# IMPACT OF ABUSIVE SUPERVISION ON EMPLOYEE CYNICISM AND RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT IN BANKING SECTOR OF PAKISTAN



## MARVEE HAFEEZ MS HRM 2K18

A thesis submitted to NUST Business School for the degree of Master of Science in Human Resource Management

2022

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#### Abstract

The relationship between a leader and follower in any organization plays a key role in defining the work environment. The concept of Abusive supervision and its effects on organizational culture have drastically taken up pace around the globe. If there is abusive supervision, it will lead to both Employee Cynicism and Relationship Conflict within an organization. A general positive view of the world caters to low cynicism and a negative view relates to a high level of cynicism. This particular study focuses on how abusive supervision can cause Employee Cynicism along with Relationship Conflict. The study has opted for a quantitative approach where data is collected through self-administered questionnaires. Data has been collected from employees in the banking sector of Pakistan. The main contribution of this study is that abusive supervision tends to affect an organization in more ways that can be generally perceived; by showing that abusive supervision causes both employee cynicism and relationship conflict. Any abuse to an employee, in any form is something that can be viewed to induce various negative impacts within an organization and hence, it has become increasingly important that abusive supervision is taken into consideration and is eventually reduced so that the employees and organization can live up to their true potential in order to achieve its goals and objectives.

Keywords: Abusive Supervision, Employee Cynicism, Relationship Conflict

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## Chapter 1

#### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 Background

The concept of leadership in organizations has existed since ancient times. It gained popularity since its inception into the field of social science in the beginning of the 20th century. Wittgenstein (1953) identifies the definition of leadership as a "Blurred concept" because of the different environments and characters the role of leadership takes place in. With changing times, the concept of leadership has evolved into various different aspects. One of these aspects is Abusive Supervision that exists in various organizations. In a study by Jonason, Slomski and Partyka (2011), puts emphasis on the increasing numbers of researches that have been carried out over the past few years on toxic and abusive supervisors or employees. Abusive supervision has been linked to various negative outcomes that can be observed both in employee level and at a team level. Abusive supervision tends to effect employees on various levels such as their morale, functioning in the organization and also their psychological health (Tepper, 2016). This particular research will focus on Abusive Supervision and how it effects employees and leads to employee cynicism also leading to a relationship conflict when different views arise among them.

An organization needs effective management of resources in order to achieve its goals and objectives effectively. One of the most critical factors to ensure the success of any organization is an efficient management of its resources. Behaviors and attitudes are determined by organization climate, with the management and leaders playing a critical role as published in a study by Demir, Mustafa & Cicek, Isik. (2015). The organizational leadership ensures that under their supervision, the employees ensure that the organizational tasks that are assigned to them are executed in accordance with the objectives of the organization, through tools that maximizes their motivation. It is evident from various researches that behavioral aspects of humans in a workplace, operating environment and goals are linked to outcomes related to organizational culture, employee

performance and overall the job itself. One of the most common negative outcomes in terms of employees is conflict in relationships and employee cynicism within an organization. Berta, W., Laporte, A., Perreira, T. et al. (2018)

Li, Zhou and Leung (2011) in a study define Social Cynicism as the negative beliefs about people and social institutions. It also shows the negative impact on people's reactions. Social cynicism mostly is an outcome that arises from higher expectations from the society, supervisor and organizations. If these expectations are not met from an employee's perspective, then it leads to disenchantment which as a result leads to negative feelings such as betrayal and disappointment. A study by Kierein and Gold (2000) finds that leaders that have negative and cynical views have a tendency to mistrust the skills of their employees which as a result effects their motivation and performance in the organization. In comparison supervisors that tend to have positive beliefs hold optimistic expectations from their employees. As a result, this motivates an employee to put forth more effort in their work (Eden, 2003). Byza et.al. (2017) in their study tend to explain that if a supervisor has a positive view of the organization, they are termed to be low on social cynicism. On the other hand, negative view focuses on that fact that the supervisor is high on social cynicism. The Person- Supervisor fit theory comes in handy here where the compatibility between a supervisor and subordinate is the key for the organization. Both supervisor and their subordinates tend to have separate cynical beliefs at times because of various personal and environmental factors.

A state of Relationship Conflict (RC) arises when two individuals or groups tend to reach a disagreement on a common discussion (Laursen, 1993). The disagreement is triggered due to the fact that different employees have different views of their surroundings and peers. Here the concept of Social Cynicism applies which tends to give birth to relationship conflict between a leader and follower. If this disagreement arises, the leader would tend to use abusive supervision in order to teach its follower a lesson or abide him to follow the rules in the organization.

