Validation of Abusive Supervision Scale: Evidence from School Teachers of Australia

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Abstract

This research aims to validate multi-dimensional abusive supervision scale in the Australian context. Two separate instruments were adapted and data were collected from the school teachers in Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney at three different times. Final sample comprised of 429 respondents from Perth, 448 respondents from Melbourne, 424 respondents from Adelaide and 451 respondents from Sydney. Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Multiple Regression analyses were used for analysing the data. Results suggested that multi-dimensional abusive supervision scale is a robust instrument and is valid in the Australian context as well. In this regard, it should be noted that the instrument is found to be valid in all four Australian cities namely Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney.

Keywords: *Credit Stealing, Yelling, Belittling Behavior, Scapegoating and Abusive Supervision.*

Introduction

People frequently use the words or phrases that suggest that the world has not remained what it used to be a century or two ago. This is especially the case when one thinks about the human rights and the way we treat each other. It is often portrayed that people in the past were not as civilized as we are today. It is because of the fact that they were less educated than the people are today. Hence, it is assumed that people today are far better than the people in the previous generations and we live in a world that has a better social system as it was ever before.

Furthermore, there has been a tendency among the people to understand today's world as a modern and educated world where people care about each other or at least understand the fact that one must not abuse others. However, this is contrary to the fact. In this regard, it has been estimated that nearly 10 to 16 percent of overall workforce in the US face abusive supervision, and this does not happen with them on few occasions but on regular basis (Tepper, Duffy, Hoobler &Ensley, 2004). This seems to be unimaginable for many because of the fact that United States is one of the most advanced countries of the world and is often portrayed as a symbol of democratic values and coexistence. Hence, it is quite obvious that if this is being happened in the United States which is considered as the symbol of democratic values and coexistence, then what will be the level of abuse in other places of the world.

Moreover, it is also estimated that in 89% of all workplace bullying cases, leaders/supervisors are main perpetrator of bullying. Although, this percentage varies from country to country but the bottom line is that it is high in nearly all the countries of the world. For instance, in Norway which is again a civilized country in the Scandinavian region and is considered as a welfare state with high quality of level, supervisors are the main perpetrator of bullying in half of the workplace bullying cases, whereas, in the United Kingdom which is considered as the mother of modern democracies and is considered as one of the most civilized countries in the world, this percentage is way beyond Norway and it is 80% in the United Kingdom. Hence, the very fact that supervisors are involved in bullying has remained constant (Einarsen, Hoel & Cooper, 2003). Furthermore, the mentioned facts suggest that we are not as civilized as we are thought to be. Hence, although we may be living in a world which is far more technologically advanced than it had ever been before, however, the planet earth is not that different than it had been before, when it comes to the value system.

This abusive supervision results in huge losses and it is estimated that it may have been resulting in an annual loss of US$ 23.8 billion (Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006). Therefore, it is obvious that organizations want to reduce this loss and are therefore forced to pay attention towards this topic (Tepper, 2000).However, abusive supervision has usually been studied as one dimensional construct (e.g. Tepper, 2000). Nonetheless, Tepper (2007) insisted that abusive supervision should be studied as a multidimensional construct. Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) tried to study abusive supervision as a multi-dimensional construct and found two dimensions, however, it failed to differentiate between the two types of abusive behaviors. Hence, dimensionality of abusive supervision has remained largely under-studied. Therefore, Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) studied the dimensionality of abusive supervision and developed a multi-dimensional abusive supervision scale.

In order to prove that the developed scale is a robust scale, Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) tested the scale at three different geographical locations namely Karachi, Istanbul and Dubai, however, they proposed that for greater generalizability of the results, the scale be tested and validated at other geographical locations as well. In this regard, it should be noted that although Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) replicated their study in three different cities of three different countries and it seems that these three countries have their own cultures. However, there is some similarity as well in these three countries. These three countries are located in Asia. In this regard, although, it can be argued that Istanbul lies at the cross road of Asia and Europe, however, it should be noted that most of the Turkey is in Asia and thereby, if there is a need to categorize Turkey as an Asian or European country, it should be categorized as an Asian country. Hence, all three cities are Asian cities. Furthermore, another thing that is common in these three cities is that these three cities are predominantly Muslim cities. Hence, there exists a need to test the scale in a different setting.

