



## The Mediating Role of Psychological Contract Breach In relation to Abusive Supervision and Work Withdrawal Intention

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**ABSTRACT:** It is believed that employees who experienced abusive supervision tend to provide a negative reaction which can be seen in their attitudes and behaviours. Hence, it is important to determine the mechanisms that can explain this relationship to understand this phenomenon. This study examined the role of psychological contract breach in the relationship between abusive supervision and work withdrawal intention using the theory of psychological contract. The results revealed that abusive supervision was linked to work withdrawal intention among the female educational workers Higher educational institution of Quetta city and psychological contract breach mediated this relationship. This study discussed the theoretical and practical implications. It is bit challenging to reveal that abusive supervision alone cannot generate the turnover intention unless the feeling of psychological contract breach is there as a mediator creates a situation for this function. The present study endures with this stream of research and extending the knowledge by examining the mediating role of psychological contract breach and coping behavior which is employee turnover intention.

**Keywords:** psychological contract breach; abusive supervision; psychological contract theory; employee work withdrawal intention.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Supervisory leadership plays an imperative role in persuading desired attitudes and behaviours of employees in the organisations [1]. Over the past few decades, researchers have discussed the concept of mistreatment by supervisors including the effects of supervisory behaviour on employee outcomes in the workplace [2]. This study is interested to understand the supervisory role and outcomes associated with it. This study intended to explore the supervisory behaviour that is referred as “dark side of the organisation” by Griffin and O Leary Kelly [3] and this term is defined in the literature as “angry outbursts, public ridiculing, taking the credit, scapegoat subordinates [4, 5] and withholding needed information” [6].

For the past two decades, abusive a supervision was a sufficiently covered theme in the management literature. Issues pertaining to negative intention of employees in organisations have attracted the researchers’ attention [7]. Past studies found that abuse could affect the employees’ intention and had strong implications on organisations [4, 5, 8, 9].

Much of the Tepper work based on the assumptions of how abusive supervision could produce negative attitudes and deleterious consequences. This study linked abusive supervision to employee work withdrawal intention through psychological contract breach in explaining the negative feelings due to psychological contract breach. A number of research explored the impact of abusive supervision on organisational

outcomes [5]. However, several researchers pointed out that abusive supervision alone cannot lead to work withdrawal intention without the influence of stress or emotions. Abused subordinates have to cope with the dilemma of maintaining an unwanted relationship [5]. They create a physical distance when dealing with the unwanted relationship or they would avoid any interaction that leads to work withdrawal intention.

### II. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

#### Abusive supervision and work withdrawal intention

Organizational justice theory [10] provided useful theoretical underpinnings in understanding the relationship between abusive supervision and work withdrawal intention. This theory refers to the perceptions of fairness in the treatment of individuals in the organisation. Tepper used this theory to study the relationship between abusive supervision and its outcomes [8]. The first hypothesis is on abusive supervision and work withdrawal intention. When employees experienced abuse, they feel frustrated and tried to escape from the situation. Thus, employee work withdrawal intention will be high.

#### Abusive supervision and psychological contract breach

psychological contract theory is characterised by individual beliefs on the obligations between the individual and another party. Such as If one party has paid the other party will reciprocate (fulfils its promise).

#### Psychological contract breach as a mediating mechanism

The psychological contract theory [11] provides a theoretical framework that explains the mediating role. First, this theory is linked to the actions and attitude of the employees. The employees will perform in a negative manner when they predict that their obligations are not met by the employer [12]. Second, psychological contract theory is characterised by the acceptance of the organisation's standards which are related to the individuals' commitment to the organisation.

**Hypothesis:**

H1: Psychological contract breach and Abusive supervision is positively related to employee work withdrawal intention.

**III. SAMPLE AND PROCEDURES**

This cross-sectional study was conducted under the positivist research paradigm, which is intended to test the theory using explanatory approach. The data comprised of 249 respondents who were the female educational workers of Higher educational institution of Quetta city. The study revealed that nurses faced ethical dilemmas on performance in their daily responsibilities due to pressure, workload, and high job demands [7]. The nurses were informed about the study and they were requested to complete the questionnaires. The response rate was 70%, which was considered good due to personal indulgence. This study used convenience sampling which was convenient in selecting the respondents to cover the diversity of the female

educational working in different Higher educational institutions of Quetta city sector.

