DO ISLAMIC WORK ETHICS MOLLIFY ABUSIVE SUPERVISION? A VICTIM PRECIPITATION THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Given its widespread occurrence at workplaces, Abusive supervision (ABSV); a dark-sided leadership style, has attracted considerable researchers' attention in recent years. Drawing from victim precipitation theory (VPT), this study highlights the significant impact of employees' Islamic work ethics (ISWE) in mending the issue of abusive leadership. In addition, the mediating role of workplace deviance has also been investigated. Data were collected from 189 full-time employees working in the private sector of Pakistan. The results verify the proposed relationship and the mediating role of WD in reducing the probability of abusive supervision. The findings present a new perspective of abusive leadership from the other way around, making it dependable on employees' workplace ethics orientation. In the end, managerial and possible future directions are presented.

Keywords: *Islamic work ethics; abusive supervision; Victim precipitation theory workplace deviance; Qur'an; Sunnah; Pakistan.*

INTRODUCTION

Emerging as a distinct field of study in Islamic societies over the last 20 years, Islamic work ethics (ISWE) has received crucial attention regarding its impact on workplace outcomes. Derived its origin from the holy book of Muslims, the Holy Qur'an, and the Sunnah (Yousef, 2001; Ahmad & Owoyemi, 2012), ISWE centers around principles of Islamic-based morals and values and serves as guidance for individuals in their professional conduct (Nauman & Basit, 2023; Husin & Kernain, 2020). Strictly led by the sense of accountability to God, individuals possessing IWE believe that their actions will be judged and rewarded (Akhmadi et al., 2023), based on their morals comprising honesty, fairness, respect for others, hard work, accountability obligations towards others (Ahmad & Owoyemi, 2012). Drawing from victim precipitative theory (VPT; Wolfgang 1957), this study attempts to shed light on ISWE's role in minimizing negative work constructs such as abusive supervision (ABSV). According to VPT, victims' characteristics create feasible situations to be precipitated by the offender. Based on this, we assert that employees' ethical orientations such as ISWE assist employees to demonstrate ethical conduct, thus may invite less abusive behaviors by their supervisors through fewer offending situations.

As mentioned by Tepper (2000), Abusive supervision(ABSV), is considered mistreatment demonstrated in the workplace and is described as "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which their supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact". Some studies have linked abusive supervision with harmful workplace behaviors of employees and negative job outcomes (e.g., Tepper, 2000; Ferris et al., 2012; Mathieu & Babiak, 2016). Previous research has, generally, pinpointed outcomes of perceived supervisory abuse; however, its antecedents are less explored (Tepper et al., 2011; Khan et al., 2017). Therefore, to pre-emptively address unwanted happenings in the organization, managers would like to predict and reduce the abusive behavior of their supervisors. Where the extant literature has

associated ISWE as a moderator (Javaid, F., et al., 2024; Javed, B. et al., 2019) in ABSV-work-related outcomes, we attempt to investigate its explanatory impact as employee ethical orientation on ABSV.

Moreover, the direct impact of ISWE on ABSV is further elaborated by the crucial role of employees' workplace deviance (WD) as a mediating variable. WD adversely affects organizations and causes a "serious economic threat to organizations" (Spector et al., 2006; Bennett &Robinson, 2000). Through WD, employees deliberately violate standards and threaten the interests of the organization or its employees (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Thus, employees with high WD are perceived as threats and may face strict and abusive behavior from their supervisors (Mawritz et al., 2017). Following this rationale, we predict an intervening role of WD in the relationship between ISWE and supervisory abuse. Our research proposes that employees possessing high ISWE will maintain professional ethics by complying with rules & regulations thus demonstrating less WD, which in turn will likely decrease abusive supervisory behavior.

