Abusive Supervision, Employee Well-being and Ill-Being:

The Moderating Role of Core Self-Evaluations

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Abstract

Purpose - This chapter investigates the relationship between abusive supervision and employee well-being (i.e. job satisfaction, engagement) and ill-being (i.e. burnout, workaholism) and examines whether follower core self-evaluations (CSE) moderate this relationship.

Design/ methodology/ approach - The study uses cross-sectional survey data collected from 111 professional employees across a range of industry sectors.

Findings - Results show that abusive supervision is negatively related to employee well-being (i.e. engagement and job satisfaction) and positively related to employee ill-being, namely burnout. In addition, employees low in CSE are less engaged and less satisfied than employees high in CSE.

Research limitations/ implications - The study's cross-sectional design limits the strength of its conclusions.

Practical implications – The chapter notes the ethical and legal obligations of organisations to provide a safe working environment and identifies the policies and procedures that will signal a commitment to employee well-being.

Originality/ value - The study contributes to the leadership and well-being literatures by exploring the influence of abusive leaders on follower well-being and engagement. It also goes beyond merely identifying correlations between leadership style and follower well-being outcomes to investigate how leader and follower attributes can combine to influence these outcomes.

Keywords - abusive supervision, employee well-being; job satisfaction; engagement; workaholism; burnout; core self-evaluations.

Introduction

Employee well-being is a fundamental issue for organisations. Evidence indicates that levels of work engagement, as an indicator of well-being, have performance implications that are linked to individual and team performance (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008), client satisfaction (Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005), financial returns (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009) and proactive work behaviours (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2009; Miner & Glomb, 2010). In contrast, employee ill-being, in particular burnout, has been linked to employee absence (Peterson et al., 2008) and absence duration (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Van Rhenen, 2009a). Given these potentially conflicting outcomes, it is of critical importance for organisations to understand the antecedents of, and conditions under which, employee well-being can be achieved and ill-being reduced or even prevented.

Leadership has been found to be an important antecedent of employee well-being (Kelloway, Turner, Barling, & Loughlin, 2012; Nielsen, Yarker, Randall, & Munir, 2009) with leaders, for example, shaping employees' immediate job environment (Picollo & Colquitt, 2006), emotions (Bono, Foldes, Vinson, & Muros, 2007) and performance-related outcomes (Aryee et al., 2012). The relationships that employees have with their manager therefore represents a useful lens through which they evaluate their work environment (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012; McDermott, Conway, Rousseau, & Flood, 2013; Nielsen & Daniels, 2012; Tuckey, Bakker, & Dollard, 2012). To date, the majority of studies investigating this issue have considered the influence of constructive leadership - such as employees' perceptions of transformational leadership (Nielson et al., 2009), ethical leadership (Chughtai, Byrne, & Flood, 2015) or authentic leadership (Leroy, Palanski, & Simons, 2012) - on both positive and negative indicators of well-being. However, there is a growing body of research exploring the consequences of destructive leadership including employees' perceptions of abusive supervision (Nyberg, Westerlund, Hanson, &

Theorell, 2008; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). This focus on the darker side of leadership is important because evidence suggests that abusive leaders are more prevalent than previously assumed (e.g. Aasland, Skogstad, Notelaers, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2010; Tepper, 2007) and because the performance-related costs of abusive leaders (e.g. costs arising from absenteeism and turnover) are significant (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Yet there is a much more limited understanding of how abusive leadership is linked to positive indicators such as job satisfaction or engagement (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011; Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Skakon, Nielson, Borg, & Guxman, 2010; Wu & Hu, 2009). In addition, the processes which underline relationships between leadership styles and well-being outcomes are not so well documented or understood (Hansbrough, Lord, Schyns, 2015; Skakon et al., 2010).

The present research aims to contribute to this literature in two ways. First, we consider how perceptions of abusive leadership are linked to a broad taxonomy of well-being (Bakker, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2012; Salanova, Del Líbano, Llorens, & Schaufeli, 2014) rather than being isolated to only negative indicators of well-being. Specifically, we provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of employees' perceptions of abusive leadership on both indicators of *well-being* (job satisfaction, engagement), and *ill-being* (workaholism, burnout). While leadership is regarded as an important lever for employees' reactions (Meindl, 1995; Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014), our approach focuses on how employees' perceptions or subjective experiences of their immediate leader's behaviour can play a role in shaping their well-being (Weiss & Rupp, 2011). Second, we extend this employee-centred focus by considering how employees' personal characteristics and qualities can further shape how they frame and cope with experiences of abusive leadership. We take into account employees' personal resources – specifically their core-self evaluations (CSEs) – and test whether these moderate our proposed relationships. Our model therefore considers employees as active agents who can

potentially alleviate the negative effects of an abusive leader. We build on previous work that has investigated the domain of constructive leadership and engagement (Shin, Taylor, & Seo, 2012; Sonenshein and Dholakia, 2012; van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2013) and use the job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001) to provide deeper insights into how both perceptions of abusive leadership (i.e., a workplace demand) and employees' core self evaluations (i.e., a personal resource) combine to influence both positive and negative indicators of well-being. Thus, we respond to calls for research linking leadership and well-being to move beyond simply identifying correlations to consider the processes which influence these relationships (Hansbrough et al., 2015; Hiller, DeChurch, Murase, & Doty, 2011).