In this regard, it can be argued that Australia is one of the biggest economies in the world. Furthermore, it encompasses nearly a whole continent; therefore, if one truly wants to validate any instrument that is meant to be used in a worldwide setting, sooner or later, it will be required to test the instrument in the Australian context as well. Therefore, it is quite important to validate the scale in the Australian context as well. Furthermore, the demographic and cultural environment is quite different from that of the cities in which Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) conducted their study. Hence, this study seeks to validate multi-dimensional abusive supervision scale in Australia.

Literature Review

Theoretical Background

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory focuses on two-way relationship between leaders and their followers (Graen (1995). Deluga (1998) argued that quality of relationship between leaders and followers influences the work outcomes. In other words, if a leader has good relationship with the subordinate, it will help the leader to inculcate the culture in the organization where people are willing to work. Since, this study is concerned about the abusive supervision and it is believed that abusive supervision can be detrimental for the leader member relationship, therefore, this research is based on leader-member exchange theory.

Abusive Supervision

Display of hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors can be categorized as abusive supervision(Tepper, 2000). However, it should be noted that Tepper (2000) did not include any sort of physical abuse as part of abusive supervision. Humiliating an employee in front of others, silent treatment and the use of derogatory names are considered as abusive supervision (Keashly, 1998; Zellars, Tepper & Duffy, 2002). In this regard, it can be argued that although, it is believed that the modern world has got rid of the abusive mind sets, however, abusive is still prevalent in most of the parts of the world. The prevalence of abusive supervision is not only common in developing countries but this is quite prevalent in the developed countries as well.

Dimensions of Abusive Supervision

Abusive supervision has usually been studied as one dimensional construct (e.g. Al-Hawari, Bani-Melhem & Quratulain, 2019; Thompson, Carlson, Hackney, & Vogel, 2022). Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) found it to be two dimensional, however, these factors contained seemingly unrelated items.Therefore, a multi-dimensional abusive supervision scale was developed by Ghayas and Jabeen (2020). It is a four dimensional construct,these dimensions include belittling behaviour, yelling, scapegoating and credit stealing.

While defining abusive supervision, Keashly (1998) used the term yelling.It is a form of abuse because it violates the fundamental right of being treated with dignity. It is usually done by supervisors because when others are involved in yelling, the employees may retaliate, however, when it is done by supervisors, employees usually don't have any choice but to remain silent (Tepper, 2000). Hence, Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) included yelling as the dimensions of abusive supervision.

On the other hand, criticizing and embarrassing subordinate in front of others is belittling behaviour (Ashforth, 1994). This belittling involves making someone look less important, therefore, it is a form of abuse. Hence, Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) argued that belittling behaviour is a dimension of abusive supervision.

Credit stealing is another such phenomenon. In this phenomenon, a supervisor tries to take credit of the task that are not done by him but are rather done by the subordinate (Ghayas & Jabeen, 2020). Furthermore, scapegoating which can be considered as the tendency of supervisors to shift the blame on subordinates is also classified as abusive supervision (Ghayas & Jabeen, 2020).