**IV. MEASURES**

Abusive supervision was assessed using 15 items from Tepper [8]. It was measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This study assessed the global measure of perceived contract breach by the employees' perceptions of how well their psychological contracts were fulfilled by their organisation. It is consistent with the concept of psychological contract breach [13]. This scale measured the intention of employees to work for the organisation and the higher score indicated high employee work withdrawal intention. The items are as follows: 1) I often think about quitting; an 2) it is likely that I will actively look for a new job next year. The reliability of the scale in this study was 0.73.

**V. RESULTS OF BI-VARIATE DATA ANALYSIS**

The correlation analysis revealed a positive correlation between work withdrawal intention and psychological contract breach ( $r= 0.683, p <.01$ ). The correlation matrix shows the effects of the control variables. It was found that nature of job ( $r=-.070; p <.001$ ) and education of supervisor ( $r = -.094, p <.05$ ) were significant but negatively correlate.

**Table 1: Pearson correlation matrix.**

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Work withdrawal intention	(.73)				
2. Abusive supervision	.261**	(.80)			
3. Psychological contract breach	.683**	.372***	(.70)		
4. Nature of job	-.070***	.126*	-.311**	-	
5. Education of supervisor	-.094**	.045	-.030	-.443	-

**Note.**  $p <.05$   $p <.01$   $p <.001$

The acceptance of H1, Table shows the process procedure of mediation results by Andrew Hayes, (2013). The outcome of this process procedure showed a significant model with  $p$ -value which was less than 0.001 at 99% confidence interval. The value of direct effect of abusive supervision (X) on employee work withdrawal intention (Y) is .011 which is in between the Lower Limit of Confidence Interval and Upper Limit of Confidence Interval ( $b= .011, p <.001, 95\% CI [.004, .088]$ ). The Indirect effect of abusive supervision (X) on employee's work withdrawal intention (Y) is 0.194 which is greater than direct effect and lies in between the Lower Limit of Confidence Interval and Upper Limit of Confidence Interval ( $b= .194, p <.001, 95\% CI [.125, .272]$ ). The effect size of total effect is .205 ( $b = .205, p <.001, 95\% CI [.109, .301]$ ). It provides the evidence to justify the hypothesis that the relationship between abusive supervision and employee work withdrawal intention is partially mediated by psychological contract breach. The results reveal that intimidation acts as a mediating variable that links the independent and dependent variable.

**VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Research to date on abusive supervision has shed light on its negative consequences [2, 13, 14, 15]. The current study adds to research on abusive supervision by studying the psychological contract breach as mediator that leads to turnover intention. The results have provided significant support to the hypothesis. These findings are consistent with previous research [4, 13, 14]. Previous researches have indicated that abusive supervision is associated with employee's turnover intention. The model is moderate and significant value is less than .001, which shows that relationship is significant. Various studies have shown that the consequences of abusive supervision result into employee's counterproductive behavior [15-18]. This hypothesis is tested by using regression analysis technique. The results of regression analysis support the hypothesis. [11, 17, 18]. The association between psychological contract breach and turnover intention has been supported significantly by the regression results. The significance value indicates the relationship

is significant. This result is consistent with other researches and provides insight on how psychological contract breach leads to negative reaction [11, 12, 19].

## VI. CONCLUSION

The conclusion is generally based on the findings that abusive supervision had a strong impact on psychological contract breach and employee work withdrawal intention. For the psychological contract theory, this study confirmed that psychological contract breach mediated the relationship between abusive supervision and employee work withdrawal intention.

## VII. FUTURE SCOPE

The current study will make theoretical contribution to the existing research on abusive supervisory behavior and psychological contract breach. Studies conducted will provide guideline for future studies to examine abusive supervision. The negative outcomes of abusive supervision. The current study will also add value to the existing research on the breach of contract and its relationship with abusive supervisory style and turnover intention of employee. This study has examined this relationship empirically. This study will help the organizations to find ways and strategies to retain their employees since it affects the cost of organizations. Employees are the real assets of the organizations. An understanding of this psychological aspect associated with abusive supervision can help the organizations to avoid abusive leadership style and increase their productivity. So, for the organizations this study has some implications. For instance, by changing such supervisory leadership style organizations can enhance their productivity.

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