Moral Exclusion Theory: This particular research tends to support the Moral Exclusion theory which suggests that every individual has a "Scope of Justice" that initiates a psychological boundary. This boundary separates others into groups on the basis of where they should receive fair and respectful treatment or not.

#### 1.2 Problem Statement

This study is required as it has become of crucial importance that the relationship between abusive supervision is studied with regards to employee cynicism and relationship conflict as for any organization to maximize its performance and achieve its set goals and objectives, the culture and human interaction has to be taken into great consideration.

Abusive supervision is more evident in the service industry (Tahir and Khan,2019; Park, J., & Kim,2019; Gürlek and Andyeşiltaş,2020).

Studies highlighted that it has significant negative association with impact work family conflict, job demand and supervisor's narcissism and have a significant association with abusive supervision including the banking sector (Qabool, S., & Jalees,2019). Above studies have been conducted on Abusive Supervision with the above-mentioned variables but very limited studies are found in the literature which shows the impact of Abusive Supervision with Employee Cynicism and Relationship Conflict. There is a scarcity of literature relation to Abusive Supervision in the banking sector. Few studies have been conducted in banking sector with mostly studies explore the relation between Abusive Supervision and Knowledge Hiding (Farooq and Sultana, 2021; Ghani et al., 2020; Feng and Wang,2019).

So, there is a need to explore the relation between Abusive Supervision, Employee Cynicism and Relationship Conflict specifically in the Banking Sector of Pakistan.

### 1.3 Gap and Significance

Organizations in recent times work in different dynamics than before. The role of a leader and its followers has become a vital part for any organization and its internal environment. Abusive supervision has now become a common phenomenon in most of the organizations worldwide and being studied extensively. The study by Etodike, Ezeh and Chukwura (2017) is based upon studying Abusive Supervision, Employee Cynicism and work place behaviors among industrial workers. Another study by Byza et.al. (2017), explores the leader and follower social cynicism relation with taking Leader Member Exchange as mediating role where follower's extra role behavior and proactive behavior will be affected. The current study is done with a new perspective and variables where an Employee's Cynicism will be assessed along with Relationship Conflict within an organization with Abusive Supervision as the cause. The need for such a study especially

in the Pakistani context is because employees tend to associate their behaviors with workplace environments and other employees as well.

#### 1.4 Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this study is to explore different and new dimensions of abusive supervision with reference to relationship conflict and employee cynicism. The research objectives of this study are the following:

- To understand and investigate the relation between Abusive supervision and Employee Cynicism.
- To study Abusive Supervision and its effect on Relationship Conflict within an organization.

#### 1.5 Research Questions

The study will aim to answer the following questions:

- Does Abusive Supervision significantly impact Employee Cynicism within an organization?
- Does Abusive Supervision significantly relate with Relationship Conflict?

#### 1.6 Justification of the Study

The factors Abusive Supervision, Relationship Conflict, Employee Cynicism gives a new perspective in the 21st century organizations for better understanding how behavioral tendencies of supervisors can affect the organizational culture and also cause cynicism in the employees, consequently hindering the functioning of the organization.

#### **Chapter Summary**

The preceding chapter discussed the background, gaps and significance, aims and objectives, research questions and justification of the study. The next chapter gives the detailed literature review and the theoretical framework of the variables; Abusive Supervision, Employee Cynicism, Relationship Conflict.

#### Chapter 2

#### 2 Literature Review

This chapter discusses the literature review and theoretical framework of the variables of the study. It discusses in detail the existing literature of Abusive Supervision, Employee Cynicism, and Relationship Conflict. It also discusses the Theoretical Framework of the study.

#### 2.1 Abusive Supervision

Abusive Supervision is defined as "subordinate's perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, Simon and Park, 2017).

Abusive supervision in literal terms means how some supervisors showcase certain negative traits and behaviors that can affect the subordinate's perception of work in an organization. These abusive interactions shown by supervisors endure more mental damage where verbal and nonverbal behaviors cause problems for the employees (Keashly, Trott and MacLean, 1994). As leaders are an important asset in any organization, their behavior with their subordinates and colleagues is also very important. If leaders are abusive in nature or have negative attitudes towards their subordinates, this can eventually lead to employee dissatisfaction and organizational commitment. These traits in employees are only few of the many results that can occur due to abusive supervision in any organization (Tepper, 2007). According to Kim, Kim and Yun (2015), if an organization has abusive supervisors there is a high chance that it will affect the knowledge sharing ability of the subordinates also.