Our study presents significant theoretical as well as managerial implications. First, utilizing VPT, this study identifies employees' individual-specific characteristics or behaviors that might make them less vulnerable to supervisory abuse. This would broaden the abusive supervision literature from the other way round perspective where employees create offending situations, thus inviting more ABSV. According to the researchers' best knowledge, it is the first of a kind study in which abusive supervision is viewed as a response to individuals' work ethics. Second, it adds to the literature by exploring the intermediary mechanism affecting the 1SWE-ABSV relationship. Lastly, in Pakistan, more than 95 % of the country's population belongs to Islam (Islam et al., 2021), so ISWE is expected to be high. Therefore, studying ISWE in a country such as Pakistan would add another suitable layer towards contextual contribution.

Theoretical Background & Hypotheses Development
Islamic Work Ethics(ISWE) And Abusive supervision (ABSV)
Islam, one of the world's largest religions (Maoz & Henderson, 2013), directs its followers to demonstrate specific work ethics (Murtaza et al., 2016). These work ethics may be termed Islamic work ethics (ISWE) and derive their origin from the holy book of Muslims, the Holy

Qur'an, and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him & His

Family). The Holy Qur'an supports constructive behavior by creating discipline and respect for hierarchical order by stating "O People who Believe! Obey Allah and the Noble Messenger and those amongst you who are in authority…" (Qur'an, 4:59). According to an

English translation of one of the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him & His Family), He reportedly said, "Nobody has ever eaten a better meal than that which one has earned by working with one's own hands. The Prophet of Allah, David (Peace be upon Him & His Family), used to eat from the earnings of his manual labor" (Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 2072). Believers of Islamic guidelines will fetch benefits for themselves, their employers, and society (Ahmad, 2011; Murtaza et al., 2016). Employees belonging to an Islamic society are likely to possess ISWE and would be less deviant (Javed et al., 2019; Murtaza et al., 2016), especially in those cultures where religion plays a dominant role in their society and values such as in Pakistan (Khalid et al., 2020). Drawing from victim precipitation theory, individuals with higher ISWE would show complete loyalty and commitment toward their employer and, thus, would be less deviant, which plays a significant role in reducing the probability of facing abusive behavior from supervisors. Although extant literature witnessed ISWE as either a moderator or mediator in ABSV-work-related outcomes, this study attempts to change the ABSV perspective of the darker side of leadership to the darker side of followers; by making it dependent on followers' characteristics. Following this unique angle, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: ISWE has a negative association with abusive supervision.
Islamic Work Ethics and Workplace Deviance
Islamic perspective encourages individuals to embrace ethical attitudes, actions, and behaviors to live a high-quality life (Aldulaimi, 2016). Previous researches reveal the negative impact of one's ISWE in demonstrating counter-productive behaviors at the workplace. One such norm-

violating deliberate behaviour involves workplace deviance(WD) that threatens both organizational as well as employee well-being (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). According to them, there are two aspects of WD. One aspect is related to interpersonal WD such as harming others with assaults, harassment, and reputation-damaging rumors and other constitutes organizational-related WD that involves stealing, breaking organizational rules & regulations, and wasting or damaging organizational resources (Aquino et al., 2004). Costly for businesses (Christian & Ellis, 2014) WD has serious financial consequences. Based on the Conversation of Resource theory (COR; Hobfoll, 2011), we suggest the significant role of ISWE in reducing WD. The theory assumes that employees in an organization have limited resources such as energy, time, money & social support, thus coming under stress in case, they fear resource depletion. Upholding Islamic principles of truth, fairness, integrity & care for others, employees will try to conserve these resources by not indulging in activities, that cause resource depletion. Employees with high ISWE tend to be more cooperative, hardworking & follow instructions, thus tend to show less deviant behaviors. Earlier research also showed a negative impact of ISWE on WD, even in counter-productive work contextual factors such as abusive leadership (Javed et al., 2019).

Similarly, several other researchers also confirmed the negative impact of ISWE on WD.

Following the dominant approach, we also hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: Islamic work ethics are negatively related to workplace deviance.

