



How does abusive supervision impair follower's intrinsic motivation? Testing roles of positive affect and leader humor expression

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Abstract

Investigating the complex interplay of leadership dynamics, this amended research concentrates on the repercussions of abusive supervision on worker ingenuity and motivation. We delve deeper into the intricate links between aggressive management, innate motivation, and managerial humor by utilizing principles from studies on emotional responses and humor. This approach brightens the path to encouraging creativity in the workspace. We compiled data through a series of staggered surveys from a broad spectrum of 192 employees in diverse Korean commercial enterprises. Using the PROCESS Macro tool, we scrutinized our proposed model for potential mediational and moderational influences. Our results illustrate that abusive supervision detrimentally influences the innate drive of followers; a process intermediated by their affirmative emotions. We also underline how managerial humor can influence the relationship between aggressive management and supportive follower behavior. Specifically, our research discloses that elevated levels of managerial humor may intensify the damaging repercussions of abusive supervision on a follower's optimistic demeanor. At the heart of our investigation, we underline the vital part played by optimistic emotions as an intermediary between oppressive supervision and worker innate motivation, and bring attention to the impactful, yet often overlooked, influence of managerial humor. Managerial humor, rather than defusing the situation, can potentially escalate the detrimental effects of harsh supervision on a worker's positive emotions. Hence, our research provides valuable perspectives on the driving forces behind the effects of abusive supervision on follower's intrinsic drive, and the importance of affirmative emotions and managerial humor in either alleviating or intensifying the adverse effects of oppressive supervision in a work environment.

Keywords Abusive supervision · Leader humor · Positive affect · Intrinsic motivation

Supervisory abuse, which denotes a leadership style marked by hostility towards subordinates, has garnered scholarly attention due to its damaging effects on individuals, teams, and organizations (Tepper et al., 2017). Even though research has uncovered various unfavorable outcomes linked to supervisory abuse, its impact on motivational aspects like intrinsic motivation has not been thoroughly studied (Martinko et al., 2013; Mackey et al., 2017; Fischer et al., 2021; Tepper, 2000; Gallegos et al., 2022).

Intrinsic motivation, which plays a crucial role in enhancing creativity and performance within organizations

(Amabile, 1996; Fischer et al., 2019; Malik et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Scott & Bruce, 1994; Tan et al., 2019), is argued to be adversely affected by supervisory abuse (Liu et al., 2012). As such, it becomes essential to investigate the psychological routes through which supervisory abuse impacts intrinsic motivation, thus broadening the scope beyond simply viewing supervisory abuse as a precursor to negative outcomes, to considering it as a driver of intrinsic motivation.

Using the framework provided by the Affective Events Theory (AET), we introduce a unique model that associates abusive supervision with the follower's positive affect and intrinsic motivation. Our study suggests that supervisory abuse, acting as a negative affective incident, diminishes followers' positive affect, consequently leading to a drop in intrinsic motivation. This narrows a critical gap in the study by elaborating on the mechanism in which supervisory abuse affects intrinsic motivation.

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We also investigate leaders' use of humor, a communication tactic that has received less attention, as a potential moderator in the association between supervisory abuse and follower outcomes (Crawford, 1994; Tan & Xia, 2021). This increases our comprehension of how good leadership techniques could mitigate the detrimental effects of supervisory abuse. We specifically suggest that the employment of humor by the leader can decrease the negative impacts of supervisory abuse about the positive affect of followers. Therefore, leaders that use humor might lessen the negative effects of their aggressive behavior.

Our research is centered on two main questions: 1) *In what way does supervisory abuse influence followers' intrinsic motivation?* and 2) *Can the expression of humor by leaders moderate the adverse effect of supervisory abuse on followers' positive affect, and by extension, intrinsic motivation?*

Despite a wealth of research unveiling several adverse consequences of supervisory abuse, the understanding of how this leadership style impacts intrinsic motivation remains limited (Tepper, 2000; Gallegos et al., 2022). Previous research has rarely examined the function of intrinsic motivation as a mediator in the relatedness between supervisory abuse and its repercussions (Ronen & Doniab, 2020; Zhang et al., 2014). Moreover, while the influence of supervisory abuse on an employee's intrinsic motivation seems established, the underlying mechanisms driving this relationship remain unclear.

To fill this void, our study applies AET to develop a theoretical framework that explores the psychological mechanisms connecting supervisory abuse and intrinsic motivation. By conceptualizing supervisory abuse and leader humor expression as affective events, we propose that these factors influence followers' positive affect, and subsequently, intrinsic motivation. Additionally, although previous research has investigated various moderating factors between supervisory abuse and individual outcomes, The communication strategy of leader humor expression and its moderating effect on the association between supervisory abuse and followers' positive affect are not well understood (Crawford, 1994; Kong et al., 2019; Tan & Xia, 2021). Therefore, our study builds on prior research by examining the interactive effects of supervisory abuse and leader humor expression.

