals with organizational objectives and do what is beneficial to the organization, such as engaging in more in- and outgroup cooperation and helping behavior (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) and sometimes sacrificing their own interest when it contradicts with the

organizational interest. Therefore, individuals with a high level of OI are less likely to perform deviant behaviors toward the organization. In contrast, when employees' OI is low, they will be less concerned about organizational success. As subordinates' OI weakens, they are more eager to distinguish between themselves and the organization and more likely to engage in deviant organizational behaviors. When OI is salient in individuals' self-concept, the effect of OI within the individuals increases.

We argue that abusive supervision reduces subordinates' OI. Acting as legitimate representatives of an organization, leaders influence their subordinates' attitudes and behaviors toward the organization. Employees care much about their interpersonal interactions with organizational authorities (Lind & Tyler, 1988), and abusive supervision disrupts subordinates' expectation that the organization is kind and warm. Thus, employees ascribe a leader's mistreatment to the organization because it has not established rules and policies (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001) or informal norms to discourage such behavior by leaders. The victims then believe that their employer cares little about them; thus, they are less likely to identify with the organization (Tepper et al., 2008). The decreased OI most likely occurs because abusive supervision undermines the processes by which employees derive their self-esteem – which is a widely explored antecedent of social identity (e.g. Tajfel, 1982) – from OI. The negative relationship between abusive supervision and OI can also be inferred from studies that found that supportive leaders promote group identification (e.g. Hobman, Jackson, Jimmieson, & Martin, 2011), and team-level studies indicate that group identity acts as a mediating mechanism for the relationship between group abuse and group outcomes (Priesemuth et al., 2014). From the identity perspective, when employees have a low level of OI, they care less about the organization and engage in more deviant behaviors. Lord and his colleagues' (1999) self-concept-based theory of leadership demonstrates that leaders play a critical role in subordinates' social identity, which, in turn, determines their behaviors and reactions. The authors stated that 'the interpersonal relation of superiors to subordinates affects subordinates' identification and self-concepts, which, in turn, are critical determinants of social and organizational processes' (p. 170). Thus, we argue that the weakened OI resulting from abusive supervision is likely to result in organizational deviance. Based on the above discussion, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 2: OI mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and employees' organizational deviance in the workplace.

Another important form of identity is moral identification. According to Lord and his colleagues (1999), we suggest that moral identification functions as a mediator in the relationship between supervisory abuse and organizational deviance. Moral identification is conceptualized as one of many possible identities that people use in their self-definition or self-identity (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Aquino, Reed, Thau, & Freeman, 2007). Moral identification captures the very core of one's being and functions as one of the self-regulatory mechanisms that promote ethical behavior. Moral identification motivates individuals to perform ethical (or avoid deviant) behavior in the organization to maintain consistency with their conceptions of their moral self. Individuals with a high level of moral identification prefer to be caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, hardworking, helpful, honest, kind and so on (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Employees with high moral identification feel comfortable with possessing these characteristics to be similar to their social referents, and they expect others to behave similarly. It is worth

noting that the trait-based definition does not necessarily mean that moral identification is a personality characteristic. Researchers have found that moral identification can be activated or suppressed by situational variables (Forehand et al., 2002). Therefore, moral identification can be harmed by supervisory abuse. Individuals' identities may be validated or altered by the treatment they receive from others (Darwin, 1872; Goffman, 1967), especially leaders (Jennings et al., 2015). For example, researchers have found that ethical and transformational leaders promote subordinates' moral identification (Schaubroeck et al., 2012; Zhu, Riggio, Avolio, & Sosik, 2011), whereas negative or unethical leaders weaken it (Hannah et al., 2013). Priesemuth et al. (2014) found that an abusive supervision climate negatively influences social identity. When employees are poorly treated by leaders, their moral identification suffers, as they perceive less respect and fairness (Bies, 1999). Abusive supervisors' behaviors of indifference, anger, hostility, rudeness or discrimination against subordinates may influence subordinates' perception of morality and threaten the identity of those with a high moral self-concept. Therefore, supervisory abuse reduces subordinates' moral identification.

On the other hand, when their identity (or identification) is threatened or harmed by others, people are motivated to defend themselves by reacting to the offensive behaviors (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). The notion that the threatened or harmed identity is positively related to a counter-response is also supported by empirical studies (e.g. Aquino & Douglas, 2003; Felson & Steadman, 1983; Tedeschi & Felson, 1994) and deduced from the dynamic models of conflict escalation and the revenge literature (e.g. Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Bies, Tripp, & Kramer, 1997). The attenuated moral identification makes individuals engage in revenge and deviant behavior more easily because those with a low moral self-concept are more inclined to act unethically and have counterproductive intentions (Hardy, Walker, Rackham, & Olsen, 2012). As sociologist Katz (1975) noted, 'hence in identifying another as deviant a person precludes cooperative, interdependent action' (p. 1384); thus, when coping with leaders' deviance (abusive supervision), employees are likely to become noncooperative or revolt. We can assume that weakened moral identification leads abused subordinates to engage in organizational deviance. That is, abusive supervision causes employees to feel morally uncomfortable (decreasing moral identification) and more doubtful about their moral self. In turn, they are more inclined to behave carelessly, irresponsibly or lazily at work and thus engage in more organizational deviance. Following the above logic, we predict the following:

Hypothesis 3: Moral identification mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and employees' organizational deviance in the workplace.