Validity of Multi-Dimensional Abusive Supervision Scale

The multi-dimensional abusive supervision scale was developed by Ghayas and Jabeen (2020). Their study tested reliability and validity of the scale at three different geographical locations namely Karachi, Istanbul and Dubai and found that the developed instrument was reliable and valid across all the three geographical locations. However, the researchers suggested that for greater generalizability of the scale, it should be tested on other geographical locations as well. In this regard, it should be noted that Karachi, Istanbul and Dubai are all Asian cities and are predominantly Muslim cities. Furthermore, Karachi and Dubai are Asian cities, whereas, half of the Istanbul city is in Asia. Plus, the very fact that majority of the land of Turkey is in Asia and historically Turkey has remained more connected with the Asia rather than that of Europe in the Ottoman Era; therefore, Istanbul can also be categorized as a city with eastern values. This is further evident from the fact that even far before the arrival of the Ottomans, modern day Istanbul which was then known as Constantinople was the capital city of Eastern Roman Empire. Hence, ever since the East-West Schism of 1054, Istanbul has culturally remained an eastern city. Hence, there exists a need to test the scale in a different setting. In this regard, it can be argued that Australia is one of the biggest economies in the world. Furthermore, it encompasses nearly a whole continent; therefore, if one truly wants to validate any instrument that is meant to be used in a

worldwide setting, sooner or later, it will be required to test the instrument in the Australian context as well.

Turnover Intentions

Since this study aims to validate multi-dimensional abusive supervision scale developed by Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) in the Australian context, therefore, testing the concurrent and predictive validity is a must. Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) regressed the dimensions of abusive supervision against the turnover intention. Therefore, for the purpose of establishing the concurrent and the predictive validity, dimensions of abusive supervision are regressed against the turnover intention at two different points in time. Hence, following the footsteps of Ghayas and Jabeen (2020), this study also seeks to regress abusive supervision dimensions against the turnover intentions.

Research Methodology

A set of two instruments were adapted, the first instrument comprised of 15 items. The items were adapted from Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) and were used for measuring four dimensions of abusive supervision. These dimensions included yelling, scapegoating, belittling behaviour and credit stealing. On the other hand, the second instrument comprised of three items that were adapted from Cummann, Fichman, Jenkis and Klesh (1979) and were used for measuring turnover intentions.

The data were collected from the school teachers in Australia. Moreover, it should be noted that since it takes time to observe and understand the behaviour of others and develop attitude accordingly, therefore, only those respondents were included who are working under their managers for a minimum of six months.

Furthermore, in order to prove that the instrument is a robust instrument, the data were collected from Australian cities of Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney. Moreover, for overcoming the issues of common method bias, the data were collected at three different points in time for each of the geographical location. There was a time lag of one month between each point in time.

At time one, five hundred sets of both the instruments were distributed at each of the four geographical locations. From these instruments, 454 instruments were received from Perth, 476 instruments were received from Melbourne, 463 instruments were received from Adelaide and 486 instruments were received from Sydney. On the other hand, at time two, the first instrument that seeks to dimensions of abusive supervision are distributed only among those respondents who have already filled and returned both the instruments at time one. From these respondents, 447 respondents from Perth filled and returned the instruments, 469 respondents from Melbourne filled and returned the instruments, 454 respondents from Adelaide filled and returned the instruments; and 478 respondents from Sydney filled and returned the instruments. Afterwards, at time two, the second instrument that aims to measure turnover intention were distributed among those respondents who have already filled the instruments at time one and two. It should be noted that from these respondents, 429 respondents from Perth filled and returned the instruments, 448 respondents from Melbourne

filled and returned the instruments, 424 respondents from Adelaide filled and returned the instruments; and 451 respondents from Sydney filled and returned the instruments.

For the purpose of analysis, the confirmatory factor analysis is used as the statistical technique for confirming the dimensions of abusive supervision that are explored by Ghayas and Jabeen (2020). This confirmatory factor analysis is applied to the data collected from the first instrument at time one. It should be noted that procedures suggested by Fornell and Larker (1981) are applied for calculating the AVE and establishing the composite reliability of the instrument. The discriminant validity is also established by comparing the correlations with the AVE. Moreover, the Pearson correlation analysis is also used to test the relationship between the items of data collected from the first instrument at time one and the same items of data collected from the first instrument at time two. This is done so for establishing test-retest reliability. Furthermore, in order to test the concurrent and the predictive validities, Multiple Regression Analyses was applied.