The structure of the chapter is as follows. First, we describe the taxonomy of well-being outcomes that are the focus of the research. Next, we adopt a follower perspective in understanding the relationship between abusive leadership and well-being. We then describe the job demands-resources (JD-R) model as a useful framework for understanding how perceptions of abusive supervision may be regarded as a social demand. In this context we further review the evidence for the relationship between abusive supervision and employee well-being and ill-being outcomes, respectively, and propose that core self-evaluation might act as a personal resource and moderator of these relationships. We then present our findings from a cross-sectional survey of professionals, followed by a discussion of the implications of those findings. We close the chapter with recommendations and ideas for future research in the area.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Employee Well-being and Ill-being: A Taxonomy

Work-related well-being is subjective, with employees making evaluative judgements regarding their work and work environment (Cotton & Hart, 2003; Hart & Cooper, 2002;

Watson, 1988). Subjective and psychological well-being have been identified as key components of employee mental health (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). The literature identifies high levels of positive affect and low levels of negative affect (Watson & Tellegen 1985), and the cognitive evaluation of one's satisfaction with life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), as indicative of subjective well-being. Bakker et al. (2012) and Salanova et al. (2014) propose an affective-cognitive model of well-being which spans work-related well-being (*job satisfaction* and *engagement*) and work-related ill-being (*workaholism* and *burnout*). This model of positive and negative work-related well-being (see Figure 1) is adapted from Russell's (2003) circumplex of core affect, comprising four axes of emotion, ranging from *pleasant* to *unpleasant* and *high activation* to *low activation*. Russell (2009) defines core affect as 'a neurophysiological state that underlies simply feeling good or bad' (p. 1259). In the *taxonomy of work-related well-being*, Bakker et al. (2012) and Salanova et al. (2014) adapt the circumplex of core affect to inform the intensity of emotion and activation displayed by employees during each state of well-being (see Figure 1).

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

This chapter utilises the affective-cognitive model of work-related well-being, where employee *well-being* is comprised of *engagement* and *job satisfaction.* Engagement, the optimum state of well-being, is defined as 'a positive, fulfilling, work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption' (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002, p.74). In his seminal paper on engagement, Kahn (1990) defines engagement as 'the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's "preferred self" in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performances' (p. 700). Other scholars regard engagement as a positive state of pleasure and high activation (e.g., Bakker et al., 2012; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006), where engaged workers have high levels of energy,

are fully immersed in their work, and are enthusiastic and enjoy their work (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, & Fischbach, 2013).

Job satisfaction was first defined by Locke (1976) as 'a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences' (p. 1304). Job satisfaction has been described as an evaluative judgement and positive emotional reaction and attitude to one's work (Briner & Kiefer, 2009; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Wright, Cropanzano, & Bonett, 2007). Bakker et al. (2012) classify job satisfaction as a passive state of contentment and pleasure, accompanied by low activation. Salanova et al. (2014) suggest that job satisfaction describes '9-to-5' followers who are 'content but fall short on drive' (p.77). However, caution may be required in the use of the term '9-to-5' to describe followers who are content and passive, as this would imply that followers who are engaged and who work with vigor, dedication and absorption, must work long hours, an aspect of workaholism (Shimazu, Schaufeli, Kamiyama, & Kawakami, 2015).

Employee *ill-being* is comprised of *workaholism* and *burnout.* Workaholism, was first conceptualised by Oates (1971) as '. . . the compulsion or the uncontrollable need to work incessantly' (p. 11). He characterised workaholism as a strong irresistible inner drive to work excessively hard. Building on this definition, Spence and Robbins (1992) conceptualised the workaholic triad and measured workaholism in terms of the dimensions *work involvement*, *drive* and reduced *work enjoyment*. McMillan, O'Driscoll and Burke (2003) identified both behavioural and cognitive components of workaholism where the behavioural component was operationalised as a *strong irresistible inner drive* and *working excessively hard*, while the cognitive component was evident in *thinking persistently about work*, and *working compulsively*. Van Beek et al., (2012) found that high levels of workaholism were associated with high levels of introjected regulation (controlled extrinsic motivation where individuals act to avoid criticism or to receive reward) combined with high levels of identified regulation

(autonomous extrinsic motivation where individuals accept and identify with the reasons to act).