The interaction between organizational identification and moral identification

In most cases, people may respond to abusive supervision with organizational deviance when their OI is lowered. Indeed, when their OI is lowered, they are indifferent or even feel ashamed to identify themselves with the organization, and they may engage in behaviors that harm the organization. However, to what extent do subordinates' deviant behaviors also depend on their moral identification (Aquino et al., 2007; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007)? Deviant behaviors are affected by the intertwining of OI and moral identification. Moral identification serves as a self-regulatory mechanism that determines an individual's behavioral actions (Blasi, 1984; Damon & Hart, 1992). Individuals behave in a way that is consistent with their moral self (Reynolds &

Ceranic, 2007). Most deviant organizational behaviors (e.g. stealing, destroying company property or performing self-benefitting behavior that harms the organization) violate the basic moral standards (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Bennett & Robinson, 2000). Therefore, it is reasonable conjecture that the self-importance of being moral (moral identification) interacts with OI in affecting employees' deviant behaviors. Some people feel compelled to defend themselves against threatened OI; others may react more intensely than others when they are less constrained by the moral self.

Scholars have argued that individuals' deviance is caused by low moral standards (e.g. Merriam, 1977). As one example, employees with a lowered OI are likely to go through a moral cognition process when they decide to engage in organizational deviance (Kohlberg, 1984), and organizational deviance is more likely to occur when individuals have low moral identification. Low moral identification means that individuals choose not to be the moral self (Aquino & Reed, 2002) and it amplifies the negative association between OI and organizational deviance. In contrast, when their moral identification remains at a high level, individuals feel comfortable with their moral self and are against engaging in unethical behaviors (Aquino et al., 2007), such as organizational deviance. In either case, we have adequate theoretical reasons to expect organizational deviance to occur more frequently in response to lowered OI when one's moral identification is low than when it is high. Thus, we predict the following:

Hypothesis 4: Moral identification interacts with OI to influence organizational deviance. Specifically, the negative effect of OI on organizational deviance is stronger for employees who have lower moral identification.

Integrative moderated mediation model

Thus far, we have developed theoretical arguments for the mediating effects of OI and moral identification (Hypotheses 2 and 3) beyond the controlled mediating mechanism (i.e. perceived leader social support) as a substantive covariate. We also seek to investigate the interactive effects of OI and moral identification (Hypothesis 4), and we argue that the causal effect of OI on organizational deviance is contingent on the different levels of employees' moral identification. We find that the theoretical underpinnings for the moderating effects of moral identification might also suggest an integrative moderated mediation model.

More specifically, moral identification might moderate the indirect effect of abusive supervision on organizational deviance through OI. We propose that the mediating effect of OI might be significantly different at different levels of moral identification; thus, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 5: Moral identification moderates the indirect effect of abusive supervision on employees' organizational deviance through OI such that the indirect effect is stronger when employees' moral identification is lower.

Method

Sample and procedure

We collected data from employees and their matched supervisor in a large construction material manufacturing company in China. Before distributing the survey instruments, we established a random list of 272 subordinates and 272 supervisors (one supervisor rated one subordinate) with the support of the company's human resource departments. We collected data at three waves with a two-month interval to avoid common method variance. In the first wave (Time 1), subordinates were asked to evaluate their leader's abusive supervision and provide their demographic information (e.g. gender, age and education). We received 222 responses, for a response rate of 81%. Two months (Time 2) later, we administered questionnaires to the 222 subordinates who responded in the first wave of data collection, and they reported their OI and moral identification. Two-hundred and seven of them (for a response of 93%) responded to the survey. In Wave 3 (Time 3), supervisors provided information on the 207 subordinates' organizational deviance in Wave 2. Of the supervisors, 182 responded to our survey. After matching employee and supervisor questionnaires in the three waves, we ultimately obtained 182 supervisor-subordinate dyads for the subsequent hypothesis testing.

Of the 182 subordinates, 75.1% were male. In terms of their age, 38.7% were between 26 and 35, 28.7% were between 36 and 45, and 22.1% were 46 or above. Their average tenure was 8.99 years. In a multivariate analysis of variance, we found no significant difference between the analyzed cases ($n = 182$) and the targeted cases ($n = 272$) in terms of demographic characteristics.