Data Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFA results at Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney are given below:

Table 1
Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Perth				Melbourne				Adelaide				Sydney			
Items	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
CS1	0.925				0.844				0.784				0.864			
CS2	0.891				0.794				0.778				0.811			
CS3	0.815				0.746				0.775				0.846			
CS4	0.795				0.705				0.726				0.874			
BLB1		0.799				0.765				0.745				0.724		
BLB2		0.784				0.748				0.749				0.712		
BLB3		0.812				0.722				0.721				0.731		
BLB4		0.762				0.757				0.735				0.727		
Y1			0.912				0.784				0.791				0.714	
Y2			0.814				0.734				0.794				0.710	
Y3			0.798				0.763				0.786				0.703	
SG1				0.809				0.709				0.814				0.719

	7 8 9			
SG2	0 . 8 1 4	0.7 14	0.8 08	0.7 04
SG3	0 . 7 1 2	0.7 23	0.8 23	0.7 11
SG4	0 . 7 3 5	0.7 29	0.8 41	0.7 26
	CFI = 0.937, GFI = 0.934	CFI = 0.916, GFI = 0.913	CFI = 0.912, GFI = 0.910	CFI = 0.907, GFI = 0.904

Since the CFI and GFI values of all four models are greater than 0.9, therefore, all the models are statistically significant. Furthermore, the standardized factor loadings (SFL) for all four models are greater than 0.7, therefore, these items are confirmed.

Reliability

After checking the model fit indices and the standardized factor loadings (SFL), the Cronbach alpha,composite reliability and the test-retest are calculated.

Table 2
Alpha and Composite Reliability

		Perth		**Melbourne**		**Adelaide**		**Sydney**	
Variables	**Number of Items**	**CR**	**Alpha**	**CR**	**Alpha**	**CR**	**Alpha**	**CR**	**Alpha**
CS	**4**	0.914	0.912	0.856	0.855	0.850	0.849	0.912	0.910
BLB	**4**	0.869	0.868	0.836	0.835	0.827	0.826	0.815	0.814
Y	**3**	0.880	0.879	0.804	0.802	0.833	0.832	0.752	0.751
SG	**4**	0.848	0.846	0.818	0.817	0.893	0.891	0.807	0.806

Since Cronbach alpha are greater than 0.7, hence, this meets the criteria suggested by Nunnally (1967). Furthermore, composite reliability is also greater than 0.7, hence, the variables meet the criteria suggested by Fornell and Larker (1981). Therefore, the data is said to be reliable.

Moreover, test-retest reliability measures the stability of instrument over the period of time. Correlation analysis between same items at different points in time was used for this purpose. Table 3 presents the results of the analysis:

Table 3
Test-Retest Reliability

Correlation with same item at different time	Perth	Melbourne	Adelaide	Sydney
CS1	0.891**	0.871**	0.896**	0.888**
CS2	0.899**	0.846**	0.917**	0.845**
CS3	0.921**	0.839**	0.914**	0.896**
CS4	0.945**	0.894**	0.942**	0.891**
BLB1	0.875**	0.905**	0.926**	0.902**
BLB2	0.865**	0.895**	0.909**	0.911**
BLB3	0.901**	0.891**	0.901**	0.919**
BLB4	0.903**	0.865**	0.918**	0.899**
Y1	0.934**	0.903**	0.884**	0.885**
Y2	0.864**	0.915**	0.876**	0.847**
Y3	0.896**	0.891**	0.893**	0.871**
SG1	0.877**	0.888**	0.919**	0.902**
SG2	0.863**	0.886**	0.920**	0.900**
SG3	0.845**	0.901**	0.914**	0.878**
SG4	0.875**	0.913**	0.903**	0.877**
**** significant at 0.01 level**				

Since, correlation of items at different points in time are high, therefore, test-retest reliability is established.