Workplace Deviance and Abusive Supervision

Generally, the literature has focused on abusive supervision as an antecedent of negative job outcomes (e.g., Tepper, 2000; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper et al., 2008; Tepper et al., 2009; Thau et al., 2009; Ferris et al., 2012; Javed et al., 2019). However, the study will conform with somewhat scant literature that deals with antecedents of abusive behavior of supervisors in context (Khan et al., 2017). Following the previous research, we argue that some personality characteristics (e.g., negative affectivity; workplace deviance) could make employees vulnerable to the abusive behavior of supervisors (e.g., Bowling et al., 2010; Mawritz et al., 2017). Utilizing victim precipitation theory, our study may become a significant part of the literature that highlights supervisory abuse caused by employees' personalities or behavior (e.g., Aquino& Douglas, 2003). Based on this, we suggest that deviant employees are more likely to face abusive actions, decisions, or behaviors of their supervisors (Mawritz et al., 2017). Following this, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3: Workplace deviance is positively associated with abusive supervision.

The Mediating impact of WD in the ISWE-ABSV relationship

Building on our hypothesis 1, we further assume the mediating impact of WD in the relationship between ISWE and AL. Aligning with previous studies (e.g., Javed et al., 2019; Murtaza et al., 2016), we suggest that believers of ISWE, who show complete loyalty and dedication toward their organization would adhere to the prescribed way of work to get good for the organization and its employees. So, they would show a lesser amount of deviation from the standard operating procedures (SOPs) provided to them by their employer, which in turn will reduce the possibility of being victimized by abusive supervision. According to Henle and Gross (2014), employees possessing certain personalities or emotions are believed to face more abusive supervision, as these characteristics might activate hostility and frustration in their supervisors. For instance, a low degree of employee conscientiousness or emotional instability was considered an offensive personality trait that increased the likelihood of hostility and tension in their relationships with others (Kim & Glomb, 2010). Making use of victim precipitation theory, we take WD as an offensive behavior on the part of employees which may trigger the likelihood of hostility, frustration, and tension in their relationship with supervisors. Therefore, deviant employees could face more abusive supervision (Eissa et al., 2020; Mawritz et al., 2017). Based on these arguments, we suggest that subordinates with strong ISWE would face low abusive supervision because of their lower inclination toward WD. Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between Islamic work ethics and abusive supervision is mediated by workplace deviance.
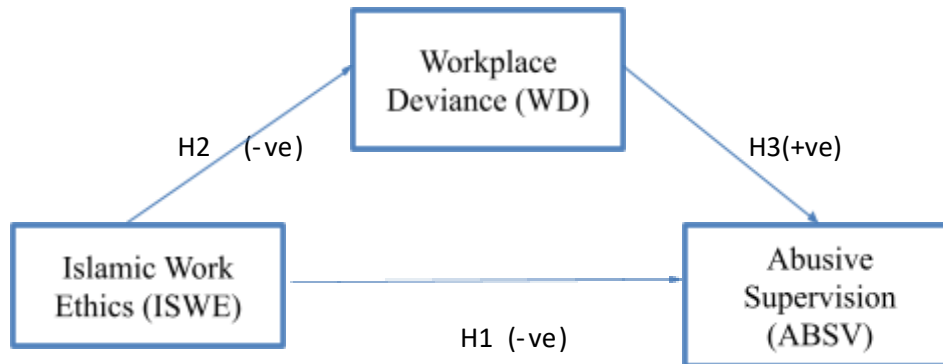
H4 (Mediating hypothesis)

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework of the Study

Method

To investigate the impact of ISWE on ABSV through the mediation of WD, data was collected through self-administered questionnaires from 250 full-time employees from diverse organizations operating in the private sector of Pakistan on a convenience basis. Surveys were distributed with a cover letter that explained the purpose of the study and guaranteed the secrecy and anonymity of respondents. One hundred eighty-nine (189) completed surveys were received. The response rate (76%) is per studies performed in a similar context (e.g., Raja et al., 2004; Abbas et al., 2014).