Measures

To measure our key variables, we adopted scales that have been widely used in previous research. We followed the commonly used back-translation procedure to convert the scales into Chinese (Brislin, 1970; Chapman & Carter, 1979). We asked translators to translate the instrument into Chinese and reach an agreement on the final instrument, which was then translated back into English by other professors. Items with discrepancies between the two translations were then modified, and a second back-translation was conducted. We obtained a final edition after several back-translations.

Abusive supervision. We used a 15-item scale developed by Tepper (2000) to measure abusive supervision. The 7-point Likert scales (from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) were completed by the subordinates at Time 1. A sample item is 'My supervisor is rude to me'. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .92.

Organizational identification. We used a six-item scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992) to measure OI. The 5-point Likert scales (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) were completed by the subordinates at Time 2. A sample item is 'When someone criticizes my organization, it feels like a personal insult'. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.88.

Moral identification. We used a five-item scale developed by Aquino and Reed (2002) to measure moral identification. The 5-point Likert scales (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) were completed by the subordinates at Time 2. A sample item is 'It would

make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics (e.g. fair, friendly and kind)'. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.88.

Perceived leader social support. We utilized a two-item scale used by Van Yperen and Hagedoorn (2003) to measure perceived leader social support. The 5-point Likert scales (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) were completed by the subordinates at Time 2. A sample item is 'I can rely on my immediate supervisor for help when it's necessary'. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.85.

Organizational deviance. We used a 12-item scale developed by Bennett and Robinson (2000). The 5-point Likert scales (from 1 = never to 5 = daily) were completed by the supervisors at Time 3. A sample item is 'Come in late to work without permission'. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.87.

Control variables. Previous studies have found that demographic variables influence deviant behaviors (Herscovis et al., 2007). Thus, we controlled for subordinate demographics (gender, age and education). Age was coded with '1' for employees aged 25 or below to '5' for employees aged 56 or above. Gender was dummy coded, with male coded as '1' and female coded as '2'. Education was coded from '1' for employees who graduated from junior high school or below to '5' for employees with a master's degree or above.

Results

Preliminary analyses

We performed confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to evaluate the validity of the key variables. We first examined a baseline model that specified five factors, that is, abusive supervision, OI, moral identification, perceived leader social support and organizational deviance behavior, with 40 items in total. To reduce the number of parameters in the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis and maintain a reasonable degree of freedom in the model (Bandalos, 2002), we used the item parceling method recommended by Bagozzi and Edwards (1998). Specifically, we modeled abusive supervision using five parcels and organizational deviance using four parcels. Before parceling the abusive supervision (or organizational deviance behavior) items, we performed an analysis with a single-factor solution on those items. We then obtained a factor loading coefficient for each item and sorted the items based on these coefficients. We combined the items with the first, fourth and seventh highest loadings and then combined the items with the second, fifth, eighth, 12th highest loadings, and so on. The same approach was applied for the scale of organizational deviance behavior. Scholars have widely accepted the combination method to conduct SEM analyses (e.g. Li, Liang, & Crant, 2010). Finally, we obtained five and four parceling items for abusive supervision and deviant organizational behavior, respectively, in the CFAs.

As shown in Table 1, the CFA results revealed that our proposed five-factor model fit the data well, with $\chi^2(199) = 348.26$, CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.93, SRMR = 0.06, RMSEA = 0.07. All factor loadings were significant, demonstrating convergent validity. We tested the discriminant validity of the hypothesized five-factor model by contrasting it with that of alternative CFA models. We

compared the five-factor model to (a) a four-factor model (where abusive supervision and organizational deviance items were combined into a single factor), $\chi^2(203) = 755.35$, CFI = 0.84, TLI = 0.82, SRMR = 0.12, RMSEA = 0.12; (b) a four-factor model (where OI and moral identification items were combined into a single factor), $\chi^2(203) = 888.48$, CFI = 0.81, TLI = 0.79, SRMR = 0.12, RMSEA = 0.14; (c) a four-factor model (where OI and perceived leader social support items were combined into a single factor), $\chi^2(203) = 451.77$, CFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.89, SRMR = 0.08, RMSEA = 0.08; (d) a three-factor model (where OI, moral identification, and perceived leader social support items were combined into a single factor), $\chi^2(206) = 995.07$, CFI = 0.77, TLI = 0.74, SRMR = 0.14, RMSEA = 0.15; and a single-factor model (where all five items were combined into a single factor), $\chi^2(209) = 2151.93$, CFI = 0.55, TLI = 0.55, SRMR = 0.20, RMSEA = 0.23. The five-factor model produced a significant improvement in the chi-squares over the four-factor models, $\Delta\chi^2_{(4)} = 407.09$, $p < .01$, $\Delta\chi^2_{(4)} = 540.22$, $p < .01$, $\Delta\chi^2_{(4)} = 103.51$, $p < .01$, respectively; the three-factor model, $\Delta\chi^2_{(7)} = 646.81$, $p < .01$; and the one-factor model, $\Delta\chi^2_{(10)} = 1156.86$, $p < .01$, suggesting a better fit than the other models. The fit indexes of Table 1 demonstrated that the hypothesized five-factor model fit the data considerably better than any of the alternative models did (Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). Hence, the discriminant validity or independence of the constructs was supported.

