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Double Jeopardy: Subordinates' Worldviews and Poor Performance as Predictors of Abusive Supervision

Abdul Karim Khan[1] · Samina Quratulain[2] · Jonathan R. Crawshaw[3]

Abstract

Purpose   To test a moderated mediation model where a positive relationship between subordinates' perceptions of a dangerous world—the extent to which an individual views the world as a dangerous place—and supervisory abuse is mediated by their submission to authority figures, and that this relationship is heightened for more poorly performing employees.

Design/Methodology/Approach   Data were obtained from 173 subordinates and 45 supervisors working in different private sector organizations in Pakistan.

Findings   Our model was supported. It appears that subordinates' dangerous worldviews are positively associated with their perceptions of abusive supervision and that this is because such views are likely to lead to greater submission to authority figures. But this is only for those employees who are performing more poorly.

Implications   We highlight the possibility that individual differences (worldviews, attitudes to authority figures, and performance levels) may lead employees to become victims of abusive supervision. As such, our research informs organizations on how they may better support supervisors in managing effectively their subordinate relationships and, in particular, subordinate poor performance.

Originality/Value   We add to recent work exploring subordinate-focused antecedents of abusive supervision, finding support for the salience of the previously untested constructs of individual worldviews, authoritarian submission, and individual job performance. In so doing we also extend research on dangerous worldviews into a new organizational setting. Finally, our research takes place within a new Pakistani context, adding to the burgeoning non-US based body of empirical work into the antecedents and consequences of abusive supervision.

Keywords   Abusive supervision · Authoritarian submission · Subordinate's performance · Dangerous worldviews · Victim precipitation theory · Dual-process model

✉ Abdul Karim Khan
  karimkhan2002@yahoo.com

[1]   College of Business and Economics, United Arab Emirates University, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates

[2]   Lahore University of Management Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan

[3]   Aston Business School, Aston University, Birmingham, UK

Introduction

Abusive supervision refers to, "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper 2000, p. 178). Examples of abusive supervisory behaviors include public ridicule (Tepper 2000), employing the silent treatment, explosive outbursts, aggressive eye contact (Zellars et al. 2002), breaking promises, invading privacy, lying, taking credit for subordinates' work (Harris et al. 2007), supervisors' violations of normative standards (Unal et al. 2012), and purposely withholding needed information (Zellars et al. 2002). A growing scholarly interest in abusive supervision has emerged as more research has shown it to not only negatively affect the attitudes and behaviors of employees but also bring significant economic costs to the organization (Avey et al. 2015; Decoster et al. 2013; Palanski et al. 2014; Tepper 2007; Tepper et al. 2004).

While the majority of current research has tended to focus on these consequences of abusive supervision, more recently

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attention has turned to questions regarding its potential antecedents or predictors (e.g., Tepper et al. 2011). To this end, several factors have been identified, including supervisors' perceived relationship conflict (Tepper et al. 2011), perceptions of interactional justice (Aryee et al. 2007), and attribution style (Martinko et al. 2011). We noted that most of these studies have been focused on the supervisors' characteristics and perceptions and far less is currently known about the potential roles played by subordinates' own characteristics or cognitions as antecedents of perceived abusive supervision. In other words, are there subordinate characteristics that may leave them more prone to perceived or actual abusive supervision?

Recent work by Henle and Gross (2014) and Wang et al. (2015) has begun to ask this question, examining whether subordinates' personalities might foster their perceptions of supervisory abuse. For example, Henle and Gross (2014), applying victim precipitation theory, found that employees lower in emotional stability or conscientiousness are more likely to report higher levels of supervisor abuse because they experience more negative emotions. In short, low conscientiousness and emotional instability are seen as provocative personality traits; traits that are more likely to cause tension and hostility in interpersonal relationships (e.g., Kim and Glomb 2010). Employees who exhibit such traits, therefore, are said to attract victimization—such as abusive supervision—because of the frustration and hostility these traits instill in their supervisors (Henle and Gross 2014).

Our research seeks to extend this work on victim precipitation theory and subordinate perceptions of abusive supervision by applying the dual-process model (DPM) of ideology and prejudice to explore the independent and interdependent antecedent roles of two previously untested subordinate-focused individual difference variables, namely subordinates' social worldviews and ideological attitudes (authoritarian submission). We also extend limited extant research that examines subordinates' job performance as a potential moderator of perceived abusive supervision (Fig. 1).

Our study thus meets recent calls for additional empirical research that explores new subordinate-focused antecedents of abusive supervision (e.g., Martinko et al. 2013; Tepper

2007). We also extend this research into the antecedents of abusive supervision research by developing a new theoretical model that effectively synthesizes and applies DPM and victim precipitation theory (VPT). Moreover, we conduct an empirical test of this model within a new organizational/workplace context. The majority of social worldviews and DPM research has been conducted at a societal/national level of analysis—exploring, for example, the effects of social worldviews on individual sociopolitical orientations (Mowle 2003) and collective religious orientation (Sire 2004). Testing these constructs within an organizational/workplace context thus provides the social worldviews and DPM literatures with an important extension of their generalizability and utility.

Finally, we only found one study that explored the outcomes of abusive supervision within a Pakistani context (Khan et al. 2010) and some related research on workplace bullying within the same context (e.g., Bashir and Hanif 2011). This limited research highlights the importance of studying non-Western countries such as Pakistan. As a relatively high power distance culture, Pakistani society is often described as supporting high inequalities of power and wealth (Hofstede 2001). The deference to authority associated with such cultures certainly speaks to our interest in employees' authoritarian submission and perceptions of abusive supervision. For instance, we may expect individuals from such cultures to be more submissive to authority and less sensitive to abusive supervisory behaviors—and thus less likely to report such abuses—than those from a lower power distance US cultural context. Our study thus extends research into a new, Pakistani, national and cultural context providing the literature with essential tests of generalizability regarding the key antecedents of abusive supervision.