Drawing upon the justice theory, the relation between abusive supervisors and their subordinates was explored. A common trait was found among certain subordinates that tend to quit their jobs; they had abusive supervisors. Those subordinates who continued to do their jobs depicted low job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This clearly showed that abusive supervision tends to have a negative effect on the subordinate's wellbeing in and out of the organization (Tepper, 2000). Employee workplace deviance is one of the many variables that are explored in relation to abusive supervision in

organizations. In this particular study the authors explore the relation between the two in a negative view. Retaliation and aggression were used as a basis for understanding employee reactions towards abusive supervision. The results showed that subordinates that showed higher negative beliefs; abusive supervision and supervisor directed deviance was higher in such cases. That is why abusive supervision was taken as a negative connotation specifically in this study (Mitchell and Ambrose, 2007). Tepper, Duffy, Henle and Lambert (2006), focus on the relation between Procedural Injustices and Abusive Supervision. Supervisors that have been exposed to abuse by their supervisors tend to abuse their own subordinates after assuming the posts of supervisors. Procedural injustices experiences develop feelings of depression and abuse based upon their own past experiences. Abusive supervision supports the "Trickle down framework" in which abused supervisor tend to showcase the same actions to which they were once exposed. Hence, the past procedural injustices mount up and give more depth to abusive supervision for future subordinates in organizations. Mawritz et.al. (2012) also tested the trickle-down framework through 3 levels of hierarchy; Managers, Supervisors and Employees. The abusive behavior tends to have a trickle-down effect where abusive managers correlate positively with abusive supervisor behavior. This abusive behavior tends to affect the last level of the hierarchy i.e. employees also. Here environment of an organization also plays a vital role in determining these behaviors. If the environment is highly hostile, then the relationship between abusive supervisor and group deviance is strong and vice versa. This shows that Abusive supervision tends to drop down a ladder in which preceding behaviors play a pivotal role in determining the future behaviors of an organizational employee.

Personality traits and Abusive supervision have been linked with each other in some researches where a certain perception is made on abusive supervision because of different personality traits of employees. Certain subordinate's traits; Emotional stability, conscientiousness and Agreeableness were hypothesized which tend to be negatively correlated with perceived abusive supervision where negative emotions mediate the relationships. Results showed that the first two traits; Emotional stability and Conscientiousness were negatively related to abusive supervision where negative emotions mediated the relation. Employees with these two traits are more prone to negative emotions and high levels of perceived abusive supervision (Henle and Gross, 2014). A study by Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhave and Christian (2015), tend to associate Abusive supervision with daily sleeping patterns of leaders in organizations. Drawing upon the Ego

Depletion theory, the researchers use night sleep quantity and quality to predict abusive supervision. They argue that keeping in view the ego depletion theory, a poor night's sleep encourages abusive behaviors which as a result affect the working of subordinates as well. Other than that, results suggest that only sleep quality and not sleep quantity of leader's effect abusive behaviors.

Burton and Hoobler (2011) also conducted a study of workers' reactions to abusive supervision using a sample of full-time US workers who are also MBA students. The focus was on the Midwest, South, and West of the United States. Respondents had to complete an online survey on the perception of abusive supervision and forward the same survey to four employees working under the same manager. The focus was on participants who worked under the manager for more than 6 months, and this sample was reduced to 262 employees. These researchers found that when their subordinates worked under an abusive manager, they responded positively not only to the perceived abusive manager, but also to the organization itself. This fact was further confirmed and elaborated in another study by Mitchell and Ambrose (2007). The author aimed to investigate the reaction of his subordinates to the abusive supervision. The contestant was a person convened by a jury trial in the southeastern United States. The researchers distributed the survey and collected data from 427 interested participants over an eight-week period.

#### 2.2 Employee Cynicism

## "A cynic is a man who, when he smells flowers, looks around for a coffin (H.L. Mencken)"

Social Cynicism is defined "as negative beliefs about people and social institutions" in their study. These negative beliefs tend to have negative results and reactions for the coworkers and the organization as well (Li, Zhou and Leung, 2011). Social axioms are generalized cognitive representation which aid in construction of different frameworks related to individuals. Social Cynicism is set to be a negative indicator of social axioms where reward is considered to be the positive social axiom (Bernardo, 2013). Aqueveque and Encina (2010) define Social Cynicism as a social axiom where social axiom are the general beliefs regarding people, their environment, institutions, groups and the social world.