Table 1. Results of confirmatory factor analysis for the measures of the variables studied.

Model	χ^2	$\Delta\chi^2$	Df	TLI	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA
<i>Five-factor model</i>							
AS, OI, MI, PLSS and OD	348.26	–	199	0.93	0.94	0.06	0.07
<i>Four-factor model</i>							
Combine measuring items of AS and OD	755.35	407.09	203	0.82	0.84	0.12	0.12
Combine measuring items of OI and PLSS	451.77	103.51	203	0.89	0.90	0.08	0.08
Combine measuring items of OI and MI	888.48	540.22	203	0.79	0.81	0.12	0.14
<i>Three-factor model</i>							
Combine measuring items of PLSS, OI, and MI	995.07	646.81	206	0.74	0.77	0.14	0.15
<i>Single-factor model</i>							
Combine all measuring items	2151.93	1156.86	209	0.55	0.55	0.20	0.23

Note. TLI: Tucker–Lewis index; CFI: comparative fit index; RMSEA: root-mean-square error of approximation; SRMR: standardized root-mean-square residual; AS: abusive supervision; OI: organizational identification; MI: moral identification; PLSS: perceived leader social support; OD: organizational deviance

Descriptive statistics

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations and zero-order correlations of all study variables. As shown in Table 2, abusive supervision was positively related to organizational deviance ($r = 0.23$, $p < .01$), and organizational deviance was negatively related to OI ($r = -0.22$, $p < .01$), perceived leader social support ($r = -0.24$, $p < .01$), and moral identification ($r = -0.22$, $p < .01$). In addition, abusive supervision was negatively related to OI ($r = -0.24$, $p < .01$) and perceived leader social support ($r = 0.23$, $p < .01$). In general, the correlational coefficients provided preliminary support for our prediction regarding the direct relations among the measures.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations and correlations.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender ^a	1.25	0.43									
2. Age ^b	2.69	1.07	-0.02								
3 Education ^c	2.83	0.96	0.00	-0.12							
4. Job tenure	8.99	5.04	-0.01	0.61**	-0.17*						
5. Abusive supervision	1.78	0.63	0.06	-0.06	-0.38**	-0.05	(0.92)				
6. Organizational identification	3.08	0.73	-0.17*	-0.04	0.07	0.07	-0.24**	(0.88)			
7. Moral identification	4.04	0.74	-0.07	-0.08	0.13	-0.03	-0.09	0.17*	(0.88)		
8. PLSS ^d	3.32	0.88	-0.04	-0.06	0.02	0.02	-0.18*	0.08	0.07	(0.85)	
9. OD ^e	2.19	0.56	-0.06	0.16*	-0.03	0.10	0.23**	-0.22**	-0.22**	-0.24**	(0.87)

Note. $N = 182$.

^a Gender: 1 = male; 2 = female.

^b Age: 1 = aged 25 or below; 2 = aged between 26 and 35; 3 = aged between 36 and 45; 4 = aged between 46 and 55; 5 = aged 56 or above.

^c Education: 1 = junior school or below, 2 = high school, 3 = community college, 4 = bachelor's degree, 5 = master's or above. The bracketed values on the diagonal are the Cronbach's alpha values of the scales.

^d PLSS: perceived leader social support.

^e OD: organizational deviance.

* Significant at the $p \leq .05$ level. Two-tailed tests.

** Significant at the $p \leq .01$ level. Two-tailed tests.

Tests of hypotheses

We used SEM to test our hypothesized model, and we estimated the control variable paths, estimate errors, and the set of paths hypothesized in this study. As no conventional estimate of error and measurement path is available for the single-item measures, we followed Seibert, Kraimer, and Liden's (2001) approach to assume no error in the measurement model and set the measurement path equal to one for the single-item control variables (sex, age, gender and education). This assumption provides a conservative test of the model. Moreover, to prevent multicollinearity, we followed previous research and centered the variables to create an interaction term. Furthermore, we employed Cortina, Chen, and Dunlap's (2001) approach to set the error and measurement path of the interaction term. The results of the structural modeling (Table 3) indicated an acceptable fit of the model to the data: $\chi^2(300) = 554.20$, CFI = 0.90; TLI = 0.88 and RMSEA = 0.07.