This definition is adopted by Schaufeli, Shimazu, and Taris, (2009b) who define workaholism as 'the tendency to work excessively hard (behavioral dimension)' and describe workaholics as 'being obsessed with work (cognitive dimension), which manifests itself in working compulsively' (p. 322). Unlike engaged employees who get 'carried away' when they are working (Schaufeli et al., 2006) and who are intrinsically driven and enjoy their work (Kahn, 1990), workaholics do not enjoy their work (Shimazu et al., 2015). Workaholics are tense and agitated, working compulsively out of introjected and identified regulation, to comply with standards that are set both externally and internally (Schaufeli, Taris, & van Rhenen, 2008). Consequently, workaholism is identified as a negative state of high activation and displeasure (Bakker et al., 2012; Salanova et al., 2014).

Burnout, the fourth dimension in the taxonomy of work-related well-being, is defined by Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) as 'a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy' (p. 397). Demerouti and Bakker (2008) also identify burnout as 'a psychological syndrome that may emerge when employees are exposed to a stressful working environment, with high job demands and low resources' (p. 1). On the taxonomy of work-related well-being, burnout is classified as a negative state of low-activation and displeasure. Emotional exhaustion, which represents a state of low activation (Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou, & Kantas, 2003; Demerouti, Mostert, & Bakker, 2010), is regarded as the central component of the burnout process (Maslach et al., 2001). Research has shown that job demands result in physical, affective, and cognitive strain which exhaust employees' mental and physical resources leading to burnout (Cullinane, Bosak, Flood, & Demerouti, 2014; Demerouti et al., 2003). The present research will build on the described taxonomy of

employee-well-being and assess employees' levels of engagement, job satisfaction, workaholism and burnout (emotional exhaustion). An important antecedent of these well-being outcomes is employees' perceptions of leadership.

Abusive Leadership and Well-being: A Follower Perspective

Much of the literature on abusive supervision focuses on follower perceptions of the characteristics and behaviours of the abusive leader and the outcomes of abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000; Tepper, Moss, Lockhart, & Carr, 2007). Studies have investigated negative leadership through a variety of conceptualisations; *destructive leadership* (Aasland et al., 2010; Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007), *abusive supervision* (Tepper, 2000) and *petty tyranny* (Ashforth, 1997). Einarsen et al. (2007) define destructive leadership as 'the systematic and repeated behaviour by a leader, supervisor, or manager that violates the legitimate interests of the organisation by undermining and/or sabotaging the organisation's goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates' (p. 208). Ashforth (1997) defines petty tyranny as 'someone who uses their power and authority oppressively, capriciously, and perhaps vindictively' (p. 126). Tepper (2000) defines abusive supervision as the 'subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviours, excluding physical contact' (p. 178). This research will use Tepper's (2000) conceptualisation of abusive supervision to measure destructive leadership at the individual rather than organisational level. Abusive supervision encompasses negative and hostile behaviours perceived by the employee during their interactions with their supervisor and is in keeping with the antecedents of burnout described by Maslach et al. (2001) as interpersonal stressors on the job.

Evidence from the literature establishes a link between leadership and follower well-being (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005; Zhang & Bartol, 2010), particularly between

transformational leadership and outcomes such as job satisfaction and engagement (Breevaart & Bakker, 2013; Tims, Bakker, & Xanthopoulu, 2011). There is also evidence to suggest that employees who perceive their leader's style to be destructive (i.e., abusive), are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety (Demerouti et al., 2010; Tepper, 2000; Zellars, Tepper & Duffy, 2002) and burnout (Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012; Tepper, 2000). It is also suggested that the literature on engagement has tended to be quite managerialist in its approach, thus ignoring the potentially 'darker' elements of work (Maslach, 2011). Our focus, which incorporates both pleasurable and unpleasurable outcomes of work, will address the need for a greater balance between managerialist and employee-centered perspectives (e.g., George, 2011; Maslach, 2011). A useful way in which leadership can be understood is from a demands and resources perspective, depending on how supportive or abusive leaders are perceived.

Abusive Supervision and Well-being: The Role of Job Demands and Resources

A number of theoretical frameworks exist in the literature to explain well-being at work. Karasek's (1979) Job Demand-Control model (JD-C) has been used in a number of studies to show how high levels of *job demands* (e.g. psychological demands, work pressure) and low levels of *job control* (e.g., decision latitude, skills discretion) influence employee strain, and their psychological and physical well-being (De Lange et al., 2003, 2004; van Hooff et al., 2005; Van der Doef & Maes, 1998).