Thus, this article aims to fill two significant gaps in the research by looking at the under-researched moderating role of leader humor expression in the dynamics of supervisory abuse and intrinsic motivation and the under-researched mediating role of intrinsic motivation as a mediating variable in the relation between supervisory abuse and its consequences. By tackling these gaps, we aim to offer a broader understanding of how supervisory abuse affects intrinsic

motivation and the potential mitigating role of positive behaviors like leader humor expression.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Affective event theory

The theoretical underpinning of this research rests on the AET by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996). AET was designed as a paradigm to comprehend the way moods and emotions can sway job satisfaction and performance. The essence of AET is the concept that occurrences in the workplace spark either positive or negative emotional responses, consequently inducing affect-driven actions. This theory holds particular relevance to our investigation as it provides a solid base for discerning the interplay among abusive supervision, the emotions of employees, and intrinsic motivation.

Abusive supervision was defined by Tepper (2000) as the perception of employees regarding the extent of persistent hostile verbal and nonverbal conduct from their superiors, barring physical contact. In the AET framework, such supervisory behavior is perceived as an adverse workplace occurrence leading to negative emotional responses among employees. Following the tenets of AET, these negative emotions can instigate actions driven by affect, such as a decline in intrinsic motivation.

It was described as the act of engaging in something purely due to its inherent appeal or enjoyment (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, b). This type of motivation is crucial for encouraging innovation and creativity in the workplace (Amabile, 1988). As per AET, the negative emotions stirred by abusive supervision have the potential to weaken the intrinsic motivation of employees, thereby impinging on their creative abilities.

Humor exhibited by a leader, within this framework, also carries considerable importance. Humor, being a social and communicative act, can perform various roles in a workplace, including alleviating stress, fostering group unity, and enhancing leadership effectiveness (Cooper, 2008). Nonetheless, within the scenario of abusive supervision, the humor of a leader could act as a moderating influence. As per AET, positive work events have the capacity to lessen the effects of negative emotions. However, when positive (humor) and negative (abuse) behaviors coexist, the positive act may not alleviate but rather amplify the negative emotions, leading to a further decrease in intrinsic motivation.

Abusive supervision and positive affect

Our investigation delves deep into essential organizational behavior constructs associated with 'affect,' which include moods, emotions, as well as positive and negative affect

(Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017; Grandey, 2008). Among these, our research concentrates particularly on 'positive affect,' exploring how it may be influenced by abusive supervision (Fischer et al., 2021). Negative feelings often surface due to unpleasant incidents like abusive supervision. However, these emotions' effect on outcomes related to employees can be indirect and uncertain, unlike the more immediate impact of positive emotions (Pearson, 2017; Tsai et al., 2007).

Against the backdrop of abusive supervision, we emphasize the importance of positive affect over negative affect, intending to address an existing research void in this domain. We argue that abusive supervision, being a negative affective event, could potentially deplete positive affect, which in turn have a detrimental impact on intrinsic motivation, using the AET as our theoretical framework (Fredrickson, 2004; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

We place great emphasis on the interaction between the behaviors of leaders, the emotions of followers, and affect in the workplace. We explore how negative affective events prompted by abusive supervision can trigger unfavorable emotional responses in employees. Previous study has established a solid relation between abusive supervision and follower affect, frequently leading to negative outcomes (Chen et al., 2021; Gooty et al., 2010; Martinko et al., 2013). With these findings as a basis and guided by the AET framework, we hypothesize that subordinates subjected to abusive supervision might experience a reduction in positive affect (Clercq et al., 2021).

Accordingly, we argue that the favorable influence of followers is adversely affected by abusive supervision, which ultimately causes a decrease in their intrinsic drive. Investigating these interactions via the lens of AET helps us better understand how abusive supervision affects followers' intrinsic drive and good affect.

Hypothesis 1: Abusive supervision has a negative relationship with follower's positive affect.

Mediating role of positive affect

Relying on the theoretical groundwork of AET, the current research proposes positive affect plays an essential role in adjusting intrinsic motivation, which may be influenced by the extent of abusive supervision. The substantial influence of emotional states on cognitive processes, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors has been thoroughly established in scholarly work (Bower, 1981; Isen et al., 1978; Rosenhan et al., 1981). The new study broadens this knowledge by recognizing the motivational aspects of emotional arousal and contends that the feeling of joy might spur people to set higher goals (Ilies & Judge, 2005) and demonstrate increased dedication and perseverance in work tasks (George & Brief, 1996; Tenney et al., 2016).

However, the relationship between positive affect and intrinsic motivation has not been explicitly discussed in the literature yet (Isen & Reeve, 2005). By positing a connection between positive affect and intrinsic motivation and drawing on Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2008), which describes the circumstances that favor intrinsic motivation, the present research seeks to narrow the gap. CET underscores the inherent human tendency towards novelty, challenges, and personal growth (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, b), emphasizing that controlling situational variables can undermine intrinsic motivation while feedback about competence can strengthen it (Burgers et al., 2015). Hence, a work environment that promotes competence and autonomy can theoretically boost intrinsic motivation (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999).