Table 3. Comparison of structural equation models.

Model and structure	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$ (Δdf) ^a
1. Hypothesized model ^a	554.20	300	0.90	0.88	0.081	0.071	
2. Model 1 ^b	553.08	299	0.90	0.88	0.079	0.071	1.12 (1)
3. Model 2 ^c	559.97	301	0.90	0.88	0.080	0.071	5.77 (1)

Note. $N = 182$.

^a The hypothesized model was the theoretical model, which included the three paths from AS to OI, MI, and PLSS, the three paths from OI, MI, and PLSS to OD, and the path from the interaction term to OD.

^b In contrast to the hypothesized model, Model 1 adds the path from AS to OD.

^c In contrast to the hypothesized model, Model 2 deletes the path from the interaction term of OI and MI to OD.

$1 \lambda = \text{Sqrt}(\alpha)$; $\sigma^2 = 1 * (1 - \alpha)$; $\alpha = (\alpha_1 \times \alpha_2 + r^2)/(1 + r^2)$; α is set equal to the reliability of Z_x , and r is set to the correlation between the components of the product.

Model comparisons

We compared our hypothesized model with model 1 (including the direct path from abusive supervision to organizational deviance in comparison to the hypothesized model) using a chi-square change test (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). This test, as shown in Table 3, revealed that the model 1 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1.12$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p > .05$) was not significantly better than the hypothesized model and was less parsimonious. We also compared the hypothesized model with model 2 and found that the hypothesized model with the path from the interaction term of moral identification and OI to organizational deviance had a better fit index. In particular, the AIC values showed that model with the path from the interaction term to OD had a smaller value (AIC = 710.20) than the model without the path from the interaction term to OD (AIC = 713.97), thereby reinforcing the model including the path from the interaction term to OD was the better model. Hence, the hypothesized model is the good-fitting, more parsimonious model. We have correlated the residuals among mediators to address any unexplained covariance in all models.

Hypothesis test results

Hypothesis 1 proposed a positive relationship between abusive supervision and organizational deviance. As demonstrated in the SEM results, abusive supervision was positively related to employees' organizational deviance ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < .01$) when we did not include mediators in the path model. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. When testing the mediating role of OI in Hypothesis 2, we found that after we integrated OI, moral identification, and the interaction terms into the model (including perceived leader social support as an alternative mediating mechanism), the impact of abusive supervision on organizational deviance became insignificant ($\beta = 0.13$, $p > .1$). The results in Figure 1 indicate that OI partially mediated the relationship between abusive supervision and subordinates' deviant organizational behavior after we controlled for perceived leader social support. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported. We employed the Monte Carlo method (Preacher & Selig, 2012) for assessing mediation to verify the results. (We did not employ the Sobel test because the sampling distribution of ab may not be normal, and we needed to use the normal distribution for computing the p value with the Sobel test.) The simulation output showed that the indirect effect was 0.06, different from zero with CI_{.95} [0.011, 0.128] (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Because the confidence interval of the indirect effect did not include zero, we could conclude that the indirect effect was indeed significantly different from zero at $p < .05$ (two-tailed). Thus, the mediating effect of OI was supported (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). We also replicated and tested the mediating effect of perceived leader social support, and the Monte Carlo results suggested a significant indirect effect of the variable with CI_{.95} [0.0001, 0.0806].

Hypothesis 3 indicated that moral identification mediated the relationship between abusive supervision and organizational deviance. However, as abusive supervision was insignificantly related to moral identification ($\beta = -0.10$, $p > .1$), the mediating role of moral identification was not supported. Several reasons may explain the undesired results. First, moral identification was stable within our sample and less affected by outside influences. In addition, moral identification was self-reported, and individuals are inclined to create a positive image, which improved their ranking of the moral identification.

In terms of Hypothesis 4, we found that the hypothesized model with the path from the product term of moral identification and OI was significantly better than the hypothesized model without the path from product term to organizational deviance ($\Delta\chi^2 = 5.77, \Delta df = 1, p < .01$). In addition, the interaction of moral identification and OI was positively related to organizational deviance ($\beta = 0.23, p < .01$). Following the procedure recommended by Aiken and West (1991), we plotted Figure 2 to demonstrate the significant interaction effect between OI and moral identification on employees' organizational deviance. As shown in Figure 2, OI was not significantly related to organizational deviance ($\beta = -0.09, p > .1$) when moral identification was high but was negatively related to organizational deviance ($\beta = -0.55, p < .01$) when moral identification was low. These results provide support for Hypothesis 4.