More recently, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001) has been introduced into the occupational health psychology literature as an approach to explain employee well-being at work. Specifically, this model suggests two psychological processes which are distinct from each other – a motivational process and a health impairment process (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The motivational process implies that job resources satisfy individual needs including autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and in doing so lead to motivational outcomes such as

engagement and job satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Such job resources include the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that (a) reduce or buffer job demands, (b) facilitate work goal attainment, or (c) encourage personal growth and development (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 296). In contrast, the health impairment process occurs when employees' mental and physical resources get exhausted due to high job demands, which ultimately leads to burnout and ill-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Bakker and Demerouti (2007) identify such job demands as 'those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs' (p. 312). They argue that while demands are not necessarily negative, they may become stressors if employees fail to recover from the efforts expended to meet them. A large amount of research has indeed demonstrated that job demands (e.g. work load, time pressures, emotional and physical demands) and job resources (e.g. job control, autonomy, supervisor or co-worker support, opportunities for development, and social support) are predictors of employee well-being, specifically engagement and burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Christian et al., 2011; Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2009a). An important demand which will be the focus of the present research is follower perceptions of abusive supervision.

Leaders are regarded as having a high degree of control over followers' job demands and available resources (Christian et al., 2011; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), influencing their experience of work (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Zhang, Kwan, Zhang, & Wu, 2012). The JD-R model highlights the important role of the leader in controlling job resources and influencing followers' experiences of work. This literature has informed our decision to identify follower perceptions of abusive supervision as a job demand exerting a negative psychological cost and emotional pressure on the follower. While much research has

considered follower perceptions of constructive or supportive leadership as an important social resource that can influence well-being outcomes (e.g. Ng & Sorenson, 2008), much fewer studies have considered how follower perceptions of abusive leadership represent a demand on employees. In the present study we will conceptualise perceptions of abusive leadership as a social and emotional demand which will negatively impact employee well-being and contribute to employee ill-being.

Abusive supervision and well-being. The most widely investigated outcome is job satisfaction on the basis that supervisors form such an important part of a follower's job, they will contribute significantly to whether the overall job experience is perceived as pleasant or unpleasant (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). In relation to follower work-related well-being, Tepper (2000) provides evidence of the negative impact of abusive supervision on job satisfaction. Only two studies to date (Bailey, Madden, Alfes, & Fletcher, 2015) have directly studied the negative link between abusive supervision and engagement (Sulea, Fischmann, & Filipescu, 2012) and between destructive leadership and lower levels of dedication (Aryee et al., 2008). However, these studies confirm a negative link between perceptions of a destructive leadership style and employee well-being to support the following hypotheses:

H1a. Employee perceptions of abusive supervision are negatively related to employee engagement.

H1b. Employee perceptions of abusive supervision are negatively related to employee job satisfaction.

Abusive supervision and ill-being. Tepper (2002) and Tepper, Moss and Duffy (2011) examine the negative outcomes of perceived abusive supervision to show that followers who perceive abusive supervision are likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and experience reduced enjoyment of their work. As emotional

exhaustion and reduced enjoyment of work are dimensions of burnout (Demerouti et al., 2010) and workaholism (Shimazu et al., 2015) respectively, these findings suggest that perceptions of abusive supervision are related to follower work-related ill-being. This view is supported by Liu et al. (2012) who investigated the link between perceived abusive supervision and burnout and concluded that 'abused followers often suffer from depression, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, and that they tend to alienate themselves from their jobs' (p. 1189). Zhang et al. (2012) found that employees who perceived their supervisor as abusive, who evaluated their performance in an abusive manner, encouraged those followers to work excessively hard in an attempt to avoid negative evaluations in the future. These findings support our decision to propose the relationship between perceived abusive supervision and follower affective cognitive well-being at work. It is proposed that a supervisor who is perceived as abusive, who imposes a tense and controlling work environment (Tepper, 2000) through interpersonal abuse (i.e. publicly humiliating followers) and passive abuse (i.e. giving followers the silent treatment) will influence follower well-being and ill-being outcomes. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H1c. Employee perceptions of abusive supervision are positively related to employee workaholism.

H1d. Employee perceptions of abusive supervision are positively related to employee burnout.