This work also provides managers with new practical insights, and thus potential solutions, to the emergence and development of employee perceptions of abusive supervision. Recent research has informed managers that their own personality traits, relationship orientations, and attitudes towards work may influence their propensity and likelihood to enact abusive supervision and useful training and support has potentially emerged from this work (e.g., Martinko et al. 2011). Our research extends this work, informing managers, and their employers, that the values,
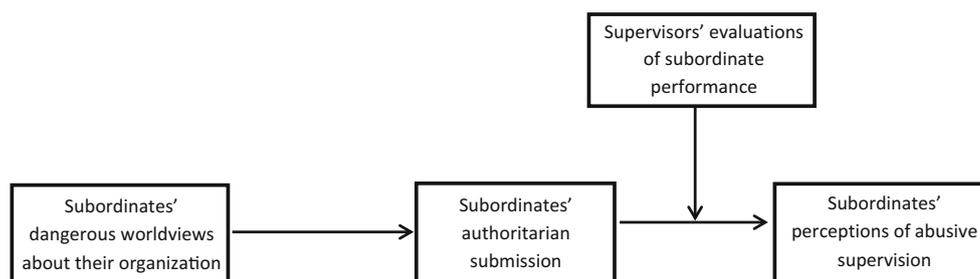

Fig. 1 Hypothesized model

worldviews, and performance levels of their subordinates may also initiate their abusive supervisory behaviors and that support and training for managers in this regard may help mitigate against this.

Theory and Hypotheses

Dangerous Worldviews and Authoritarian Submission: The Dual-Process Model (DPM)

Social worldviews are relatively stable interpretations, beliefs, or schema about the social world and other people within that world (Goldberg 2009; Perry et al. 2013; Rokeach 1960; Ross 1993). They are said to be formed and influenced by individuals' day to day interactions and research has shown that early (life) socialization, national cultural values, religious values, and personality are predictive of the worldviews that are developed (e.g., Duckitt and Sibley 2010; Van Hiel et al. 2007). Worldviews formation is also said to involve individuals' cognitive processes such as categorization, boundary establishment, and the use of cognitive scripts (Goldberg 2009). These worldview schemas are important because they help individuals to make sense of, and to navigate through, the social world—including, we propose, their workplaces and interactions with supervisors. While we cannot find any prior research that has applied notions of social worldviews to an organizational context, Tietjen and Myers (1998) suggests that, "the values, or worldview, a worker carries into the job form the foundation by which attitudes (to that job) develop" (p. 230). In other words, an individuals' social worldviews may be an important predictor of their attitudes towards their jobs and the people with whom they work.

The DPM of ideology and prejudice has strongly influenced extant research on social worldviews and suggests that individuals form dual judgments about the 'competitiveness' (competitive worldview) and 'dangerousness' (dangerous worldview) of the world around them and that these judgments will provide a motivation (or not) to hold certain ideological attitudes (Duckitt 2001). A competitive, as opposed to a cooperative, worldview is said to promote in individuals a social dominance orientation (SDO). In other words, a competitive worldview is a threat-driven motivation for individuals to support and seek their in-group dominance and superiority over others (Perry et al. 2013). A dangerous worldview, as opposed to a safe and secure worldview, is said to promote in individuals a motivation for greater social cohesion and collective security as represented by more Right Wing Authoritarian (RWA) beliefs (Duckitt et al. 2002). In other words, social cohesion and collective security are threat-driven motivational goals within a dangerous, unpredictable, and uncertain world (for a meta-analysis, see Perry et al. 2013). Thus, the DPM argues that views on the dual notions of a competitive and dangerous world independently predict the formation of dual ideological beliefs/motivations of SDO and RWA, respectively. Within our current study, however, we are focused solely on the relationship between a dangerous worldview and RWA.

Right wing authoritarianism legitimates a social system that is based on, "conventionalism (an agreement with traditional societal norms), authoritarian aggression (a willingness to engage in authority sanctioned aggression) and authoritarian submission (a tendency to obey authority figures)" (Cohrs and Stelzl 2010, p. 674). Of particular interest to our research was the notion of authoritarian submission—or the tendency to obey authority figures—as this idea appears to relate more to the extant organizational/workplace based research. In particular, the work by Hofstede (1980) and the GLOBE project (House et al. 2004) on high power distance cultures suggests that individuals from high power distance cultures are said to more readily accept inequalities in power within society and thus more readily accept the decisions of, and defer to, those individuals in higher power/authority positions within organizations (e.g., Beugre 2007). There is clear overlap between notions of high power distance and authoritarian submission. However, while we could not identify any research that has explored similarities or differences between these constructs, related cultural research exploring notions of collectivism/individualism and authoritarianism has shown them to be closely related yet distinct constructs (Kemmelmeier et al. 2003).

Thus, our research explores, within a workplace context, the relationship between employees' dangerous worldviews and their propensity towards the ideological attitude of authoritarian submission. Drawing on the DPM we argue that employees transfer their broader societal dangerous worldviews into their organizational context, and thus are more likely to view their organization as a dangerous, unpredictable, and uncertain place. These beliefs, we argue, reinforce employees' ideological attitudes that within such an organizational context it is essential—in order to ensure and maintain organizational cohesion and collective security—that individuals obey and submit to the will and decisions of authority figures (authoritarian submission) (Perry et al. 2013). We thus propose the following hypothesis:

H1 Subordinates' dangerous worldviews of the organization are positively related to their perceptions of authoritarian submission.

Authoritarian Submission and Abusive Supervision

Abusive supervision is a subjective construct and it is quite possible, in fact quite likely, that individuals will differ in

how they assess a supervisor's behavior. Thus it is employees' *perceptions* of abusive supervision that drive their responses to it (Mitchell and Ambrose 2007). As Chan and McAllister (2014) argue, it is employees' cognitive processes that play an important role in labeling supervisory actions as abusive.