The Social Cynicism social axiom relates to the negative connotation of human nature. Organizations that develop negative political environments over time contribute in development of cynical attitudes of employees towards their organizations (Davis, W and Gardner, 2004). As Social Cynicism and Reward are negative and positive social axioms respectively, a study explores the employee relationship with respect to Corporate Social Responsibly (CSR). Employees that are low on Social Cynicism have been positively impacted by CSR. This as a result reduces distrust among employees in comparison to employees that are high on Social Cynicism i.e. cynical employees (West, Hillenbrand and Money, 2015). Sheel and Vohra (2016) focus on the positive role of CSR which tends to reduce employee's cynicism towards the organization. After the data collection process, it was found that positive perceptions of CSR had a negative correlation with organizational cynicism for the employees. This study provides evidence that if organizational cynicism goes unchecked, it can become a burden for the organization because it is considered to be a negative attitude for any organization. Understanding such relations, the Person-Supervisor fit has turned into a focal hypothetical point of view in the administration writing (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). It offers a viable methodology to investigate the elements among pioneers and supporters (Van Vianen, 2000) and can comprehend devotee frames of mind and practices (Van Vianen, Shen, and Chuang, 2011). As indicated by the idea of beneficial PS fit, pioneers and supporters try to affirm their view on the world (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). At the point when a pioneer and a supporter are compatible by the way they see the social world, they share a common understanding, feel associated, and have comparative desires for how to act (Uhl-Bien, 2006). The theory of Person-Organization (P-O) is now considered to be an important predictor to judge work related behaviors in employees. But there exist certain conditions because of which the ideal P-O fit is not achieved. Rubin et al. (2009) study the relation between a leader's cynicism about organizational change (CAOC) and the related outcomes of these variables.it was found that leader CAOC negatively influences an employee's and as well as the leader's outcomes in any organization. An important finding in this study was the type of leadership style; Transformational Leader that mediated the relationships. This shows that not only the cynical views of employees affect the relations, but the work environments also play a critical role in determining work attitudes and behaviors. Andersson and Bateman (1997) reveal that different factors such as compensation, organizational performance and layoffs create cynicism specifically in white collar workers.

Three forms of Organizational Cynicism exist in literature; Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral. The relationship between these forms of Organizational Cynicism and Social Cynicism is explored in this particular research. The relation between the both exists only if it is hypothesized as cognition. If the relation is taken as a behavior the relation does not stand valid. On the other hand, if organizational policies focus on fairness and giving autonomy to employees, then the Employee Cynicism 's effect on the Organizational Cynicism may turn out to be positive rather than a negative one (Kwantes and Bond, 2019).

Gkorezis, Petridou and Xanthiakos (2014) explore the relation of Leader Member Exchange (LMX) between leader's positive humor and employee's perception of Organizational Cynicism.

#### 2.3 Relationship Conflict

Coser (1957) defines Conflict "as a struggle over values and claims to achieve status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals". In another instance Thomas (1992) defines conflict as "conflict as the process which begins when one party perceives that another has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of his or her". Relationship conflict has been specifically defined by De Dreu (2008) as "Tensions, annoyances, disagreements and personal incompatibles over matters such as beliefs, values, habits and personalities".

Different types of conflict exist in organizations where three main types of conflict arise in organizations: Task Conflict, Relationship Conflict and Value Conflict. Task conflict mostly relates to work assignments that are employee oriented. Differences in opinions on how a particular assignment or task should be carried out, how resources should be divided, judgment and understanding the facts come under the umbrella of task conflict. When there is greater conflict among employees related to a specific task, then Task Conflict comes into play. Relationship Conflict on the other hand focuses more on interpersonal incompatibility between the employees. In this particular case conflict arises mostly due to irreconcilable differences on values, norms and beliefs between two or more employees on a particular issue or work assignment. The last type of conflict is Value Conflict which is mostly due to differences in individualities and values. These differences could be in relation to a particular religion, political views or even ethics (Medina et.al.