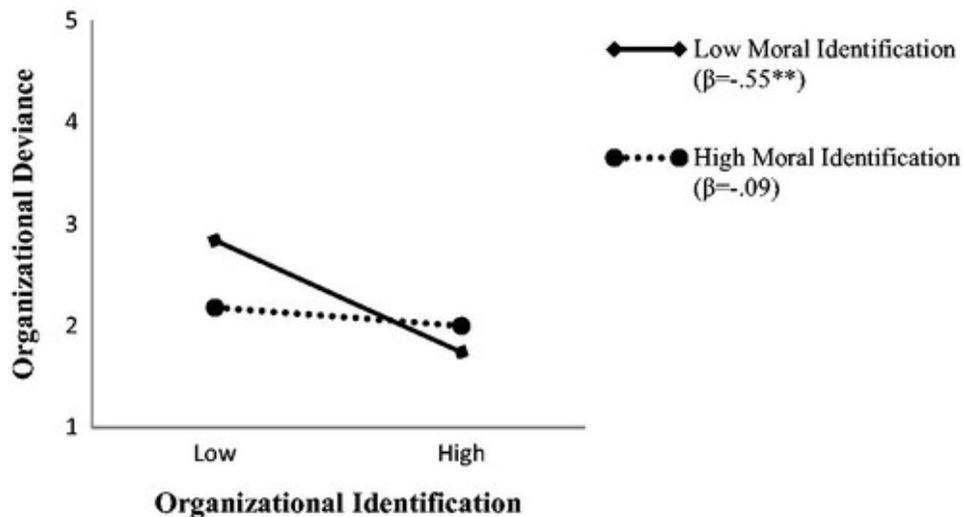


Figure 2. The interactive effects of organizational identification and moral identification on employee deviant organizational behavior.

We followed Edwards and Lambert's (2007) approach to test the moderated mediation model. Table 4 demonstrates that abusive supervision had a stronger indirect effect (through OI) on organizational deviance for those who reported lower levels of moral identification (*indirect effect* = 0.08, $p < .01$) than for those who reported higher levels of moral identification (*indirect effect* = 0.01, $p > .1$); the strength of the indirect effect differed significantly depending on moral identification levels ($[0.01] - [0.08] = -0.07, p < .01$). The indirect effect of abusive supervision (through OI) on organizational deviance at both low and high levels of moral identification is depicted in Figure 3. The results for alternative mediator perceived leader social support are also presented. The moderating effect of moral identification on the indirect relationship between abusive supervision and organizational deviance through perceived leader social support was not significant at different levels of moral identification ($[0.01] - [0.06] = -0.05, p > .05$). Overall, Hypothesis 5 is supported.

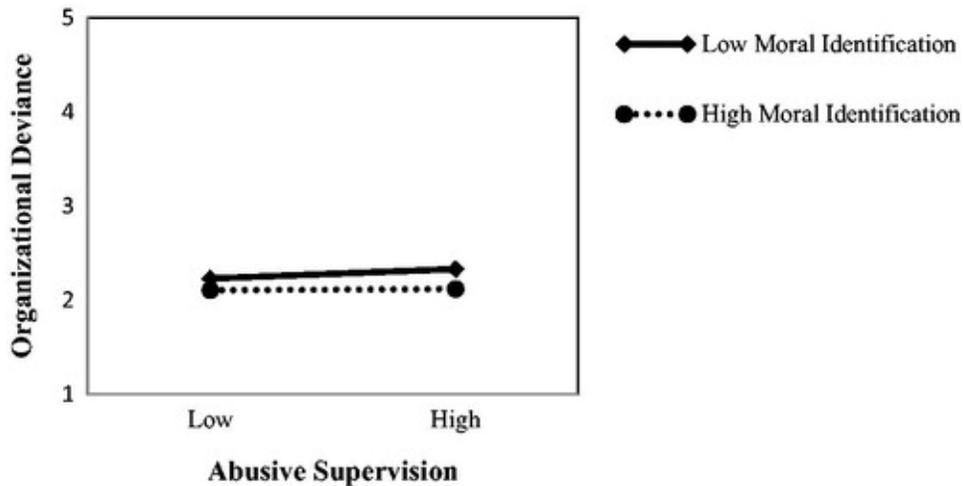


Figure 3. The moderating effects of moral identification on the indirect. Relationship between abusive supervision and organizational deviance through organizational identification.

Table 4. Results of the moderated path analysis.