While the majority of early research into abusive supervision tended to focus on its outcomes and implications, more recent researchers have turned their attention to questions of its antecedents (e.g., Tepper et al. 2011). One burgeoning line of inquiry within this body of work has focused on the potential role of subordinates' characteristics in promoting their perceptions of supervisory abuse and mistreatment (e.g., Aquino et al. 1999; Henle and Gross 2013). Applying victim precipitation theory (VPT), these studies have identified a number of subordinate personality traits that may predict their perceptions of victimization and supervisory abuse, including their negative affectivity (Aquino et al. 1999; Aquino and Bradfield 2000; Tepper et al. 2006), emotional stability and conscientiousness (Henle and Gross 2013), and hierarchical status (Aquino et al. 1999).

In summary, VPT posits that certain individuals, and individual personality types, may be more prone than others to victimization and abuse at the hands of authorities or significant others (Bowling et al. 2010), with research in both work (e.g., Kim and Glomb 2010) and non-work (Olweus 1978) settings consistently identifying two types of victims. First, submissive victims are those that invite mistreatment and victimization from others because they are seen as passive, non-aggressive, and unwilling or unable to defend themselves (Henle and Gross 2013). Second, provocative victims invite mistreatment because they are considered by others to be hostile, frustrating, or threatening and thus induce tension and conflict within their relationships and ultimately a hostile and aggressive response from others (e.g., line managers) (Bowling et al. 2010). We propose, therefore, that those individuals high in authoritarian submission might leave themselves open to become passive victims of supervisory abuse. In short, the predisposition of those high in authoritarian submission to submit to the authority of others, and their inclination towards conformity, may make them less likely to defend themselves and challenge inappropriate supervisory actions, decisions, and behaviors.

While we could not find prior research that has tested these ideas, in related research, Cohrs et al. (2012) drew on notions of social categorization to highlight the potential salience of moral judgments of others (e.g., their supervisors) of those holding RWA ideological attitudes. Social categorization suggests that individuals tend to judge other individuals and/or social groups along two distinct positive–negative dimensions—their competence/incompetence and warmth/coldness (Kervyn et al. 2010). Across two studies,

Cohrs et al. (2012) reported that warmth/coldness judgments, that is, those judgments of whether one is morally good or bad (Cohrs et al. 2012), were more salient for those holding RWA ideological attitudes. In other words, the perceived threats to social conformity and cohesion by those holding RWA ideological attitudes make such individuals more sensitive to the moral goodness or badness of supervisors. We extend these ideas by arguing that individuals holding more RWA ideological attitudes are not only more sensitive to the moral goodness or badness of their supervisors, but actually more likely to perceive themselves as victims of abusive (morally bad) supervisory behavior. We thus propose the following hypothesis:

H2 There is a positive relationship between subordinates' authoritarian submission and their perceptions of abusive supervision.

Moderating Role of Subordinates' Performance

Most extant research has examined subordinate performance as an outcome of abusive supervision. For example, Harris et al. (2007) reported a negative relationship between abusive supervision and both leader-rated and formal appraisal ratings of subordinate performance in 192 dyads. Similarly, Tepper (2000) reported negative relationships between perceived abusive supervision and other performance-related outcomes, including turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and affective organizational commitment.

Recently, however, Tepper et al. (2011) presented an alternative perspective on the relationship between subordinate performance and abusive supervision. Drawing from Opotow's (1995) work on the 'scope of justice' and VPT, they found support for a moderating role of subordinates' job performance on the relationship between supervisor–subordinate dissimilarity and supervisory abuse. Opotow (1995) proposes that individuals (e.g., supervisors) make judgments regarding those who are deserving or undeserving of fair treatment. Those who are deemed to be deserving of fair treatment are said to be in their scope of justice (see also, Opotow and Weiss 2000). One of the key factors that may cause individuals to become morally excluded from (or included in) a supervisor's scope of justice is the subordinate's perceived usefulness or utility (Hafer and Olson 2003). Subordinates who are poorly performing, therefore, may be judged as lacking utility and thus more likely to be outside a supervisor's scope of justice. Being outside this scope of justice thus potentially exposes the subordinate to more abusive supervisory behaviors.

VPT may also help explain this antecedent relationship between subordinate performance and abusive supervision. As we reviewed earlier, VPT suggests that some subordinates may be more prone to victimization by supervisors than

others, and that there are two types of victims—passive and provocative. Tepper et al. (2011) argue that a supervisor's frustration and difficulties caused by their subordinate's poor performance may precipitate the subordinate becoming a provocative victim of supervisory abuse.

In line with these arguments, therefore, we propose that the indirect effect of subordinates' dangerous worldviews on abusive supervision (through authoritarian submission) will be moderated by their job performance, where low job performance will strengthen the positive relationship between authoritarian submission and perceived supervisory abuse. In short, subordinates who hold ideological attitudes of authoritarian submission and are performing poorly may leave themselves in 'double jeopardy' with regards to their potential victimization. On the one hand, their submissive attitudes towards the supervisor (and all authority figures) leave them prone to being a passive victim. On the other, their poor performance may create frustration and difficulty for their supervisor and thus leave them prone to being a provocative victim. We thus propose the following hypothesis:

H3 An indirect positive relationship between subordinates' perceptions of dangerous worldviews and their perceptions of abusive supervision (through subordinates' authoritarian submission) will be strengthened when supervisors' evaluations of subordinates' performance is low rather than high.

Methods

Sample and Procedures

Survey questionnaires were administered, in English, to 250 employees of 15 different private sector organizations operating in Pakistan. The participating organizations belonged to the service, textile, light engineering, and educational sectors. Employees from the service industries (e.g., software, banking, and telecom) accounted for approximately 70 % of the sample, with employees from the textiles, light engineering, and educational organizations making up the other 30 %.