2002). A study tested the relationship between relationship conflict, task conflict and 2 aspects of team effectiveness; performance and team member satisfaction. The study was carried out in Indonesia and Taiwan where the results showed that relationship conflict played the role of a moderator in the relation between task conflict and team performance. The findings suggested that relationship conflict aggravated the relationship negatively between task conflict and team member satisfaction (Shaw et.al, 2011). Various studies have suggested that task conflict is considered to be more constructive than relationship conflict, which is termed to be more destructive. Similarly keeping in view this, a study was conducted in which both of the types of conflict were studied in correlation where the variable trust was used as a moderator. The results support this hypothesis that trust moderates the relation between task conflict and relationship conflict in groups particularly. Top management groups that reported low levels of trust had increased task conflict which eventually led to an increase in relationship conflict as well. But groups that reported high levels of trust did not experience relationship conflict which would have been triggered by task conflict in the first instance. This shows that if task conflict can be mitigated timely then relationship conflict can also be avoided in organizations among employees (Simons and Peterson, 2000). Conflict has been categorized as multidimensional where recent conceptualizations of conflict include task, relationship and process conflicts (Behfar, Mannix, Peterson, & Trochim, 2011). As opposed to the positive (inspiring) impacts of engaging administration on inspirational states, relationship struggle is likely to demotivate colleagues. Significant levels of relationship struggle in a group include solid relational differences and pressures among individuals and are typically communicated with negative correspondence and absence of helpfulness among individuals uncovering sentiments of displeasure, doubt, dread, and disappointment. Conversely, groups portrayed by low levels of relationship struggle experience progressively amicable and collegial relational connections among individuals, communicated with positive correspondence that uncovers sentiments of trust and common regard (Chen et.al. 2011).

A study explores the relation between supervisor and employee relationship conflict in correspondence with abusive supervision. The proposed hypotheses in this case were based upon aggression and leader-member exchange (LMX) theory. The results showed that supervisors that experienced relationship conflict with their peers were more prone to showcase abusive behaviors with their subordinates. In this case the leader member

exchange (LMX) moderated the relationship. As a result, abusive supervision caused decreased effort in work and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) (Harris, Harvey and Kacmar, 2011). Various studies have related task conflict with high group performance and relationship conflict with low group performance. These studies also support the findings that intragroup conflict leads to conflicts in group performance not the other way around. Results show that early trust in groups mitigates the experience of having a worse relationship conflict in the near future as opposed to having no intragroup trust in early stages (Peterson and Behfar, 2003). The positive effect of task conflict and negative effect of relationship conflict has been studied with the moderating effect of social capital where trust inclines to decrease these effects. 232 Canadian firms were studied that when high levels of social interaction are reported, a positive relation exists between task conflict and innovation eventually, leading to a negative relationship between relationship conflict and innovation. On the other hand, if there are high levels of trust, the positive relationship weakens between task conflict and innovation (De Clercq, Thongpapanl and Dimov, 2009). (De Wit, Jehn and Scheepers, 2013).

A popular theoretical assumption holds that task-related disagreements stimulate critical thinking, and thus may improve group decision making. Two recent meta-analyses showed, however, that task conflict can have a positive effect, a negative effect, or no effect at all on decision-making quality. It is built upon the suggestion of both meta-analyses that the presence of relationship conflict determines whether a task conflict is positively or negatively related to decision making. It is hypothesized and found that the level of perceived Relationship Conflict during task conflict (Study 1), and the actual presence (vs. absence) of Relationship Conflict during task conflict (Study 2), increased group members' rigidity in holding onto suboptimal initial preferences during decision making and thus led to poor decisions. In both studies the effect of Relationship Conflict on decision making was mediated by biased use of information

The following Hypotheses have been proposed for the purpose of this study;

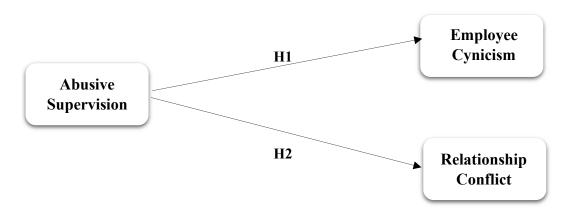
H1: Abusive Supervision has a significant positive relation on Employee Cynicism.

H2: Abusive Supervision has a significant positive relation with Relationship Conflict.

#### 2.4 Theoretical Framework

The research will focus on the following framework in which Abusive Supervision will be the independent variable while Employee Cynicism and Relationship Conflict will be taken as dependent variables.