Leadership and Follower Well-being: The Moderating Role of Employee Core Self-Evaluations

Although existing research supports the influence of the leader on employee well-being and ill-being at work, the circumstances under which this influence is more or less pronounced are less well-researched (Skakon et al., 2010). Much of this research adopts a purely leader-centric approach in exploring the influence of the leader on follower well-

being. This approach sees the leader as exerting influence over a passive and conforming follower, guiding their attitudes, behaviours and outcomes (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Thus, the attributes of the follower are often neglected in research linking leadership to outcomes and instead the follower is presented as a passive receiver of leadership (Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai, 2011; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Hansbrough et al. (2015) recently called for the study of leadership to extend its focus to investigate how leaders influence follower outcomes. They argue that contemporary approaches to leadership have not adequately considered individuals' perceptions and processes (Brown & Lord, 2001), yet 'the scientific study of leadership requires a greater sensitivity to followers' information processing beyond the traditional focus on reported leader characteristics and actions' (Hansbrough et al., 2015, p. 233). Previous research suggests that each leader-follower relationship is unique, and that follower perceptions of the quality of the relationship they hold with the same leader can differ (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schyns & Day, 2010; Uhl Bien, 2006). Weiss and Rupp (2011) support this view and propose that each individual's experience at work is unique with individuals described as active agents who organise, reflect, and react to every experience.

To explore the relationship between leader, follower, and follower well-being outcomes, our research draws on affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Affective events theory explains how exogenous factors such as leadership, can elicit emotional reactions that have consequences for attitudes and behaviours (Pirola-Merlo, Härtel, Mann, & Hirst, 2002). It is suggested that leaders impact follower emotions at work, and that emotional states are important considerations in understanding follower attitude and behaviour in organisations (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Bono et al., 2007). Further research suggests that emotions at work are aroused not just by exogenous factors and events such as leadership support, but are also influenced by endogenous factors such as individual personality (Ashkanasy & Daus,

2002; Brief & Weiss, 2002; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Consequently, our study proposes that employee perceptions of abusive supervision and resulting consequences for follower affective-cognitive well-being may vary as a result of follower characteristics, specifically, follower core self-evaluations. Core self-evaluations (CSE) are fundamental evaluations that individuals hold about themselves and are defined by Bono and Judge (2003) as comprising four core personality traits, i.e. self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control and neuroticism. These authors suggest that CSE subconsciously influences an individual's perceptions and behaviours. Evidence suggests that individuals with high CSE are more resilient in the face of challenges (Judge et al., 1998; Mäkikangas et al., 2015). In their recent study Mäkikangas et al. (2015) establish a link between occupational well-being types, specifically engagement and burnout, and employee personality traits. They found that low levels in neuroticism were related to employee well-being, specifically engagement. They further confirmed a positive relationship between the Big Five personality traits and employee well-being and ill-being indicators (engagement and burnout).

A recent review of abusive supervision research (Martinko, Harvey, Brees & Mackey, 2013) indicates that subordinates' individual differences can influence their perceptions of, and reactions to, perceived abusive supervision. Research by Wu and Hu (2009) found that high core self-evaluators were negatively related to perceived abusive supervision. While research by Zhang et al. (2012) found that CSE buffered the negative effects of abusive supervision on employee creativity to the extent that the negative relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity was less pronounced when the level of CSE was high rather than low. Harris, Harvey, and Kacmar (2009) also found that CSE buffered the negative effects of social stressors on job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Further evidence suggests that individuals who enjoy high quality relationships with their immediate managers are more accepting of change, particularly if they have lower levels of CSE (Ritz, Shantz, Alfes, &

Arshoff, 2012). Positive leadership style, specifically transformational leadership was also found to enhance employees' work engagement through the mediation of the employee personal resource optimism (Tims et al., 2011). These literatures establish employee personal traits such as core self-evaluations as a personal resource which enhances well-being at work.

This research investigates follower well-being as a dynamic process where leader and follower attributes combine to influence follower well-being outcomes. Consequently, employee CSE has been identified in this study as a personal resource, which is expected to buffer the negative social and emotional effects of abusive supervision. Specifically, we propose that employees high in core self-evaluations indicated by high self-beliefs, low neuroticism and negativity, a strong sense of control over their life events, and a strong self-worth will be less likely to experience the negative effects of abusive supervision. Thus, we propose that high levels of CSE – as a personal resource - will buffer the negative effects of abusive supervision on employee well-being (see Figure 2). We propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: The relationship between perceptions of abusive supervision and employee engagement is moderated by employee CSE, such that the negative relationship will be weaker when CSE is high than when it is low.

Hypothesis 2b: The relationship between perceptions of abusive supervision and employee job satisfaction is moderated by follower CSE, such that the negative relationship will be weaker when CSE is high than when it is low.

Hypothesis 2c: The relationship between perceptions of abusive supervision and employee workaholism is moderated by employee CSE, such that the positive relationship will be weaker when CSE is high than when it is low.