Through the lens of AET, this study extends the premises of CET and proposes that positive affect might evoke emotions of competence and autonomy, igniting intrinsic drive. This assertion is supported by empirical research that show how positive emotion has an impact on how people perceive their tasks (Kraiger et al., 1989), engagement at work (Chong et al., 2020), and the generation of positive work events (Casper et al., 2019). Positive emotional states have been linked to more appreciative task evaluations, thereby enhancing work interest, enjoyment, and subsequently boosting intrinsic motivation and occupational wellbeing (Fishbach & Woolley, 2022). Furthermore, recollection of past exceptional performances is more effortless in positive emotional states (Bower, 1981; Joseph et al., 2020). Relying on the mood-as-information effect concept (Schwarz & Clore, 1988), it can be hypothesized that individuals with elevated positive affect tend to evaluate their past performance favorably, thereby strengthening their confidence in future task accomplishment and, in turn, promoting intrinsic motivation.

The current investigation discovers a favorable association between positive affect and intrinsic motivation in the workplace based on these theoretical justifications and empirical data. It argues that abusive supervision shows a negative indirect influence on intrinsic motivation, especially through mediating positive emotion. Because of this, it is possible to regard positive affect as a key factor in the connection between abusive supervision and intrinsic drive.

Hypothesis 2: The interaction between abusive supervision and follower intrinsic motivation is mediated by follower positive affect.

Moderating role of leader humor

Building upon AET, our study posits that the leader's use of humor, a contextual factor within the workplace, can potentially temper the harmful relationship between domineering

leadership and an employee's positive emotions (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). As a situational variable, the leader's humor expression has the ability to influence the emotional responses and subsequent reactions of team members who experience overbearing leadership.

The application of humor by leaders has been recognized as an effective tool in facilitating positive organizational outcomes like enhanced trust, commitment, morale, and creativity (Crawford, 1994; Dienstbier, 1995; Gruner, 1997; Hughes & Avey, 2009; Kong et al., 2019; Murdock & Ganim, 1993; Tremblay & Gibson, 2016; Westwood & Johnston, 2013). However, it's essential to acknowledge that humor's impact can be influenced by the context and may vary based on the conditions in which it's deployed. For instance, leaders' use of hostile humor could unintentionally intensify deviant behavior within the organization (Yam et al., 2018). Consequently, in an environment of oppressive leadership, the leader's humor expression might be construed as an additional form of aggression, potentially escalating negative sentiments and further undermining employees' positive emotions (Wei et al., 2022).

The prevailing literature indicates that humor can be an effective strategy for modulating emotional states, with a high presence of humor being associated with increased positive emotions in both uplifting and challenging situations (Martin et al., 1993; Moore & Isen, 1990). Nevertheless, the dual nature of humor, referred to as a "double-edged sword" by Malone (1980), suggests it can both mitigate and exacerbate the negative emotional fallout of domineering leadership. Consequently, humor expression by oppressive leaders could potentially enhance, rather than diminish, the negative impacts on their followers' positive emotions.

Keeping these factors in mind and underpinned by the AET, we suggest that the adverse effects of overbearing leadership on an employee's positive emotions might be exacerbated for those experiencing high levels of humor expression by their leaders, due to its potentially aggressive undertones in such an environment. Conversely, the negative relationship between oppressive leadership and positive emotions might be less pronounced among employees who encounter lower levels of humor expression from their leaders. Thus, our proposed hypothesis is as followed:

Hypothesis 3: The association between abusive supervision and followers' positive affect is moderated by leader humor expression, making the negative relationship stronger for followers who encounter high (vs. low) levels of leader humor expression.

Moderated mediation model

Relying on AET as proposed by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), our study further dissects the interplay among

abusive supervision, leaders' use of humor, and employees' intrinsic motivation. Prior studies have shed light on how humor used by leaders can harsh supervision's detrimental consequences on a worker's personal motivation (Vernon et al., 2008). Building on this, the study applies AET to suggest that positive emotions serve as a vital intermediary in this interaction.

Aiming to push this field of research forward, we put forward Hypothesis 2, stating that abusive supervision impacts intrinsic motivation through the intermediary role of positive emotions. Further, we introduce Hypothesis 3, asserting that the way leaders express humor can alter this relationship, thereby proposing a moderated mediation model (as per Edwards & Lambert, 2007). These assumptions are consistent with AET, underlining the impact of workplace occurrences (like leaders using humor or displaying abusive behavior) in molding employees' emotional states and subsequent motivation levels.

Additionally, based on prior research (Vernon et al., 2008; Yam et al., 2018), we contend that the negative impacts of abusive supervision on a worker's internal motivation can be exacerbated by leaders' humor. Our objective is to advance knowledge of the complex relationship between negative emotions in leaders, employee motivation, and harsh supervision. The suggested moderated mediation model's primary objective is to investigate how humor among leaders may exacerbate the detrimental impacts of positive emotions on the association between abusive supervision and intrinsic employee motivation. Our main theoretical premise is that abusive supervision decreases intrinsic motivation through altering positive emotions, and that humor expression by leaders affects this process. Through the use of AET, this approach helps to clarify the influences of workplace variables on employee motivation.

Hypothesis 4: The indirect negative effect of abusive supervision on followers' intrinsic motivation is moderated by leaders' use of humor by way of positive affect, and it is stronger when leaders' humor levels are higher than when they are lower.

Method

Sample and procedure

Our study was conducted within multiple South Korean corporations. The study's cohort consisted of 250 full-time professional employees from diverse organizations, which encompassed sectors such as banking, aviation, and research. For enhancing the diversity of our sample and facilitating its accessibility, we employed a method of convenience sampling to invite potential participants.