Measures

The five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, was used for all items.

Islamic Work Ethics

A 17-item scale was employed to measure ISWE (Ali, 1988). Sample items used:

"Dedication to work is a virtue"; "Laziness is a vice" (α 0.977).

Workplace Deviance

A 19-item scale (Bennett & Robinson, 2000) was applied to determine deviant behavior. Sample of the items used was: "I make fun of someone at work"; "I curse at someone at work" (α 0.961).

Abusive Supervision

A scale consisting of fifteen items, developed by Tepper (2000), was applied to calculate perceived supervisory abuse. Sample items were: "My supervisor tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid" and "My supervisor ridicules me" (α 0.948).

Results

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate factor configuration along with the Cronbach alpha, composite reliability, and Average variance extracted for the observed scale—ISWE, WD, and abusive supervision Table I. CFA represents that the factor loadings of all items were significant and above 0.5 (Samuels, 2017). Convergent validity was confirmed by AVE, having a score above 0.5. The composite reliability of all three variables was also above 0.5, thus meeting the standard acceptable level (Hair Jr et al., 2017).

Table I. Confirmatory Factor Analysis & Reliability

Items	Estimate		Cronbach Alpha	AVE	CR
	Loadings				
ISW1	0.817				
ISW2	0.711				
ISW 3	.0740				
ISW 4	0.873				
ISW 5	0.870				
ISW 6	0.880				
ISW7	0.848		**0.977**	**0.726**	**0.978**
ISW8	0.899				
ISW9	0.870				
ISW10	0.879				
ISW11	0.866				
ISW12	0.843				
ISW13	0.859				
ISW14	0.885				
ISW15	0.872				
ISW16	0.881				
ISW17	0.875				
DEV1		0.705			
DEV2		0.734			
DEV3		0.726			
DEV4		0.749			
DEV5		0.740			
DEV6		0.798			
DEV7		0.736			
DEV8		0.729			
DEV9		0.705		**0.961**	**0.587**	**0.964**
DEV10		0.787			
DEV11		0.759			
DEV12		0.746			
DEV13		0.778			
DEV14		0.804			
DEV15		0.830			
DEV16		0.801			
DEV17		0.810			
DEV18		0.824			
DEV19		0.780			
ABSV1			0.804			
ABSV2			0.836			
ABSV3			0.762			
ABSV4			0.801			
ABSV5			0.730			
ABSV6			0.820	**0.948**	**0.574**	**0.953**
ABSV7			0.780			
ABSV8			0.719			
ABSV9			0.690			
ABSV10			0.726			
ABSV11			0.712			

ABSV12	0.770
ABSV13	0.749
ABSV14	0.721
ABSV15	0.725

ISW=Islamic Work Ethics, DEV= Workplace Deviance, ABSV= Abusive Supervision

Table II presents the descriptive statistics (Mean, & Standard deviation) along with the bivariate correlations among the variables, AVE, square root of AVEs. According to the results of Table 2, ISWE was negatively correlated with workplace deviance (r = -0.227, p<0.01). Also, WD was positively related to employees perceived abusive behavior (r=0.389, p<0.01). Discriminant validity is also confirmed as the square root of the AVE of each variable is greater than the off-diagonal correlations. These results followed our proposed model and encouraged us to proceed and test the hypotheses.

Table II. Means, Std. Deviation, AVE & Correlation of Study Variables

Significant at 0.05 Level

- The square root of AVE is represented by bold diagonal values,
- Discriminant Validity is confirmed when the diagonal value against each variable is greater than its corresponding off-diagonal correlations.