Hypothesis 2d: The relationship between perceptions of abusive supervision and employee burnout is moderated by employee CSE, such that the positive relationship will be weaker when CSE is high than when it is low.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

Method

Participants and Procedure

The present study uses responses from 111 professional employees engaged in a range of work activities including administration (13.5%), engineering (19%), finance (7%), human resources (3%), information technology (13.5%), law (1%), marketing (5%), medical (4%), and other (20%), with14% of respondents not specifying their work activity. Participants worked across both public (42%), private (41%) and not for profit (1%) sectors, with 16% of respondents choosing not to disclose their sector. 72% of participants indicated that they held management positions. The sample was 30% female, 56% male and 14% of participants did not indicate their gender. Further, 24% were between 29-39 years of age, 46% were between 40-50 years of age, and 15% were between 51 and 61 years of age. A total of 16% of respondents chose not to disclose their age.

The population consisted of 580 alumni from a Business School in Ireland and potential participants were sought from the alumni list. Specifically, the survey data were collected via an on-line survey which was emailed to all 580 alumni students. This procedure resulted in 111 completed and returned surveys and thus a response rate of 19%. Among these respondents, 64% of respondents indicated that they were at managerial level. Due to the sensitive nature of the survey, i.e. the investigation of followers' perceptions of their leader as abusive, participants were assured of confidentiality, and were guaranteed that all responses would come directly back to the researchers and that no individual responses would be made available to a third party at any stage.

Measures

Responses to all focal variables/items were measured on a seven point Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). .

Job satisfaction. We used three items from Cammann, Fichman and Klesh's (1979) Michigan Organization Assessment Questionnaire to measure job satisfaction. An example item is **'**In general, I like working here'. We performed an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which revealed a single factor that accounted for 91% of the variance. Responses were averaged across the three items and the resulting scale showed high internal consistency reliability (α = .95).

Engagement. We measured follower engagement using Schaufeli et al.'s (2006) nine item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWE9). This scale captures three dimensions of work engagement, i.e., vigor, dedication, and absorption. An example item for each dimension is 'At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy'; 'I am enthusiastic about my job' and 'I feel happy when I am working intensely' respectively. Schaufeli et al. (2006) recommend a one factor model using one composite engagement score to measure engagement to avoid problems of multi-collinearity which they encountered when each of the three engagement dimensions were entered simultaneously as independent predictors in a regression equation (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). EFA indicated a single factor structure which accounted for 56% of the variance. This scale showed high internal consistency reliability (α =.90).

Workaholism. We measured workaholism using the Dutch Work Addiction Scale developed by Schaufeli et al. (2009b). The ten item scale assesses two dimensions of workaholism, i.e. working excessively and working compulsively. An example item for each dimension is 'I find myself doing two or three things at one time such as eating lunch and writing a memo, while talking on the phone' and 'It's important for me to work hard even

when I don't enjoy what I'm doing' respectively. EFA indicated a single factor structure which accounted for 34% of the variance. The scale showed satisfactory internal consistency reliability (α =.77).

Burnout. We used the 16-item Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Demerouti et al., 2003) to measure burnout. This inventory includes positively and negatively worded items to measure two core dimensions of burnout, i.e. exhaustion and disengagement. An example item for each dimension is 'There are days when I feel tired before I arrive at work' and 'Over time, one can become disconnected from this type of work', respectively. As the OLBI includes both positively and negatively worded items, positively framed items are reversed coded. EFA indicated a single factor structure which accounted for 35% of the variance. The scale showed good internal consistency reliability (α = .86).

Abusive supervision. We measured followers' perceptions of abusive supervision with Tepper's (2000) 15 item Abusive Supervision scale. These items assess interpersonal and passive acts of abuse. Example items for each type of abuse include 'My immediate manager ridicules me, tells me my thoughts and feelings are stupid' and 'My immediate manager doesn't give credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort', respectively. It is suggested that self-report measures that capture employee perceptions of their work environment and work experience are a better indicator of within person attitude, behaviour and well-being than third party observations or management reports (Boxall & Mackay, 2014; Warr et al. , 2014; Wood & De Menezes, 2011). EFA indicated a single factor structure which accounted for 67% of the variance. The scale showed high internal consistency reliability (α =.96).

Core self-evaluations. We measured core self-evaluations using the 12 item scale developed by Judge, Erez, Bono, and Thoreson, (2003). These 12 items assess four core traits i.e. self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and neuroticism. The core self-evaluations scale contains both positively and negatively worded items, with negatively

worded items being reversed scored when averaging across participants' responses. Exploratory factor analysis indicated a single factor which accounted for 41% of the variance. The scale showed good internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .86$).