We approached the line managers of these organizations, through our key contacts, and got their consent to participate in the study. We asked them to fill out job performance questionnaires for a random sample of their subordinates. We then independently approached the subordinates of these line managers and asked them to complete a questionnaire containing items relating to their perceptions of a dangerous worldview, authoritarian submission, and abusive supervision. We also collected data on certain demographics which were placed in the last part of both survey forms.

Both the line manager and subordinate surveys were appropriately coded so that they could be matched and line manager–subordinate dyads formed. In an effort to minimize common method bias, we used four different versions of the subordinate survey instruments. These differed in the ordering of the measures contained within them (Ambrose and Schminke 2009; Khan et al. 2014; Meade et al. 2007).

Both survey instruments were complemented with a cover letter which highlighted the academic research objectives of the study and assured the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. We received a total of 180 subordinate responses out of 250 surveys (a 72 % response rate) and 48 line manager responses out of 80 surveys (a 60 % response rate). In line with prior work (Colquitt et al. 2002; Richardson and Vandenberg 2005; Schneider et al. 1998; Tracey and Tews 2005), we only included line manager–subordinate dyads where two or more matched subordinates had responded. Our final sample included 45 line manager and 173 employee surveys. The descriptive statistics showed that the employee sample was more skewed towards males as they comprised 70.6 % (122) of sample. The participants' average age was 32 years, and the average for number of years of service with the present organization was six.

Measures

All items measured in the survey were anchored to a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), except for subordinates' performance which, while also anchored on a 5-point scale, used different labels (e.g., from unacceptable to outstanding and very ineffective to very effective).

Subordinates' Dangerous Worldviews about the Organization

We adapted six items of Altemeyer's (1998) belief in a dangerous world scale to the organizational context. Sample items include "Although it may appear that things are getting more dangerous and chaotic in my organization, it really is not so", "There are many dangerous people at our workplace who will harm someone out of pure meanness, for no reason at all.", and "It seems that every year there are fewer and fewer truly respectable people around in this organization, and more and more persons with no morals at all threaten everyone else". Alpha reliability of this scale was 0.71.

Subordinates' Authoritarian Submission

We used the four-item instrument developed by Funke (2005) to measure the "authoritarian submission" dimension of subordinates' RWA. Sample items include

"Obedience and respect for authority are the most important values subordinates should learn", and "The real keys to the good life are obedience, discipline, and virtue". Alpha reliability of this scale was 0.60.

Subordinates' Perceptions of Abusive Supervision

We used the 15-item scale developed by Tepper et al. (2011) to measure abusive supervision. The subordinates reported how often their boss exhibited behaviors such as "My supervisor lies to me", "My supervisor is rude with me", "My supervisor invades my privacy", and "My supervisor gives me the silent treatment". Alpha reliability of this scale was 0.78.

Supervisors' Evaluation of Subordinates' Performance

Subordinates' performance was measured using the four-item scale developed by Liden et al. (1993). The items and response scales were: "Rate the overall performance that you observe for this subordinate" 1 (*unacceptable*) to 5 (*outstanding*), "What is your personal view of your subordinate in terms of his or her overall effectiveness?" 1 (*very ineffective*) to 5 (*very effective*), "Overall to what extent do you feel your subordinate has been effectively fulfilling his or her roles and responsibilities?" 1 (*not effectively at all*) to 5 (*very effectively*), and "My subordinate is superior to other subordinates that I have supervised before" 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Alpha reliability of this scale was 0.82.

Control Variables

We controlled for several factors that have been shown to be related to our study variables. These included supervisor gender and subordinate gender as previous research suggests men and women report different levels of workplace victimization (Nixon 2009). We also controlled for gender similarity because some evidence suggests that men are typically bullied by other men and often by supervisors while women may face victimization from both other women and men (Salin 2003; Zapf et al. 2011; Cortina et al. 2002). Finally, we controlled for tenure under current supervisor and subordinate hierarchical level because previous studies found significant relationships between these demographics and individual perceptions of abusive supervision (Wu and Hu 2013).

Results

Before proceeding to our main analysis, we calculated the proportions of within- and between-group variance for the dependent variable by computing intraclass correlation (ICC)

indexes. A null model tested with subordinates' authoritarian submission as the outcome variable revealed that 43 % ($p < 0.001$) of the variance in subordinates' authoritarian submission resided at the supervisor level and 56 % resided at the individual/subordinate level. When abusive supervision was the outcome, the null model test revealed that 40 % ($p < 0.001$) of the variance resided at the supervisor level and 60 % resided at the individual/subordinate level. Thus there is sufficient variance across levels of analysis to encourage us the use of multilevel method of analysis.

There were two main stages of our analysis. First, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the factor structure and discriminant validity of our four main measurement scales—dangerous worldviews about the organization, authoritarian submission, abusive supervision, and subordinates' performance. We used AMOS (Arbuckle and Wothke 1999) with maximum likelihood estimation to measure the fit of our measurement model. Second, we used hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to test our hypotheses.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We used a combination of the Chi-square test statistic with corresponding degrees of freedom and statistical significance (χ^2 (df), p), comparative fit index (CFI), goodness of fit index (GFI), standardized root mean square residuals (SRMR), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) to assess the fit of our CFA model (Hu and Bentler 1999). Normed Chi-square scores of less than 2, GFI and CFI scores of above 0.90, SRMR value of less than 0.08, and RMSEA scores of below 0.05 are said to reflect an excellent model fit (Hu and Bentler 1999; Kline 2010).