Validity

For the purpose of establishing the reliability of the instrument; convergent, discriminant, concurrent and predictive validities are calculated. The convergent validity is calculated the first.

Table 4
Convergent Validity

	Perth		Melbourne		Adelaide		Sydney		
Variables	**AVE**	**CR**	**AVE**	**CR**	**AVE**	**CR**	**AVE**	**CR**	**Status**
CS	0.736	0.914	0.599	0.856	0.587	0.850	0.721	0.912	Valid
BLB	0.623	0.869	0.560	0.836	0.544	0.827	0.524	0.815	Valid
Y	0.710	0.880	0.579	0.804	0.625	0.833	0.503	0.752	Valid
SG	0.583	0.848	0.529	0.818	0.675	0.893	0.511	0.807	Valid

For calculating the convergent validity, Composite Reliability and AVE were estimated. The values of AVE and CR are presented in table 4. As suggested by Fornell and Larker (1981), AVE is greater than 0.5 and Composite Reliability is greater than AVE.

After establishing the convergent validity, the discriminant validity is established. In this regard, Kline (2005) suggested that correlation of variable and other latent variables should be less than AVE for that variablefor discriminant validity. Table 5 presents results of discriminant analysis for Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney data respectively.

Table 5
Discriminant Validity for Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney Data

	Perth				Melbourne				Adelaide				Sydney			
Items	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
CS1	0.73*				0.599*				0.587*				0.721*			
CS2	0.14	0.6*			0.277	0.5*			0.145	0.54			0.16	0.5*		
CS3	0.24	0.45	0.71*		0.249	0.13	0.57*		0.252	0.14	0.62*		0.17	0.2	0.5*	
CS4	0.2	0.1	0.13		0.5	0.31	0.1	0.311	0.52	0.13	0.1	0.234	0.6	0.351	0.124	0.247	0.511*

Since, AVE of studied variables in all the geographical locations are greater than their correlations with other variables; therefore, discriminant validity is not an issue here (Kline, 2005).

After calculating the convergent and discriminant validities, concurrent validity is established. It seeks to provide the evidence that the instrument is good enough to predict other related outcomes at the same point in time. Therefore, data collected from abusive supervision scale at time one is regressed against data collected for turnover intentions at the same time.

Table 6
Regression Analyses for Concurrent Validity

	Perth		Melbourne		Adelaide		Sydney	
	B	**p-value**	**B**	**p-value**	**B**	**p-value**	**B**	**p-value**
CS	0.124	0.010	0.112	0.034	0.145	0.002	0.131	0.009
BLB	0.121	0.012	0.150	0.017	0.152	0.001	0.129	0.011
Y	0.025	0.026	0.091	0.036	0.075	0.031	0.111	0.005
SG	0.221	0.000	0.259	0.000	0.378	0.000	0.124	0.007
Adjusted R Square:	0.218		0.223		0.229		0.198	
F-Statistics:	48.135		44.436		48.459		47.615	
Sig-value:	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	

Table 6 suggests that in all locations, dimensions of abusive supervision significantly predict turnover intentions. Hence, concurrent validity is established. Furthermore, in order to establish the predictive validity, abusive supervision scale data collected at time one is regressed against turnover intentions at time three.

Table 7
Regression Analyses for Predictive Validity

	Perth		Melbourne		Adelaide		Sydney	
	B	**p-value**	**B**	**p-value**	**B**	**p-value**	**B**	**p-value**
CS	0.128	0.010	0.117	0.025	0.159	0.001	0.142	0.002
BLB	0.131	0.008	0.165	0.019	0.121	0.002	0.137	0.003
Y	0.029	0.010	0.081	0.038	0.054	0.036	0.108	0.005
SG	0.241	0.000	0.254	0.000	0.297	0.000	0.181	0.001
Adjusted R Square:	0.245		0.223		0.229		0.198	
F-Statistics:	45.169		40.124		45.164		44.985	
Sig-value:	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	

Table 7 indicates that in the Australian cities of Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney, dimensions of abusive supervision have causal relationship with turnover intentions. This establishes the concurrent validity of the instrument. This suggests that the studied instrument is a robustness instrument.