In the recruitment phase, the lead researcher reached out to personal contacts employed full-time in these organizations, briefing them on the study's objectives and requesting their assistance in enlisting other colleagues. The study's objectives were explained to all possible participants, and they were also made aware in an introduction note that participation was completely optional, all responses would be kept confidential, and the information they provided would only be utilized for academic research.

The survey items, originally drafted in English, underwent a translation and back-translation process, following Brislin's (1980) protocol for survey translation. Specifically, the initial English version was translated into Korean, with two independent bilingual experts providing revisions. The finalized Korean version was then back-translated to English, facilitating a comparison with the initial English items to ensure accurate representation.

The research design implemented for our study was a self-reported survey model. To mitigate the issue of common method variance (CMV), we employed the procedure outlined by Podsakoff et al. (2003). This involved conducting the survey in two stages, with a one-week gap, an interval proven to effectively address CMV concerns (Liu et al., 2020). Employees judged their managers' abusive behavior at Time 1, self-assessed their affective levels, humor expression of leaders, and demographic data. One week later, at Time 2, these employees rated their intrinsic motivation levels. Of the 250 initial respondents, 220 responded to the first phase and 192 valid responses were gathered in the second phase, yielding a response rate of 76.8%. Our data collection and sampling approaches were thus designed to gather representative and reliable data.

Examining the 192 study participants, 45% were males and 84% were engaged in full-time employment. A breakdown of job roles showed that 32% were general employees, 27% were deputy section heads, 24.5% held section head positions, and 16.5% occupied roles as department heads or board members. 28.1% of employees had been with their employer longer than seven years, while just 24.5% had been there less than three years, 26.6% for three to five years, and 20.3% for five to seven years. On analyzing company size, we found that 53.1% of respondents worked for organizations with over 2000 employees, and 35.9% were employed by firms with less than 500 employees. Lastly, only 1% of the sample possessed education levels of high school or below. These demographics give a holistic picture of the sample, informing the applicability and generalizability of the research findings.

Measures

In the following section, we outline the metrics applied in our investigation. All metrics were derived from robust

survey items previously used in esteemed scholarly publications. Unless explicitly stated, all items requested that respondents express their views on a 5-point Likert-type scale, from 1 meaning strong disagreement, to 5 meaning strong agreement and The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all variables were 0.9.

Supervisory abuse. The metric for supervisory abuse incorporated fifteen items from Tepper (2000), specifically, the Korean adaptation (Kim et al., 2020) of Tepper's 15-item supervisory abuse survey scale was used to evaluate followers' perception of supervisory abuse. Each participant gauged the frequency of each behavior demonstrated by their immediate manager on a scale of 1 to 5. A sample item from the survey is, "My boss dismisses my thoughts or feelings as stupid." To decipher the structure of the supervisory abuse scale and evaluate its internal validity, we performed an EFA using principal axis factoring and varimax rotation. We then examined the primary indicators. First, the sample adequacy Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) score was 0.96 ($p < 0.001$), indicating the data's appropriateness according to past research, which considers data with MSA values above 0.80 as suitable (Gaur & Gaur, 2006). Secondly, the factor solution extracted from this analysis revealed only one factor for the supervisory abuse scale, which explained 70.15 percent of the total variance. We concluded from this investigation that the supervisory abuse scale's internal validity was satisfactory.

Positive emotion A ten-item scale was developed by Watson et al. (1988) to gauge respondents' positive feelings. Respondents were asked to score their emotional states, such as "excitement," "enthusiasm," "determination," and "attentiveness," over the past five months on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never (1) to always (5). Through the use of principal axis factoring and varimax rotation in an EFA, the validity of this scale was also examined. Preliminary analysis revealed two factors which explained 75.39 percent of the total variance. Therefore, we eliminated items with factor loadings below 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017) for further analysis. Upon re-conducting the EFA without three items (Positive Emotion 6, Positive Emotion 7, Positive Emotion 9), the KMO MSA was 0.85 ($p < 0.001$), and the one factor explained 66.48 percent of the total variance. Thus, we averaged the remaining seven items to test our hypothesis.

Leaders' humorous expression We requested each participant to evaluate their immediate managers' humorous expression using five items from Avolio et al. (1999). For this investigation, unlike previous studies (Cooper et al., 2018), leader humor was gauged with these five items focusing on leaders' general inclination to employ humor with all employees in their workgroup. The following is an example response from the survey: "My supervisor encourages us to

laugh at ourselves when we are too serious." Through EFA, the reliability of this scale was also examined. According to the analysis, one component accounted for 66.33 percent of the total variation. With a KMO MSA of 0.86 ($p < 0.001$), adequate internal validity is indicated.

Intrinsic motivation Five items from Tierney et al. (1999) were used to gauge the intrinsic motivation of each participant in this study. The statement "I enjoy coming up with new product ideas" is an example of an item. EFA was used to reevaluate the scale's validity, and the results revealed that 68.25 percent of the variance was explained by just one factor. With a KMO MSA of 0.84 ($p < 0.001$), adequate internal validity is indicated.