Analyses and Results

Analysis Strategy

Hierarchical regression analyses were carried out to test the hypotheses. For each dependent variable we carried out two steps. In the first step abusive supervision and CSE were entered. In the second step, the interaction term (abusive supervision x CSE) was entered. In order to prevent issues with multicollinearity in testing interaction effects (Hox, 2002), we centered both the independent variable (i.e. abusive supervision) and the moderator (i.e. CSE). The hypotheses to test for moderation were tested according to the procedures outlined by Aiken and West (1991). First, prior to running the analysis, both the independent variable and the moderator variable were centered at the mean to reduce the effects of non-essential collinearity and to help aid interpretability. For each hypothesis, the centered first order terms were entered into the regression equation, followed by the second order interaction term in order to determine if abusive supervision and CSE interact to impact the four individual facets of well-being. Moderation is demonstrated in tests where the interaction effect shows statistical significance (Aiken & West, 1991). For hypotheses where the interaction effect was significant, we plotted the interactions and presented the pattern according to Aiken and West (1991).

Results

Table 1 shows means, standard deviations, and correlations between the focal variables.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Table 2 summarizes the results of the hierarchical regression analysis. We predicted that employees' perceptions of abusive supervision would be negatively related to

engagement (Hypothesis 1a) and to job satisfaction (Hypothesis 1b), respectively. Consistent with these predictions we found that, perceived abusive supervision was negatively associated with engagement (B=-.254, SE=.082, p<.000), and with job satisfaction (B=-.540, SE=.097, p<.000), thereby supporting both Hypotheses 1a and 1b. In addition, we predicted that that employees' perceptions of abusive supervision would be positively related to workaholism (Hypothesis 1c) and burnout (Hypothesis 1d) respectively. Consistent with our predictions, we found that perceived abusive supervision was positively associated with burnout, (B=.378, SE=.058, p<.000), thereby supporting Hypotheses 1d. In contrast to our predictions (see Hypothesis 1c), perceived abusive supervision was not positively associated with workaholism, (B=.013, SE=.083, p=.880).Table 2 shows results of the regression analyses of perceived abusive supervision on employee well-being (engagement, job satisfaction) and ill-being (workaholism and burnout).

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

Furthermore we proposed that core self-evaluation would moderate the relationship between perceived abusive supervision and engagement (Hypothesis 2a), job satisfaction (Hypothesis 2b), workaholism (Hypothesis 2c), and burnout (Hypothesis 2d), respectively. Consistent with Hypotheses 2a and 2b the abusive supervision x CSE interaction effect was significant for work engagement, (B= .204, SE=.086, p<.020) and job satisfaction, (B= .280, SE=.102, p<.001), respectively (Table 2). The interaction plots show that the negative effect of perceived abusive supervision on well-being outcomes, i.e. engagement and job satisfaction, was less pronounced for followers high in CSE compared to followers low in CSE (see Figures 3 and 4 respectively).

[INSERT FIGURES 3 and 4 HERE]

Although the abusive supervision x CSE interaction effect was significant for workaholism (B=.221, SE=.087, p<.009), this was not consistent with Hypotheses 2c (Table

2). For workaholism, the interaction plot shows that, interestingly, across levels of perceived abusive supervision, workaholism is higher when CSE is higher (see Figure 5). Hypothesis 2d was unsupported, CSE did not moderate the effect of perceived abusive supervision on burnout ($B= .007$, $SE=.054$, $p=.196$) (Table2).

[INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE]

Discussion

This study investigated the influence of perceived abusive leadership on employee well-being and ill-being and examined whether employees' core self-evaluations (CSE) moderate these relationships. The findings demonstrate the dynamic processes underlying the relationship between perceptions of abusive supervision (a job demand), CSE (a personal resource) and indicators of employee well-being, Firstly, our findings show that employee perceptions of abusive supervision are negatively related to the well-being outcomes of engagement and job satisfaction. Secondly, employee perceptions of abusive supervision are positively related to employee burnout. In addition, while not significant, perceptions of abusive supervision are positively related to workaholism. Finally, our results show that high CSE buffers the negative effects of perceived abusive supervision on positive well-being (engagement and job satisfaction). However, levels of core self-evaluations do not moderate the relationship between perceived abusive supervision and burnout. Taken together, our findings suggest that it is useful to draw on the JD-R framework (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) and view perceived abusive supervision as 'demands' and CSE as 'resources' in order to understand the ways in which employees perceive and react to perceived abusive supervision. The focus on the relationship between constructive forms of leadership and employee outcomes has dominated research to date (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Our findings therefore shed important light on the role of perceived abusive leadership in influencing both positive and negative indicators of well-being at work. In doing so, we address the need for a greater