Mediator	Moderator (moral identification)	First stage (P_{MX})	Second stage (P_{YM})	Direct effect (P_{YX})	Indirect effect ($P_{YX} * P_{MX}$)	Total effect ($P_{YX} + P_{YX} * P_{MX}$)
Organizational identification	Low (-1 s.d.)	-0.27**	-0.29**	-0.15	-0.08**	-0.23**
	High (+1 s.d.)	-0.18	-0.04	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01
	Differences	-0.09	-0.25**	-0.17	-0.07**	-0.24*
PLSS ^a	Low (-1 s.d.)	-0.33**	-0.17**	-0.19*	-0.06**	-0.25**
	High (+1 s.d.)	-0.09	-0.07	-0.03	-0.01	-0.02
	Differences	-0.24	-0.10	-0.22	-0.05	-0.27*

Note. $N = 182$; P_{MX} : path from abusive supervision to the mediator. P_{YM} : path from the mediator to organizational deviance. P_{YX} : path from abusive supervision to organizational deviance. The “low” moderator variable refers to one standard deviation below the mean of the moderator; the “high” moderator variable refers to one standard deviation above the mean of the moderator. Two-tailed tests.

^a PLSS: perceived leader social support.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Discussion

Our main objective in this study is to examine the effect of leaders’ abusive supervision on subordinates’ organizational deviance from the perspective of identity theories. Thus, we further advance our understanding of the relationship between abusive supervision and organizational deviance. Specifically, we found that OI and moral identification function as intervening and boundary roles in the abusive supervision/organizational deviance relationship after controlling for perceived leader social support as a substantive covariate. The results provided strong support for the current theoretical model and found that self-identity indeed plays as an important role in impacting organizational deviance as a response to abusive supervision. Consistent with previous studies, our study found a positive relationship between abusive supervision and organizational deviance (e.g. Duffy et al., 2002; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Wang et al., 2012; Restubog et al., 2011) in Chinese organizations. This finding advances the cross-culture generalization of abusive supervision theories. We also found support for our moderated mediation model, as the indirect effect of abusive supervision on organizational deviance was moderated by moral

identification. The results of this paper provide several important theoretical and practical implications, which are outlined as follows.

Theoretical implication

Our findings contribute to the abusive supervision, identity, and deviance literature in three major ways. First, they extend our understanding of how abusive supervision relates to subordinates' organizational deviance through an identity-based analysis. Previous studies of abusive supervision and organizational deviance have adopted a psychological lens (e.g. justice, affective commitment and basic need satisfaction) or social exchange theory. For example, from a justice perspective, researchers have found that when leaders abuse their subordinates, the latter are more likely to feel that they have been treated unfairly and then react with negative feelings, attitudes and behaviors (e.g. Tepper, 2000; Wang et al., 2012). Researchers of social exchange theory argue that 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth', and when subordinates experience abusive subversion, they are likely to enact revenge and retaliate (Gouldner, 1960). On the one hand, our study sought to verify the theoretical explanation of social relationships between leaders and subordinates. However, these explanations did not capture the complete picture of abusive supervision and organizational deviance (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). On the other hand, a few studies have ascribed subordinates' deviant behaviors to their harmed self-identity and advocated further explorations of this important identity/identification perspective (e.g. Aquino & Douglas, 2003). However, to our knowledge, previous research has not yet identified the specific forms of identifications that affect the abusive supervision/deviant behavior relationship or examined the intervening roles of different identifications empirically. Our study addressed this research gap by introducing the identity perspective to abusive supervision literature and identifying two identification mechanisms (OI and moral identification) beyond controlling for perceived leader social support as a substantive covariate. In particular, using a time-lagged, three-wave research design, our study simultaneously examined the two forms of identification and demonstrated that OI mediated the relationship between abusive supervision and organizational deviance. By simultaneously considering leader social support and self-identities as mediating mechanisms, we highlight the role of self-identities compared to the role of previously established mediators. The findings provided empirical evidence to support the self-identity perspective (Aquino & Douglas, 2003; Lord et al., 1999) in the proposed main effect.

Second, by introducing moral identification as the boundary condition of deviant behavior, our research makes a unique contribution to the abusive supervision literature, particularly with regard to deviant reactions to abusive supervision. Moral identification is defined as the degree to which certain moral traits are central to people's self-concept, and people act in ways consistent with their moral beliefs (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Previous research has found that individuals with a high level of moral identification restrain themselves from engaging in harmful activities. Researchers also have found an independent effect of moral identification on moral behavior (Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). However, despite its importance, moral identification is a largely neglected factor in research on subordinates' deviant behaviors (Greenbaum, Mawritz, Mayer, & Priesemuth, 2013). Our research discovered the intervening effect of moral identification on the OI/deviant behavior relationship. It revealed that a weakened OI does not necessarily lead to subordinates' organizational deviance and is largely dependent on

individual's moral identification. That is, when subordinates have a high level of moral identification, even if their OI is harmed by abusive supervision, they will not engage in organizational deviance because they believe it does not align with their self-concept (Rupp & Bell, 2010). However, when their moral identification is at a lower level, their OI is prone to being threatened or harmed, which finally translates into organizational deviance. The indirect effect of abusive supervision on organizational deviance through OI also disappears (amplifies) when subordinates' moral identification is at higher (lower) levels. These findings shed light on the identity theory by showing that the function of one's identity (e.g. OI) may be influenced by another identity (e.g. moral identification).