Control variables Some variables were controlled for in the study due to their potential associations with the dependent variables (Fishbach & Woolley, 2022). These controlled variables included gender, rank, education level, length of service in the organization, company size (determined by the number of employees), and negative affect (Watson et al., 1988).

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis

We utilized AMOS 21 to perform a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the fit of the postulated four-factor model that includes abusive supervision, leader humor, positive affect, and intrinsic motivation. The CFA outcomes, as presented in Table 1, showcased a good fit of the model according to the overall indices ($\chi^2/df = 1.87$, RMSEA = 0.067, NFI = 0.85, IFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.91, and CFI = 0.92). Furthermore, we executed CFA to contrast the fit indices of the suggested four-factor model with three substitute models. The aim of these analyses was to determine the suitability of the suggested model compared to other feasible models. The first substitute model fused positive affect and intrinsic motivation ($\chi^2/df = 2.86$, RMSEA = 0.1, NFI = 0.72, IFI = 0.8, TLI = 0.79, and CFI = 0.8). The second

substitute model integrated abusive supervision and leader humor expression ($\chi^2/df = 3.31$, RMSEA = 0.11, NFI = 0.68, IFI = 0.75, TLI = 0.74, and CFI = 0.75). Finally, the third substitute model evaluated a two-factor structure that amalgamated abusive supervision and leader humor expression, alongside the combination of positive affect and intrinsic motivation ($\chi^2/df = 3.83$, RMSEA = 0.12, NFI = 0.63, IFI = 0.7, TLI = 0.68, and CFI = 0.7).

The regression results are shown without control variables to keep the presentation simple, although we have included their bivariate correlations with additional variables (Becker, 2005). Table 2 provides comprehensive information about all the variables' descriptive statistics, correlations, and reliability. The findings reveal a link between abusive supervision and a follower's intrinsic drive that is unfavorable ($r = -0.24$, $p < 0.01$). There was also a negative correlation observed between a follower's positive affect and abusive supervision ($r = -0.25$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, it was discovered that intrinsic drive was considerably positively correlated with positive emotion ($r = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, leader humor showed a negative relationship with abusive supervision ($r = -0.32$, $p < 0.001$) and showed a positive correlation with a follower's intrinsic motivation ($r = 0.25$, $p < 0.001$) and positive affect ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$).

Hypothesis testing

Table 3 demonstrates the findings from the evaluation of the hypotheses using ordinary least squares regression analysis. The results of the analysis support Hypothesis 1 by showing a substantial and negative link between abusive supervision and followers' happiness ($= -0.17$, $p < 0.05$) as shown in Model 1.

According to Hypothesis 2, positive affect mediates the connection between abusive supervision and followers' intrinsic drive. Kenny et al. (1998) suggested procedures were utilized to scrutinize this mediating effect. The introduction of positive affect in Model 3 nullified the effects of abusive supervision found in Model 2 ($\beta = -0.18$, $p < 0.05 \rightarrow \beta = -0.17$, n.s.). Therefore, positive affect completely mediates the association between abusive supervision

Table 1 Measurement model and confirmatory factor analysis

Models	Factors	χ^2	DF	χ^2/DF	RMSEA	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
Hypothesized model	Four-factor model	819.61	439	1.87	.067	.85	.93	.91	.92
	Three-factor model 1	1597.68	558	2.86	.10	.72	.80	.79	.80
	Three-factor model 2	1847.90	558	3.31	.11	.68	.75	.74	.75
	Two-factor model	2143.97	560	3.83	.12	.63	.70	.68	.70

$N = 211$

Table 2 Correlations, reliability, and descriptive statistics

	M	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.Gender	1.54	0.50										
2.Rank	2.30	1.23	-.29**									
3.Tenure	2.52	1.15	-0.10	.66**								
4.Education	4.16	0.57	-.27**	.30**	0.05							
5.Firm size	2.74	1.42	-.26**	0.02	.19**	0.08						
6.Negative affect	2.31	0.67	.16*	-.16*	-0.06	-0.05	0.03					
7.Abusive supervision	1.81	0.77	-0.02	-0.07	0.03	0.03	0.10	.54**	(0.97)			
8.Posirive affect	3.27	0.49	-.22**	.25**	0.10	0.11	-0.06	-.29**	-.25**	(0.85)		
9.Intrinsic motivation	3.21	0.77	-.25**	.37**	0.13	.23**	0.05	-.25**	-.24**	.44**	(0.87)	
10.Leader humor	2.83	0.84	-0.06	-0.04	0.00	-0.14	-0.02	-.17*	-.32**	.18*	.25**	(0.91)

N=192 * p < .05, ** p < .01. Numbers in parenthesis are Cronbach’s alphas

Table 3 Regression analyses for mediation test

Predictor variables	DV = Positive affect			DV = Intrinsic motivation					
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Abusive supervision	-0.11	.05	-.17*	-0.18	0.08	-0.18*	-0.13	0.07	-0.17
Positive affect							0.49	0.10	0.31***
Adjusted R ²		0.14			0.21			0.29	
ΔR ²								0.08***	

N=192, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

and followers' intrinsic motivation, as demonstrated in Models 1, 2, and 3, supporting Hypothesis 2.