balance between managerialist and employee-centered perspectives on well-being (George, 2011; Maslach, 2011). Our findings are broadly consistent with previous research that has found perceived destructive leadership to be related to negative indicators of employee ill-being such as depression, anxiety and burnout (e.g. Demerouti et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2012; Tepper, 2000). Importantly, however, our findings extend this body of literature to show how perceptions of abusive leadership negatively influence positive indicators of well-being (engagement and job satisfaction). We found no significant relationship between perceived abusive supervision and workaholism. This finding can perhaps be explained by previous research which shows that workaholism manifests from an innate inner drive or internal compulsion, and not because of external factors (Oates, 1971; Scott, Moore, & Miceli, 1997). This therefore suggests that workaholism is not malleable or open to the external influences of perceived abusive supervision. Further research is recommended to test the effects of perceived abusive supervision separately on each dimension of workaholism. The work of Van Beek et al., (2012) support this approach as they identify two distinct types of motivation driving workaholism (i.e. *introjected regulation*, a controlled extrinsic motivation where individuals act to avoid criticism or to receive reward, and *identified regulation*, an autonomous extrinsic motivation where individuals accept and identify with the reasons to act).

Our findings present further evidence to show that the employee can be an active agent in shaping their well-being at work. Our findings show that the influence of perceived abusive supervision on follower well-being outcomes can vary depending on follower characteristics, specifically CSE. In the case of both engagement and job satisfaction, the negative effects of perceived abusive supervision on these outcomes were less pronounced when levels of CSE were high rather than low. However, we found no evidence to suggest CSE moderates the positive relationship between perceived abusive supervision and burnout.

This would suggest that followers' emotional and physical resources become so depleted when they perceive abusive supervision that they find it difficult to recover, regardless of their personal resources in the form of CSE. In relation to workaholism, although we found a weak but non-significant relationship between perceived abusive supervision and workaholism, our analysis of the simple slopes, found a significant interaction. Importantly, across levels of perceived abusive supervision, workaholism is higher when core self-evaluations are higher, suggesting that workaholism is driven by the individual's core traits. These findings would suggest that employees who demonstrate high self-efficacy, self-esteem, positive affect and locus of control, drive themselves hard to achieve goals that they set personally, such as achieving status, peer admiration, and supervisor approval (Spence & Robbins, 1992). This is a fruitful area for future research to consider.

Practical Implications

Our findings have practical implications for organisations and their managers. Although our research measures follower perceptions of abusive supervision with Tepper's Abusive Supervision Scale (2000), this scale measure's follower perceptions of active forms of interpersonal abuse where the supervisor '*Tells me my thoughts and feelings are stupid*', and '*Tells me I'm incompetent*'. In our recommendations, we first note the ethical and legal obligations for organisations to provide a safe place to work which discourages abusive supervisory behaviours and supports employee well-being (LaVan & Martin, 2008). Organisations should communicate to every employee the legislative requirement to provide a safe working environment and outline each employees' obligation to treat each other with respect and dignity. Abusive leadership behaviour can be measured through performance management, and positive leadership behaviours developed through leadership development programmes (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Competency based recruitment and promotion processes should identify abusive supervisory behaviours to ensure they are not recruited to, or

promoted within the organisation. Leaders and managers should be made aware of the positive and negative states of employee well-being and the positive and negative influence they can have on their employees' well-being at work. Organisations can demonstrate their commitment to employee well-being through existing HR policies such as a 'code of conduct' for managers and employees, and policies for the prevention of bullying and harassment and the promotion of health and safety at work. Organisational policies and procedures should communicate the message that employee well-being is a collaborative effort that is the responsibility of the organisation, its managers and employees.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

A number of limitations to the study should be noted. First, our study is cross-sectional and so firm conclusions about the causal order of the focal variables cannot be drawn in the absence of longitudinal data. We cannot rule out the possibility that levels of well-being influence perceptions of abusive leadership. We therefore recommend that future studies consider how abusive supervision influences well-being over time. Second, our sample size is relatively small and while it represents the experiences of individuals across a variety of organizational contexts, future research should consider exploring these issues among larger samples and among individuals operating in the same (or at least similar) contexts. For example, a larger sample within a single organisation would facilitate a multi-level focus, where shared perceptions of abusive supervision could be linked to individual and team level outcomes. Our sample is also relatively well-educated and comprises individuals in management or professional roles. Future studies should consider these relationships among individuals undertaking more routine work. Despite these limitations, our research has provided strong evidence for the hypothesized relationships which can be used as a baseline for future research endeavours.

Conclusion

This research has extended understanding of employee work-related well-being by measuring the effects of perceived abusive supervision on all four dimensions of employee well-being and ill-being. We drew on the JD-R framework in order to examine how the interaction between perceived abusive supervision (a job demand) and employees' CSE (a personal resource) influenced these outcomes. Our findings regarding CSE proffer the role of the employee as an active agent in their well-being at work, which both extends and opens up new avenues for future research.

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