An examination of these fit indices highlighted the better fit of our four factor measurement model (see Table 1). A normed Chi-square of 1.16 ($\chi^2 = 150.13$, df $= 129$, $p < 0.10$), CFI of 0.97, GFI of 0.91, SRMR of 0.06, and RMSEA of 0.03 provided evidence of the goodness of fit of our model. On comparison, the four factor model showed a significantly better fit to the data as compared to a one-factor model (χ^2_Δ (6) $= 503.39 - 150.13 = 353.3$, $p < 0.001$). Overall, the results of CFA gave us confidence in the discriminant validity of our four scales. At this stage, one item of dangerous worldviews and several items of the abusive supervision scale were removed from the analysis based on low factor loadings and high cross loadings (Kline 2010). The removal of these items improved the model fit substantially.

These data modeled at the individual level provided sufficient basis to test the multilevel structure of the data (Dyer et al. 2005). Multilevel CFA models individual- and group-level constructs simultaneously at both levels. We expected that the factor structure of the model would be consistent at both levels, thus we constructed within- and

Table 1 Comparison of measurement models for main variables in the study

Model	Factors	χ^2	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	GFI	SRMR
Model 1	Four factors	150.13	129	–	1.16	0.03	0.97	0.91	0.06
Model 2	One factor: all four factors were combined into one factor	503.39	135	353.3**	3.73	0.13	0.51	0.70	0.13

** $p < 0.01$

between-group CFA models comprising four factors. Despite the fact that our between-group sample size was low for multilevel CFA (Muthen, 1994), with the exception of the CFI, the fit statistics were satisfactory ($\chi^2 = 364.73$, df = 260, $p < 0.10$, CFI = 0.88, RMSEA = 0.04). Also, the SRMR fit indices at each level indicated that the fit of the level 1 (within) part of the model was better than at level 2 (between) part of the model. The multilevel CFA results gave us further confidence in the measurement structure of our constructs.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

The means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha, and correlations among focal variables are shown in Table 2. First, we assessed whether the different versions of questionnaires had any impact on the substantive variables in our study. One-way analysis of variance suggested no mean differences for dangerous worldviews about organization [F (3,169) = 1.3, $p > 0.05$], authoritarian submission [F (3,169) = 2.5, $p > 0.05$], and abusive supervision [F (3,169) = 0.87, $p > 0.05$] across our different subsamples. We were thus confident that our randomization of measures within the different surveys did not have any impact on our study variables and again gave us confidence to progress with our main analysis. We also noted at this stage that for subordinate performance supervisors evaluated between 2 and 7 subordinates and the following distributional information across supervisors was found (mean 3.63; median 3.69; SD 0.43, min: 2.70, max: 4.56).

In terms of our correlation tests, as predicted, subordinates' dangerous worldviews about their organization were positively correlated with their authoritarian submission ($r = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$) and abusive supervision perceptions ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$). Moreover, subordinates' authoritarian submission was positively correlated with perceived abusive supervision ($r = 0.21$, p < 0.01) and their performance negatively correlated with their perceptions of abusive supervision ($r = -0.36$, $p < 0.01$). These findings were consistent with our hypothesized relationships and gave us confidence to progress to our main model testing.

The correlations of our control variables with the main model variables are also shown in Table 2. Subordinates' gender was negatively related with dangerous worldviews about organization ($r = -0.20$, $p < 0.01$) and abusive supervision ($r = -0.24$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that female employees held less dangerous worldviews (more safe/secure worldviews) and reported lower abusive supervision perceptions than their male colleagues. Supervisor–subordinate gender similarity was positively related with abusive supervision ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$) and negatively related with subordinates' performance ($r = -0.22$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that those subordinates' with a supervisor of the same gender tended to report higher levels of abusive supervision and received lower performance ratings by their supervisor. Finally, the tenure of one's relationship with their current supervisor was positively related with their perceptions of abusive supervision ($r = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that those in longer relationships with their supervisor are more likely to report higher levels of abusive supervision. These significant findings led us to control for these variables in all our subsequent analysis.

Hypothesis Testing

We used hierarchical linear modeling (HLM 7) with random effects to test our hypotheses. To summarize, hypothesis 1 concerns the effect of subordinates' dangerous worldviews about their organization in predicting subordinates' perceptions of authoritarian submission. Hypothesis 2 relates to the effect of subordinates' authoritarian submission perceptions as a predictor of abusive supervision. Hypothesis 3 is concerned with whether the strength of the mediated relationship between subordinates' dangerous worldviews and abusive supervision (via subordinates' authoritarian submission), varies depending on the subordinates' performance—that is, a test of moderated mediation. For testing these hypotheses, we used a two-level model, where supervisors' controls were entered at level 2 and subordinates' dangerous worldviews, authoritarian submission, supervisor-rated performance, demographics, and the interaction term between performance and authoritarian submission were entered at level 1.

Table 3 shows the results of the hypotheses related to the effect of subordinates' dangerous worldviews on subordinates' authoritarian submission and direct and interactive effects of subordinates' authoritarian submission and subordinates' performance on abusive supervision. Our findings were essentially equivalent with or without the control variables, therefore, the results without controls

Table 2 Means, standard deviations, and correlations among all study variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Subordinate's dangerous worldviews	2.62	0.78	(0.71)								
2. Subordinate's authoritarian submission	3.40	0.60	0.27**	(0.60)							
3. Abusive supervision	2.10	0.75	0.38**	0.21**	(0.78)						
4. Subordinate's performance	3.60	0.71	−0.07	0.08	−0.36**	(0.82)					
5. Supervisor's gender[a]	0.12	0.32	−0.11	−0.09	−0.06	−0.04					
6. Supervisor–subordinate gender similarity[b]	0.71	0.46	0.06	−0.03	0.18*	−0.22**	−0.20**				
7. Tenure with current supervisor[c]	1.94	0.90	0.13	0.08	0.17*	−0.08	−0.15*	−0.15*			
8. Subordinate's gender[d]	0.28	0.45	−0.20**	−0.09	−0.24**	0.14	0.13	−0.72**	−0.11		
9. Subordinate's hierarchical level[e]	1.70	0.64	−0.10	0.07	−0.01	−0.12	−0.08	0.09	0.32**	−0.16*	–