A mediation test using the PROCESS macro and the bootstrap method (Model 4) further validated the hypothesized mediating effect. This test generated unstandardized coefficients and carried out 5,000 bootstrap resamples in order to determine a 95% confidence interval (CI) for predicted indirect influences. The indirect impact of abusive supervision on followers' intrinsic motivation through positive affect was then investigated. Preacher and Hayes (2008) claim that this strategy offers a reliable estimation of the mediating impact, enabling a more precise assessment of the relatedness between abusive supervision, positive affect, and followers' intrinsic drive.

It was demonstrated that the indirect impact of abusive supervision on followers' intrinsic motivation through positive affect was significant by using a bootstrapping technique and a bias-corrected 95% confidence interval (CI) that excludes zero (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Positive affect was found to significantly moderate the negative relationship between abusive supervision and followers' intrinsic drive (total effect = -0.13, SE = 0.06, 95% CI = -0.25 to -0.01; indirect effect = -0.15, SE = 0.07, 95% CI = -0.29 to -0.02; direct effect = 0.03, SE = 0.08, 95% CI = -0.13 to 0.19). As a result, Hypothesis 2 was proven to be true.

Parallel to previous research that investigated the function of humor within the workplace (refer to Martin et al., 2003; Tews et al., 2017), Hypothesis 3 suggests that the employment of humor impacts the correlation between abusive leadership and the positive affect exhibited by employees. This hypothesis stipulates that the adverse relationship between oppressive supervision and followers' positive affect becomes more pronounced for those who are subjected to high levels of humor from their leaders as opposed to those who experience a lower level. Table 4 presents the interplay of humor usage and its impact on positive affect.

Model 2 in Table 4 reveals that the regulating impact of leader's humor was evident, indicated by a negative and significant interaction coefficient (β = -0.66, p < 0.05), acquired post the adjustment for the primary impact of abusive supervision and humor from the leader. The interaction term explained 2% (ΔR² = 0.03, p < 0.001) of the variance in positive affect. Hence, Hypothesis 3 found validation (Fig. 1).

To better understand the moderation effect of humor usage, the multi-regression equation was divided into simpler regressions based on conditional values of humor expression (mean 1 SD; see Aiken & West, 1991). The moderating effect of humor in the relationship between pleasant feeling and harsh supervision is seen in Fig. 2. According

Table 4 Analysis of regression for the moderating role of leader humor

Variables	DV = Positive affect					
	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Abusive supervision	-0.08	0.05	-0.12	0.31	0.16	0.49
Leader humor	0.09	0.04	0.15*	0.35	0.11	0.59**
Abusive supervision X Leader humor				-0.15	0.06	-0.66*
Adjusted R^2					0.18	
ΔR^2					0.03***	

N = 192, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001

Fig. 1 Proposed research model

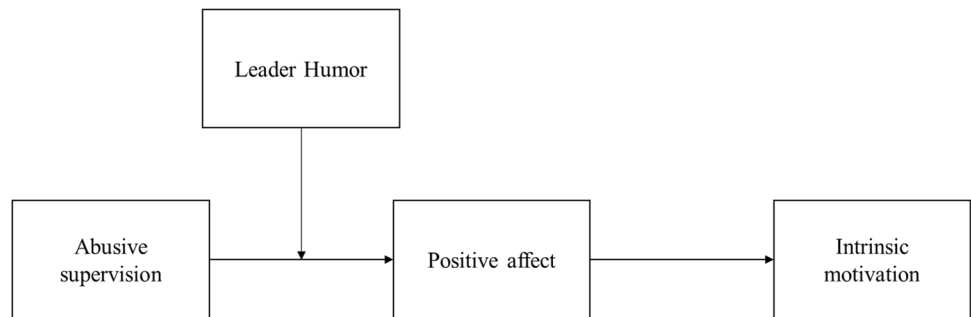
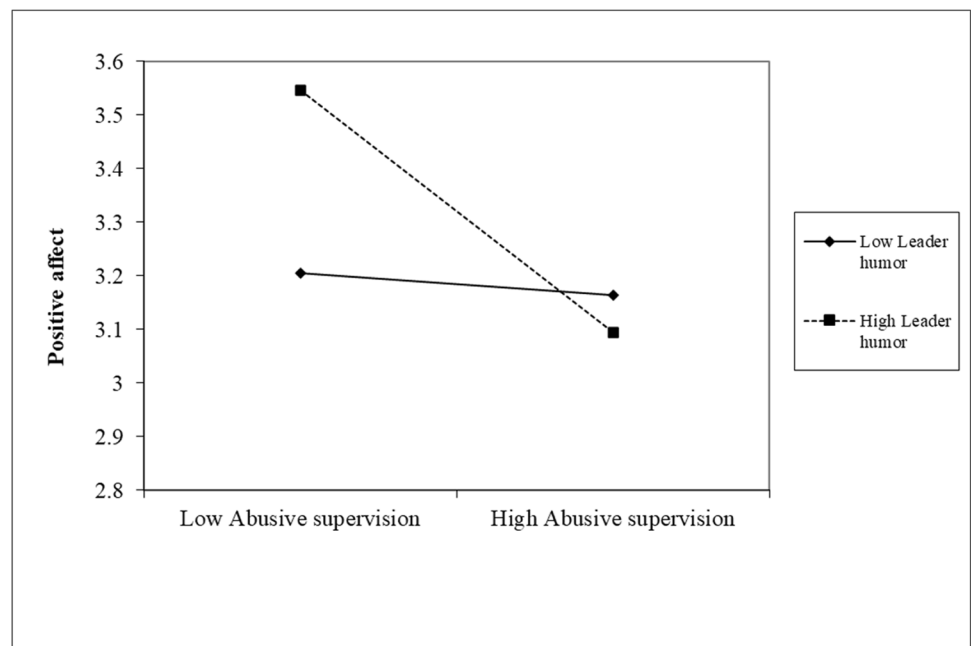