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	AVE	1	2	3
ISWE	3.71	0.99	0.726	**(0.852)**	-	
DEVI	2.65	0.98	0.587	-0.227**	**(0.766)**	
ABSV	2.36	0.85	0.574	-0.173**	0.389**	**(0.739)**

Hypotheses test results are given in Table III. These results show. The direct and indirect impact of ISWE on ABSV and Work deviance (DEV). These results demonstrate a significant and negative relationship between ISWE and ABSV (β = -0.085, p< 0.001). This indicates that employees possessing strong ISWE invite less ABSV. These results empirically support hypothesis 1. H2 proposes the negative impact of ISWE on WD, also empirically supported (β = -0.227, p< 0.001). The results show the relation between WD and ABSV is significant and positive (β = 0.378, p< 0.001), thus supporting H3. The mediating hypothesis H4 is also supported by the indirect effect of ISWE on ABSV through WD (β = -0.086, p< 0.05) Figure 2.

Table III. Regression weights, P-value & Results

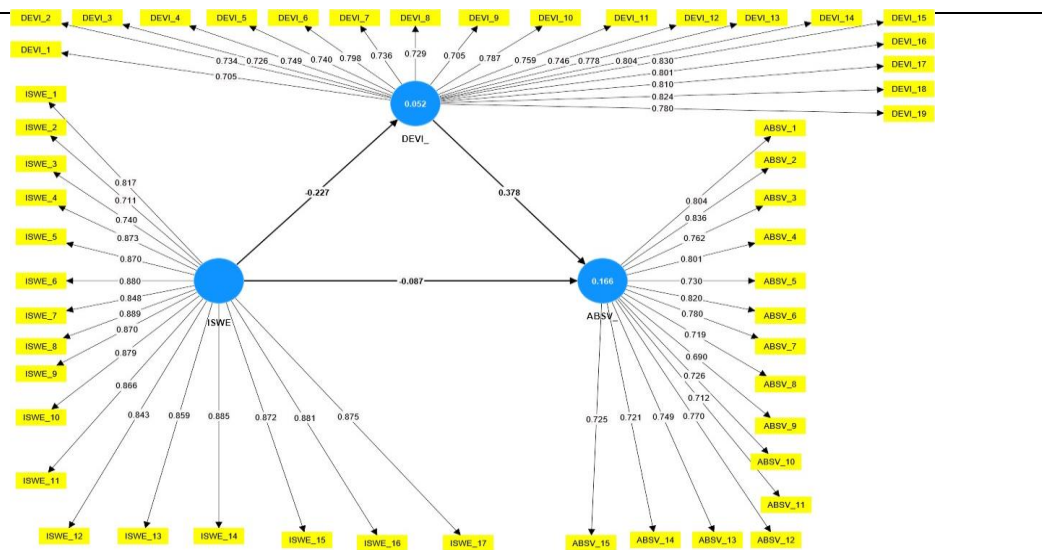| Hypotheses	Regression weights	B	p-value	Results
Direct Effects				
H1	ISWE ABSV			Supported
Adjusted R-Square	0.157	-0.087	0.002**	
H2	ISWE DEVI			
Adjusted R-square	0.046	-0.227	0.001**	Supported
H3	DEVI ABSV	0.378	0.000**	Supported
Indirect Effect (Mediating Impact)				
H4	**ISWE** DEVI ABVS	-0.086	0.006**	Supported
Notes: p-value is less than 0.05				

Figure 2. Study Model along with Loadings

Discussion

Theoretical implications

The study aims to investigate the impact of ISWE on ABSV, through a mediation of WD in Pakistan's context. Hypothesis 1 is substantiated, and presents a new perspective on the dark-sided leadership style; Abusive supervision, which occurs as a reaction to followers' religious ethics orientation. The idea has been taken from victim precipitation theory (VPT), which suggests that victims create offending situations for crime to occur. We contribute to the literature by verifying that ISWE plays a significant part in reducing abusive supervision through WD. Our results confirm that employees with higher ISWE are less deviant. Also, the employees who show low WD face lower supervisory abuse. When subordinates demonstrate WD, they invite trouble by presenting supervisors with a soft target of supervisory abuse.