$N = 173$. Cronbach's α coefficients are displayed on the diagonal. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

[a] Supervisor's gender was coded: 0 = Male, 1 = Female

[b] Supervisor–subordinate gender similarity was coded: 0 = Mismatch, 1 = Match If subordinate and the supervisor have same gender it was coded as 1 and if they have different gender it was coded as 0

[c] Tenure with current supervisor was coded: 1 = less than 1 years, 2 = 1–2 years, 3 = 3–5 years, 4 = 6–10 years, 5 = more than 10 years

[d] Subordinate's gender was coded: 0 = Male, 1 = Female

[e] Subordinate's hierarchical level was coded: 1 = Entry level, 2 = Middle level, 3 = Senior level

Table 3 HLM results testing the interaction of subordinate's authoritarian submission and subordinate performance

Model and measure	Subordinate's authoritarian submission		Abusive supervision	
	Υ	SE	Υ	SE
Model 1				
Level 1				
Intercept	3.38**	0.07	2.10**	0.05
Subordinate's dangerous worldviews	0.15**	0.06	0.30**	0.07
Subordinate's authoritarian submission			0.19*	0.08
Subordinate's performance			−0.37**	0.07
Pseudo-R^2	0.06		0.25	
Model 2				
Level 1				
Intercept			2.11**	0.06
Subordinate's dangerous worldviews			0.31**	0.07
Subordinate's authoritarian submission			0.14	0.09
Subordinate's performance			−0.35**	0.07
Subordinate's authoritarian submission × performance			−0.30**	0.11
ΔPseudo-R^2			0.03	
Pseudo-R^2			0.28	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

have been reported (Becker 2005). Table 4 summarizes the results regarding testing of the conditional indirect effect of subordinates' dangerous worldviews on abusive supervision (via authoritarian submission) at varying levels of subordinate performance.

As exhibited in Table 3 (Model 1), the effect of dangerous worldviews was significant in predicting subordinates'

authoritarian submission perceptions ($\gamma = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, Table 3 (Model 2) showed that the effect of authoritarian submission was significant in predicting abusive supervision perceptions ($\gamma = 0.19, p < 0.05$). Therefore, the results supported hypotheses 1 and 2. We tested hypothesis 3 taking the moderated path analysis approach of Edwards and Lambert (2007), which integrates moderated

Table 4 Path-analytic results: indirect and total effects of subordinate's dangerous worldviews (via subordinate's authoritarian submission) on abusive supervision at low and high levels of supervisor-rated subordinate's performance

Moderator	Subordinate's dangerous worldviews (X)	⟶	Subordinate's authoritarian submission (M)	⟶	Abusive supervision (Y)
	First stage PMX	Second stage PYM	Direct effects PYX	Indirect effects PMX × PYM	Total effects PYX + (PMX × PYM)
Subordinate's performance					
Low (−1 SD)	0.23	0.40**	0.18	0.09*	0.27
High (+1 SD)	0.18	−0.13	0.33**	−0.02	0.31**

[a] $N = 173$. *PMX* path from subordinate's dangerous worldviews to subordinate's authoritarian submission, *PYM* path from subordinate's authoritarian submission to abusive supervision, *PYX* path from subordinate's dangerous worldviews to abusive supervision

[b] Low moderator variable refers to one standard deviation below the mean of the moderator; high moderator variable refers to one standard deviation above the mean of the moderator

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

regression procedures into the path-analytic method for testing mediation. Information from the HLM results in Table 3 was used to conduct path-analytic tests at low and high levels of subordinate's performance. These results are presented in Table 4. The indirect effect (*ab*) is considered statistically significant when the 95 % biased corrected confidence interval (CI) excludes zero. The results show that when the subordinates' performance is low, the indirect effect of subordinates' dangerous worldview perceptions on abusive supervision through authoritarian submission was significant (*ab* = 0.09, CI [0.018, 0.209]). In contrast, the confidence interval related to the indirect effect through authoritarian submission was non-significant when subordinates' performance was high (*ab* = −0.02, CI [−0.102, 0.011]). Therefore, the results supported hypothesis 3.

In plotting the interaction, we followed the approach outlined by Bauer and Curran (2005). Figure 2 depicts the interaction of subordinates' authoritarian submission and supervisor-rated performance in predicting abusive
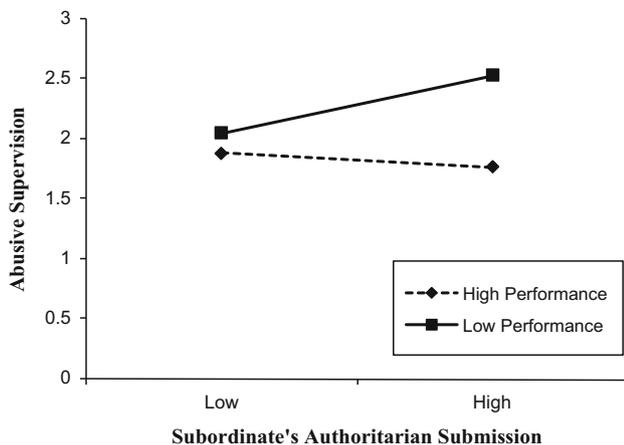

Fig. 2 Moderating effect of subordinate's performance on the relationship between subordinate's authoritarian submission and subordinate's perceptions of abusive supervision

supervision perceptions. It shows that individuals who are high on authoritarian submission and considered low performers by supervisors report high levels of abusive supervision. Thus, subordinates' authoritarian submission is positively related to abusive supervision only when performance is low. These results support hypothesis 3. We also ran post hoc analysis to test an alternative model (Abusive Supervision → Authoritarian Submission → Dangerous World Views) with our data, the results showed abusive supervision was not a significant predictor of authoritarian submission ($\beta = 0.01$, *ns*), whereas authoritarian submission was a significant predictor of dangerous worldview ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$).