Fig. 2 Interaction effects of leader humor



to our hypothesis, the findings show a connection between coercive supervision and positive affect in workers who stated their superiors used humor frequently. However, the flat slope in the interaction factor plots suggests that the influence on positive affect was minimal for individuals who had unfunny leaders. These results provide credence to the hypothesis that a leader's use of humor modifies the association between repressive supervision. Simply said,

employees' positive affect is lowest when abusive supervision and humor usage are both high.

The PROCESS macro in SPSS was used in the current study to evaluate Hypothesis 4 (Model 7). Based on 5,000 resamples, the results illustrated that there was a significant and moderate indirect impact of abusive supervision on employees' intrinsic motivation. The results imply that the moderated mediation model suggested explains the

connection between abusive supervision, leader humor expression, positive affect, and followers' intrinsic drive in a thorough and valid manner (conditional indirect effect = -0.19, SE = 0.07, 95% CI = -0.33 to -0.04). However, it was not valid for low levels (conditional indirect effect = -0.03, SE = 0.08, 95% CI = -0.18 to 0.12). The statistical significance of the moderated mediation effect was assessed using the index of moderated mediation (Index = -0.12, SE = 0.04, 95% CI = -0.199 to -0.028). The index had meaning. The broad moderated mediation hypothesis, or Hypothesis 4, was thus validated by these findings.

Discussion

Drawing inspiration from Brief and Weiss's pivotal work (2002), which highlights the crucial role of leaders in shaping the emotional experiences of their team members, our research takes an empirical deep dive into how the "shadow aspects of leadership" may affect employees' emotional conditions, with a special emphasis on their innate motivation. Previous research has largely concentrated on the benefits of leadership, frequently ignoring the possible drawbacks (Bono et al., 2007; Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022). An area that warrants further attention is the potential harm caused by supervisory misconduct on workers' positive attitudes, emotional responses, and behaviors, potentially impacting occupational wellbeing adversely.

By meticulously examining the harmful effects of managerial misconduct on subordinates' positive emotions and inherent motivation, our research addresses this research lacuna. We delve deeper into this intricate dynamic by investigating the intermediary role of positive emotions and the balancing role of leader's humor expression in these interactions. Our findings are in line with the AET, which underlines the impact of workplace incidents on workers' emotional responses and subsequent actions. In accordance with this theory, we found that supervisory misconduct, acting as a negative workplace incident, notably reduced subordinates' positive emotions, leading to a decline in their inherent motivation. This finding substantively builds upon previous research implying that negative workplace incidents can undermine inherent motivation (Mazzetti et al. 2019).

Furthermore, our examination uncovers a significant balancing role of leader's humor expression in the association between supervisory misconduct and subordinates' positive emotions. Our study shows that when a leader who frequently employs humor exhibits misconduct, the harmful effects on employees' positive emotional states become amplified. This compelling discovery adds depth to the existing literature on the many-sided role of humor in leadership (Robert et al., 2016), suggesting that humor does not always serve as a shield against negative encounters but can

potentially intensify damaging impacts under specific conditions, such as supervisory misconduct.

Theoretical implications

This study presents important additions to the field of studies on abusive management. It first sheds light on how the actions of abusive leaders influence the intrinsic drive of their subordinates, a key factor that inspires creativity yet often overlooked in organizational research (George, 2008). Our study offers evidence on how abusive leadership can diminish worker's internal motivation through the mediation of positive feelings, thereby underlining another harmful effect of such conduct. This supplements the existing body of work emphasizing the negative consequences of abusive leadership (Ronen & Doniab, 2020; Zhang et al., 2014). Our research findings bear crucial relevance for occupational health studies by offering a more in-depth comprehension of the mechanisms through which abusive leadership impairs subordinates' internal drive, with particular emphasis on the significant role of positive emotions in this relationship. By spotlighting the damaging influence of abusive management on employee contentment and job satisfaction, this work stresses the need to promote healthy leadership behavior and discourage destructive practices in a professional setting.

Additionally, this research shows that when leaders use humor, the negative effects of abusive leadership on employees are exacerbated. More precisely, the humor of such leaders has a significant impact on the connection between abusive leadership and employee internal drive, amplifying the negative effects of abusive leadership on followers' good moods. Although prior studies have shown that humor can improve leaders' effectiveness at work, they have also shown that its misuse can result in unfavorable employee reactions (Lyttle, 2007). Our findings endorse this viewpoint, aligning with theories such as the incompatible response and the within-domain exacerbation hypotheses, which suggest that inconsistent behavior from a key figure can notably and negatively affect others (Baron, 1993). This research uniquely applies these theories beyond experimental environments to investigate the harmful impacts of humor misuse in the workplace, using data collected from multiple organizations. This offers a novel viewpoint to the relatively small body of research investigating this aspect (Duffy et al., 2002).