Discussion And Conclusions

Discussion

Abusive supervision is a much debated topic. Researchers and practitioners already know that any type of abuse will have negative work outcomes. However, it is quite surprising that it is still prevalent in today's world. Furthermore, it was thought that violence and other social issues that are prevalent in today's world are actually present in the third world countries and these issues do not exist in the developed countries. This is because of the fact that people are usually well educated in the developed countries as compared to the developing countries. Furthermore, it is also perceived that there is a rule of law in the developed countries and this rule of law prevents the abuses in those countries. However, the results of this study suggest that all types of abusive supervision that are reported to be present in Karachi, Dubai and Istanbul by Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) are also present in all the major Australian cities as well. Since Australia is a developed country, therefore, it indicates that abusive supervision is a truly global phenomenon and people in no country are save from this phenomenon. Hence, this is consistent with Tepper et al., (2004) that abusive supervision is also prevalent in developed countries as well.

5.2 Conclusions

The study confirms the fact that abusive supervision is a multi-dimensional construct and consists of four dimensions. In this regard, the study suggests that Belittling Behavior (BLB) is a dimension of abusive supervision. Furthermore, consistent with the findings of Ghayas and Jabeen (2020), the study also confirms Scapegoating (SG) as the dimension of abusive supervision. Moreover, similar as that of the original multi-dimensional abusive supervision scale, yelling is also found to be the dimension of abusive supervision. This is consistent with the findings of Colquitt (2001) that interpersonal injustice is a dimension of

organizational justice and people feel bad and abused when they are not treated politely. Furthermore, like the study of Ghayas and Jabeen (2020), the study also confirms Credit Stealing (CS) as the dimensions of abusive supervision.

In addition to this, the study validates the multi-dimensional abusive supervision scale developed by Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) in four Australian cities. Hence, it is concluded that the multi-dimensional abusive supervision scale is a valid and robust instrument for measuring the dimensions of abusive supervision. Furthermore, consistent with the study of Ghayas and Jabeen (2020), the dimensions of abusive supervision are negatively related with the turnover intention.

Implications

The study is based on the study of Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) that suggested that unlike the belief of previous researchers, abusive supervision is a multi-dimensional construct. This study confirms the findings of Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) provides the basis for the greater generalizability of the results by validating the muti-dimensional scale of Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) in the Australian context. This provides that understanding that abusive supervision is not as simple phenomenon as it is thought but is rather a complex phenomenon which involves so many things. Hence, managers in the business world should not be vigilant about only one type of abuse but also about the other types of abuses as well. It is important because of the fact that lack of awareness about the different types of abuse provides the opportunity to the potential offenders to continue the abuse. Hence, the study is of key importance in the theoretical development of the concepts of abusive supervision especially with regard to dimensionality of abusive supervision.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

This study has confirmed that abusive supervision is a multi-dimensional construct and validated the multi-dimensional abusive supervision scale developed by Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) in the Australian context. However, for greater generalizability of the scale, it is suggested that the multi-dimensional abusive supervision scale developed by Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) should be tested and validated at other geographical locations as well. It should be noted that although this study has tried to include major Australian cities, however, Canberra which is the capital city of Australia and is home to about half a million people has not been included in the study. Therefore, future researchers should test the scale in Canberra as well. Moreover, in the region where Australia lies, New Zealand is an important country, therefore, it is suggested that the scale be tested in New Zealand as well. Moreover, China, Europe and North America are the regions that can be categorized as the areas of greater economic importance, therefore, similar scale validation studies that seeks to validate the multi-dimensional abusive supervision scale developed by Ghayas and Jabeen (2020) should also be conducted in these regions as well.

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