This study aligns with the research that explores employee-specific behaviors and the antecedents of abusive supervision (e.g., Aquino & Bradfield, 2000; Tepper et al., 2006; Tepper et al., 2011; Henle & Gross, 2013; Neves, 2014; Eissa et al., 2020). We add to the literature by showing ISWE and WD as antecedents of abusive supervision in an important but relatively less-explored context of Pakistan. Additionally, we respond to the call for more research by finding evidence in support of additional subordinate-specific antecedents of supervisory abuse (Henle & Gross, 2013; Khan et al., 2017).

Practical Implications

ISWE could provide a shield against potentially damaging behaviors of employees in the organization. Business managers could utilize our results to protect the workplace. Abusive supervision may badly affect an organization's profitability (Tepper, 2007; Henle & Gross, 2014). Using our findings, business managers could predict and proactively act to curb abusive behavior. Managers may create a more favorable environment by placing employees demonstrating good work ethics in key positions. They could place appropriate checks while recruiting, selecting, transferring, or promoting employees in the organization. Consequently, these suitably placed employees would likely adhere to the given line of action (e.g., SOPs) and be less deviant.

Workplace deviance can ignite abusive supervisory behavior in the workplace. Observed and self-experienced abusive supervision affects the attitude and behavior of employees (Cropanzano et al., 2001; Brockner et al., 2004; Harris et al., 2013). Deviant employees are more likely to be mistreated by their supervisors. This vicious cycle may be broken with the help of this study.

Abusive supervision, if left unchecked, might prove to be counter-productive, as affected employees might file costly lawsuits against supervisors or organizations. Thus, the managers should pre-emptively avoid the occurrence of WD. We suggest that employees with higher ISWE should be welcomed and encouraged in the

workplace to reduce WD. A reduced level of WD would in turn reduce or eliminate supervisory abuse.

Limitations and future research

Some limitations of our study that could offer new opportunities for future research are given below. The value of related research would increase if more religious, cultural, national, institutional, and economic contexts were taken into account. We used self-reported data that can be biased. However, Conway and Lance (2010) suggest that, in certain situations, data collected from employees about themselves would be deemed "appropriate" as well as "theoretically relevant". We suggest that ISWE and perceived supervisory abuse are directly associated with employees. So, in our case, it is appropriate and relevant to use the self-reported data.

It may be argued that perceived abusive supervision of employees could be different than the actual. Our adopted approach is by a general agreement among researchers that supervisory abuse is based on employee perceptions (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). Indeed, some over-sensitive individuals may perceive abuse even in situations where there is no abuse (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004). To further improve results, future research could explore abusive supervision more independently by collecting data from alternative sources.

This study also discusses directions for future research. Although many studies have investigated the consequences of abusive supervision, information on its predictors is very limited. Therefore, future studies could investigate other important dependent variables (e.g., citizenship behavior of employees, voice, silence, intentions to quit) that might act as antecedents of abusive supervision. Also, future researchers can explore & enrich the literature by highlighting the darker side of employees rather than leaders' demonstration of abusive behaviors. Researchers may collect data from other regions of the country or from other countries where the majority of the population is Muslim.

Conclusion

Abusive supervision adversely affects organizational well-being as it is associated with many harmful job outcomes (e.g., low productivity & creativity, WD, low innovation). This study explores the role of ISWE and WD in predicting abusive supervision.

In light of our findings, we conclude that ISWE is negatively but significantly linked to WD. Moreover, workplace deviance is very strongly and positively correlated to abusive supervision. Additionally, our results verify when subordinates demonstrate a higher degree of deviant behavior, they attract more supervisory abuse. While IWE plays a role in decreasing WD. This role, in turn, decreases the level of supervisory abuse.

Our results are useful as they have the potential to attract the focus of researchers and practitioners toward relatively less-explored predictors of supervisory abuse in a relatively less-explored workplace context. Making use of our findings, business managers can devise a realistic intervention to reduce the severity of the occurrence of abusive supervision in the workplace.

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