Practical implications

This research provides valuable insights for businesses, especially regarding leadership actions that may hinder employee creativity—a key element in achieving organizational objectives (Hughes et al., 2018). Furthermore,

fostering employees' positive feelings is associated with beneficial outcomes (Grandey, 2008), emphasizing the importance of leadership, intrinsic motivation, and emotions that cultivate creativity.

Primarily, our study demonstrates the damaging effects of abusive supervision, a harmful leadership approach, on employees' innate creative drive by negatively impacting their positive feelings. This necessitates a thorough reassessment of strategies for leadership development to dissuade leaders from adopting aggressive behaviors. As an example, organizations could advance individuals who are less inclined towards aggressive dispositions or attitudes. It's also crucial to invest in supervisor training initiatives to educate leaders about the potential harm their actions can inflict on employees' emotional states and intrinsic motivation. By incorporating checks in the selection procedure to spot and prevent potential abusive leaders, organizations can nurture a more positive work culture and avoid adverse consequences like reduced intrinsic motivation.

Our research highlights the role humor plays in exacerbating the negative impacts of abusive supervision on employees' positive attitudes. The detrimental effects of abusive supervision worsen if employees believe their managers frequently utilize humor at work. Therefore, humor is less likely to motivate people to create under abusive leaders. Managers must understand that combining severe punishment with everyday office humor may worsen employees' emotional problems. These data can be used to guide HR initiatives focused at enhancing employee happiness and job satisfaction. HR professionals can promote effective employee outcomes by creating policies and activities that emphasize the significance of positive leadership behaviors and by providing assistance to workers who are the targets of abusive management.

Finally, our study underlines the negative impacts of abusive supervision on employees' positive feelings and innate motivation, which are crucial for an engaging work experience (George, 2008; Hughes et al., 2018). Recognizing this relationship can help organizations make informed choices when designing and executing leadership training initiatives. Concentrating on advocating leadership styles that encourage positive feelings, respect, and motivation, and discouraging aggressive behaviors can significantly improve the employee experience. Additionally, implementing stringent selection and promotion processes can help ensure that individuals likely to exhibit abusive supervision are less likely to secure leadership roles, leading to a more encouraging and motivated work environment (Liu et al., 2012; Ronen & Doniab, 2020).

Limitations and future research directions

Even though this research offers crucial insights, some restrictions must be addressed. First, a common method bias can exist because we exclusively used employee self-reporting to measure all variables. We distributed multiple survey questions as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003) in an effort to minimize sampling bias. According to the findings of our Harman's single factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986), common method variance wasn't a significant issue. Although bias should always be taken into account, self-reported data is dependable for evaluating individual sentiments and opinions (Chan, 2009).

Second, due to potential measurement bias, our study's cross-sectional design limits our capacity to conclusively establish causality (Spector, 2006). Therefore, careful result interpretation is required. Employees with low positive affect may be more inclined to think their superiors are abusive. It may be able to conduct a thorough examination into the connections between abusive supervision, employee emotion, and causality.

Third, we failed to consider how various comedy devices can change the relationship between abusive supervision and employee affect. Different styles of humor may impact employees differently, according to a number of studies (Martin et al., 2003; Tremblay & Gibson, 2016; Yam et al., 2018). The study in the future should therefore focus on this subject.

Finally, other psychological mediators like self-efficacy could exist between abusive supervision and intrinsic motivation (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Kavanagh & Bower, 1985). The influence of humor combined with abusive supervision also merits additional investigation, as outcomes could fluctuate in varying work environments. Given our results, more research is warranted on the role of humor, especially within the framework of abusive supervision. Future investigations should also explore when humor can be beneficial or detrimental to employee well-being and job satisfaction across a range of organizational contexts. Therefore, deeper exploration into these topics is highly encouraged.

In conclusion, our results highlight the complex interplay between abusive supervision, positive affect, and intrinsic motivation while highlighting the critical importance of context in comprehending these dynamics. Our results highlight the pressing need for enterprises to address and reduce abusive supervision practices given their extensive negative consequences on employees' intrinsic motivation and well-being. Future studies could enlarge on the intricate mechanisms and border circumstances that influence how abusive supervision affects workers' intrinsic drive and happy emotions.

Data availability Because they are a part of ongoing research, the datasets developed and examined for the current work are not generally accessible, but they are available from the corresponding author upon a valid request.

Declarations

Ethical approval For this study, a survey of workers at a focal company was done. In South Korea, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was not necessary at the time of data collection. Additionally, the poll was conducted in an anonymous manner, and all respondents provided self-reported data.

Informed consent After receiving the subjects' consent via a cover letter written in Korean, the study moved forward. Participants were permitted to leave the survey at any time without penalty, according to the clear statement in the cover letter, if they felt uncomfortable or unable to continue.

Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest No conflict of Interest.

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