Discussion

A key contribution of this study was the development and testing of a theoretical model that may help to explain how, and under what circumstances, subordinates' cognitions about organizational worldviews lead to supervisory abuse. We integrated the previously unconnected theories of the dual-process model and victim precipitation to propose that subordinates' worldviews about their organization instill certain attitudes which become instrumental in inviting supervisory abuse. We found that subordinates' dangerous worldviews are related to their attitudes of obedience and conformity and that these passive/submissive attitudes are related to their perceptions of abusive supervision (see, Henle and Gross 2013). However, this effect was only observed in poor performing subordinates. Previous research has shown that poor performance may leave individuals exposed to victimization due to the antagonistic and frustrating effects of poor performance on one's supervisor (see also, Tepper et al. 2011). It appears in our study that poor performing and obedient/passive subordinates may suffer a 'double jeopardy' in regards to victimization,

where the combined effects of a high submission to authority (passive victimization) and poor performance (antagonistic victimization) create a prime target for supervisory abuse. Our findings have several important implications for theory, which we explain below.

First, we contribute to extant literature on abusive supervision by offering a new dual-process model and victim precipitation theory conceptual lens to explore the importance of two new antecedents of abusive supervision—subordinates' worldviews and submission to authority. Recent research has begun to explore the potential antecedents of abusive supervision (e.g., Tepper et al. 2011) and in particular subordinate characteristics (e.g., Aquino and Bradfield 2000; Henle and Gross 2013; Neves, 2014; Tepper et al. 2006). Our study answers recent calls for more research in this important domain by introducing and finding support for two new subordinate-focused antecedents of abusive supervision (e.g., Henle and Gross 2013). Moreover, by examining the moderating role of individual job performance (see also, Tepper et al. 2011) on these relationships we provide new research that examines the interactional effects of both subordinate-focused passive/submissive (submission to authority) and antagonistic (job performance) triggers for supervisory abuse. Of course this research is still in its infancy and additional research, in new national, professional, and cultural contexts, is needed if we are to further generalize these findings.

Second, we extend research on social worldviews into the previously under-researched organizational context. The majority of social worldviews research has been conducted at a societal/national level of analysis—exploring, for example, the effects of social worldviews on sociopolitical orientations (Mowle 2003) and collective religious orientation (Sire 2004). A key principle of social worldviews theory is that these schemas influence individuals in all aspects of their lives and, as such, research exploring the effects of these attitudes and values within an organizational context are essential if we are to get a more complete grasp of their pervasiveness. Our findings generally support the dual-process model within this organizational context—suggesting that one's social worldviews about the organization may have an important impact upon one's work- and organization-related experiences. These findings may also extend research on employee socialization (Allen 2006; Louis 1980) which has tended to demonstrate that individuals make sense of their surroundings through information seeking when they enter a new organization. The basic aim of information seeking is to reduce uncertainty in employees' social interactions (with peers and superiors) (Saks and Ashforth 1997). Our findings also resonate with recent research which proposes that employees' paranoid cognitions and arousal are associated with safety behaviors such as compliance, conformity and ingratiation, and

increased employee safety behaviors are associated with increased supervisory abuse (Chan and McAllister 2014).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The contributions and findings of our study should be considered in light of certain limitations. Though we used two sources to measure different study variables, we cannot completely rule out problems associated with common method bias. As an additional precaution against common method bias, we randomized the measures and created four different versions of the survey (Khan et al. 2014). One-way analysis of variance suggested no mean differences for our focal study variables. We also conducted Harman's single factor test to assess common method variance. The results showed that the first factor extracted only 13.8 % variance. The descriptive statistics (low correlations among study variables) also revealed that common method bias was not a problem in our study.

Our cross-sectional design also prevents any inference of causality between our dependent and independent variables. For instance, abusive supervision experiences may be associated with authoritarian submission which might be associated with one's dangerous worldviews about the organization. We ran post hoc analysis to test this model (Abusive Supervision → Authoritarian Submis → Dangerous World Views) with our data, and found no support for this alternative model. Future studies, however, may use longitudinal or experimental designs to better test for causal effects.

While we posit the benefits of extending abusive supervision research into a new Pakistani context, we also recognize that this is a potential limitation of our study and its generalizability to other national, cultural, institutional, and economic contexts. Pakistan is a high power distance culture with current and historical high unemployment rates (Hussain and Yousaf 2011). In such working conditions and cultural contexts, employees may be more tolerant of organizational injustices (such as abusive supervision) and it might be possible that the natural response of employees toward organizational authorities is submission (Beugre 2007). While such cultural values and economic conditions may align closely with our key dependent variables—authoritarian submission and perceived abusive supervision—and thus suggest a rather conservative test of our hypotheses, we accept that much more research is needed across different national contexts and workplace sectors if we are to better generalize our conclusions.

In addition, we measured subordinates' perceptions of abusive supervision and not actual abuse by one's supervisor. While this approach fits clearly with the general consensus that abusive supervision is a perceptual variable (Mitchell and Ambrose 2007), we recognize that certain individuals may be more likely to perceive abuse

in situations where none actually occurred (Aquino and Lamertz 2004). Future research, therefore, may seek to measure abusive supervision more objectively, for example, by collecting multi-source data and including additional (to the supervisee) peer and/or supervisor ratings. Alternatively, experimental methods may be used and levels of abusive supervision explicitly manipulated.