The third theoretical implication of our research is that we find that abusive supervision has differentiated effects on different forms of identification. Past studies have referred to the harmful consequences of abusive supervision for social identity (Lind, 1997) and even OI but have not provided empirical evidence (e.g. Tepper, 2000). In our study, abusive supervision reduced subordinates' OI but not their moral identification. This finding indicates that although both OI and moral identification are parts of individuals' self-concept, they utilize different mechanisms to manage the two identifications. In particular, our study suggests that OI is highly contextualized by organizational factors, whereas moral identification is not bound by organizational or supervisory factors.

Managerial implications

The study provides several substantial practical insights for managers and organizations. We found that abusive supervision increased employees' organizational deviance. The results showed that the positive effect of abusive supervision on organizational deviance disappeared when we simultaneously considered leader social support and self-identities as mediating mechanisms. To avoid the financial and psychological costs of abusive supervision (Robinson & Greenberg, 1998; Tepper, 2000), organizations should take effective measures to prevent it. They could set up a zero-tolerance policy across all levels of management positions (e.g. Sutton, 2007) and build a warm, supportive environment for organizational members. Moreover, managers should understand that their interpersonal treatment of subordinates plays a major role in affecting subordinates' behaviors at work, and they should establish a high-quality social exchange relationship with their subordinates.

Another important implication is that abusive supervision leads to employees' organizational deviance by harming their self-identities (e.g. OI). Therefore, managers and organizations should find ways to increase employees' OI (or perceived leader social support) in order to reduce organizational deviance. Considering that leaders play a role of agents serving on behalf of an organization, managers could build formal or informal channels to warmly communicate with or provide social support for their subordinates to increase subordinates' OI. Although abusive supervision did not significantly decrease employees' moral identification, leaders and/or organizations could still create a friendly environment and use warm interpersonal communication to keep or improve employees' moral identification and relieve the negative effect of abusive supervision. In addition, organizations can discourage employees' deviant behaviors by fostering an ethical climate. Organizations can reward (punish) behaviors that are

associated with improving (decreasing) moral identification. They can also formulate formal rules about ethical standards within the workplace and invest in ethical training programs.

Limitations and future directions

Our study has limitations that need to be addressed in the future. First, we did not empirically test all possible self-identities. Our research followed previous identity theories related to employees' deviant behavior (e.g. Felson & Steadman, 1983) and identified two possible relevant identities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, this limited choice may narrow our theoretical discovery from an identity perspective. As indicated by Aquino and Douglas (2003), when self-identity (such as a person's sense of competence or dignity) is harmed, he or she will seek to retaliate. We call for future research to explore whether other types of personal identities and social identities play similar roles to OI and moral identification.

Second, we did not control for certain important variables such as trait anger (Douglas & Martinko, 2001), which we think may not influence the proposed relationship, but it still needs to be incorporated into future theoretical frameworks. Third, the current sample may limit the generalization of our theoretical model. The sample was collected in the manufacturing industry in the Chinese context. The special characteristics of this industry or the Chinese culture may have some effects. Future research should expand to other industries or cross-cultural contexts to test the model. Lastly, the scales we adopted were all developed in Western cultural contexts. Moral identification, in particular, may have different content or characteristics in different cultures; for instance, some cultures, such as China, may emphasize compassion more than justice (Blasi, 1984). The Chinese focus heavily on respecting supervisors, and those holding the traditional view are more tolerant of abusive supervision and may think it is acceptable for them to receive it. Future studies may develop indigenous scales to reexamine the relationship proposed in the study. In addition, more accurate variables representing social exchange theory should be incorporated into the model to confirm the unique value of the identity perspective. Besides, although we adopted a multi-wave study of 182 subordinate-supervisor dyads, the results still could not provide a strong foundation for causal inferences and we call for more rigorous study in the future. Despite these deficits, we believe our study makes unique contributions to the abusive supervision literature.

Conclusion

Our longitudinal study demonstrates that employees engage in more organizational deviance when they are confronted with abusive supervision. It also indicates that the effect of abusive supervision on subordinates' organizational deviance is triggered by their weakened OI after perceived leader social support is controlled for as a substantive covariate. In addition, we confirm the important role of moral identification in deviance research. Employees with higher moral identification may be less inclined to engage in deviant organizational behavior even when their OI is harmed. In addition, the indirect effect of abusive supervision on organizational deviance through OI may be attenuated when an abused employee has higher moral identification. However, the mediating role of moral identification is not supported by our data, and we call for future research to examine more specific identities in order to test the theoretical framework from the identity perspective.

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