Relatedly, future research should examine how employees' dangerous worldviews interact with important contextual factors. For example, what is the impact of these general worldviews in actual situations that are more or less dangerous, for example, in times of redundancy and major corporate scandals and investigations? This relates closely to the notions of the toxic triangle of destructive leadership (e.g., Padilla et al. 2007), that connect the potential compounding negative effects of leadership behavior, follower susceptibility, and the work context.

Future research may also include additional dimensions of RWA—authoritarian aggression and conventionalism—and explore their potential relationships with abusive supervision. Similarly, we included only one dimension of social worldview in our study and future studies should again examine whether other worldviews like the competitive jungle worldview impact abusive supervision.

Finally, we had concerns regarding the low reliability of our authoritarian submission scale ($\alpha = 0.60$) which is below the commonly acceptable standard of 0.70 (Nunnally 1978). One reason for this is maybe our use of a shortened four-item scale. Previous studies have shown that highly shortened measures of personality suffer from a lack of breadth in item content, which can undermine reliability and reduce validity (Credé et al. 2012). Our findings should be interpreted with caution as they may underestimate the relationships between authoritarian submission and other study variables. We recommend that future studies should replicate our findings using more comprehensive measures of authoritarian submission.

Managerial Implications

Abusive supervision is a costly phenomenon and it can substantially impact a firm's bottom line (Tepper 2007; Henle and Gross 2014). Our results offer some practical implications to combat abusive supervision. We suggest that our findings should help managers to understand, and react to, the costly phenomenon of abusive supervision by focusing on creating a climate which gives strong signals that the organization is not a threatening and dangerous place to work. For example, managers may focus on collective socialization tactics for newcomers as tactics that are more collective provide a common message about the organization, roles, and

appropriate responses. This common message is expected to reduce uncertainty concerning roles and lead to a greater sense of shared values (Baker and Feldman 1991; Feldman 1994).

Another way of overcoming a perceived threatening environment is to treat employees with fairness, as employees use fairness heuristics to form their judgments about organizational trust (Jones and Martens 2009). Employees' worldviews about their organization are also influenced by observing the pattern of social interactions between managers and co-workers. For instance, the third-party perspective in organizational justice research documents that employees' who are not the direct victims of the situation respond similarly unfavorable to the actions and decisions of the organization that mistreats other employees (Brockner et al. 2004; Cropanzano et al. 2001). Similarly, vicarious abusive supervision also affects employees' attitudes and behaviors toward their organization above and beyond the personally experienced abusive supervision (Harris et al. 2013). The aforementioned interventions might improve employees' perceptions about abusive supervisory behaviors.

Our results suggest an interaction effect between poor performance and high authoritarian submission that predicts abusive supervision. Thus more passive and submissive employees who subsequently perform poorly are more at risk of victimization by employers. This victimization is clearly inappropriate and organizations must ensure that supervisors react more appropriately to poor performing individuals and manage this effectively. Abusing or victimizing poor performers is not going to improve performance and, instead, is more likely to lead to costly discrimination and grievance claims. Introducing well-designed performance management process, and training managers to react appropriately to poor performance, is thus essential if organizations are going to avoid the costs of abusive supervision.

Conclusion

Abusive supervision is a costly workplace phenomenon in terms of low creativity, turnover, emotional exhaustion, and organizational deviance. Our findings are important because they draw attention to previously unexamined antecedents of abusive supervision and provide bases to design practical interventions to reduce its frequency in organizations. Specifically, organizations should focus on designing and implementing policies which signal employees that their organization is not a threatening place to work, devise measures to improve individual employees' performance, and provide supervisors with clear policy and training in effective performance management.

Appendix

See Table 5.

Table 5 Factor loadings

		Factor loadings
Authoritarian submission 1	Obedience and respect for authority are the most important values subordinates should learn	0.60
Authoritarian submission 2	The real keys to the "good life" are obedience, discipline, and virtue	0.51
Authoritarian submission 3	The days when subordinates are submissive should belong strictly in the past. A "subordinate's place" in organization should be wherever they want to be	0.42
Authoritarian submission 4	What our organization really needs instead of more "employee rights" is a good stiff dose of law and order	0.58
Dangerous worldview 1	Any day now chaos and anarchy could erupt around in this organization. All the signs are pointing to it	0.55
Dangerous worldview 2	There are many dangerous people at our workplace who will harm someone out of pure meanness, for no reason at all	0.59
Dangerous worldview 3	Every day as my organization becomes more lawless and cruel, a person's chances of being dismissed go up and up	0.49
Dangerous worldview 4	It seems that every year there are fewer and fewer truly respectable people around in this organization, and more and more persons with no morals at all threaten everyone else	0.72
Dangerous worldview 5	My knowledge and experience tells me that my organization is basically a dangerous and unpredictable place, in which good, decent, and moral people's values and way of life are threatened and disrupted by bad people	0.52
Abusive supervision 1	My supervisor lies to me	0.65
Abusive supervision 2	My supervisor tells me I'm incompetent	0.76
Abusive Supervision 3	My supervisor does not allow me to interact with my co-workers	0.61
Abusive supervision 4	My supervisor is rude to me	0.71
Abusive supervision 5	My supervisor reminds me of my past mistakes and failures	0.54
Employee performance 1	Rate the overall level of performance that you observe for this subordinate	0.81
Employee performance 2	What is your personal view of this subordinate in terms of his or her overall effectiveness?	0.75
Employee performance 3	Overall to what extent do you feel this subordinate has been effectively fulfilling his or her roles and responsibilities?	0.81
Employee performance 4	My subordinate is superior to other subordinates that I've supervised before	0.61

One item of dangerous world view scale was removed due to low factor loading. Only five items of abusive supervision scale were retained, rest of the items were removed due to cross loadings (based on standardized residuals inspection) and low factor loadings

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