Figure 1: Hypothesized Conceptual Model



#### **Affective Events Theory (AET)**

Affective Event Theory (AET) is a psychological model developed to explain the relationship between feelings and emotions in the workplace, job performance, job satisfaction, and behavior. AETs are underscored by the belief that people are emotional and that their actions are guided by their emotions. This theory also states that emotions are an integral part of how employees handle situations, either positive or negative at their workplace. The Affective Event theory is supported by the Five Factor Model (FFM)/The Big Five Personality Traits; Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism.

This theory for this particular study was chosen because various different work-related behaviors have been studied. Positive and negative situations influence employee's wellbeing and the way they act in certain conditions and with other employees as the Affective Event Theory suggests.

#### **Chapter Summary**

The chapter evaluated the existing Literature Review of the variables; Abusive Supervision, Employee Cynicism, Relationship Conflict. The next chapter will give detailed Methodology in which Sample and Sample Size, Data Collection Techniques, Measures, Analytical Procedures and Statistical Tools used will be discussed

## Chapter 3

### 2 Methodology

The objective of this chapter is to provide an insight regarding the methodology used in collecting data and analyzing it for the study. The chapter starts with highlighting the importance of research philosophy and design along with the specific approach adapted for the current study. It also contains details regarding sample, its selection criteria and demographics, with measures as well.

#### 3.1 Research Philosophy and Design

Conceptualizing knowledge and ways of creating it have always been subjective in nature (James, 2012). A research philosophy is a belief about the way according to which data should be collected, investigated and used. It basically deals with our understanding of the reality of the world and our interpretation of knowledge, its existence and the reality (Crotty, 1998). Research paradigm provides basis and grounding for all the knowledge creation in the world. A research paradigm is an approach of gaining and comprehending the knowledge of world and studying it. A research paradigm consists of four components i.e. epistemology, ontology, methodology and methods (James, 2012). This chapter deals with all these four components.

Ontology in the simplest terms is the study of "nature of being and actuality" and its assumptions are concerned with what constitutes reality (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Saunders, 2011 and Crotty, 1998). Ontology studies the crux of the phenomenon that is under study. Researchers need to clearly take a stance regarding their perception of reality (James, 2012). This can either be independent of humans (objective) or dependent on humans (subjective) for its existence (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). This constitutes two basic aspects of ontology i.e., objectivism and subjectivism.

Epistemology on the other hand deals with the nature and forms of knowledge that exist and how to reach it (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The assumptions in epistemology are concerned with the ways knowledge can be created, gathered and also communicated (James, 2012). Epistemology can either be positivistic or interpretivist in nature. Positivistic approach is based on already built theories rather than generating new ones. It is concerned more with identifying and verifying causal relationship among variables (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). On the opposite hand, interpretivism approach has a

basic underpinning that humans are social actors who construct and reconstruct their own reality (Saunders et. al, 2007).

The current study aimed at objectively testing and analysing the data grounded on already established theories to find out the causal relationship among variables i.e., impact of Abusive Supervision on Employee Cynicism and Relationship Conflict in an organization. Epistemologically, the study adapted a positivistic approach, deductively gathering and interpreting data on grounded theory of Affective Events Theory (AET).

#### 3.2 Research Methodology and Strategy

The third component of the research paradigm is research methodology. Methodology component is responsible for answering questions such as why, what, where, when and how data is collected for analysis (James, 2012). Research methodologies are traditionally classified into broader spheres i.e., quantitative and qualitative research methods (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Both of these separately have several techniques that are used in collecting data.

Quantitative research methodology that was adapted for this study focuses on dealing with statistical data. Through this methodology, researcher usually tends to gather data from a relatively larger audience. The approach used for is deductive approach in which data is gathered to negate or approve already present relationships. The data gathered is quantifiable and usually focuses on testing the type and strength of relationship between variables. The study focused on studying causal relationship of Abusive Supervision with Employee Cynicism and Relationship Conflict.

Under the quantitative research methodology, several techniques are available to collect data. For this particular study, survey was used as a technique to collect data. Under survey technique, questionnaire was used as a tool to collect data. Survey questionnaire comprised of close ended questions based on variables of each construct. Participants were supposed to select from already defined choices available against each question using Lickert Scale. Cross sectional data collection strategy i.e., collecting data from participants at one point in time was used due to time constraints.

#### 3.3 Sample and Sample Size

Sample for this study include current employees in public and private sectors within the limits of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Although research shows that abusive supervision is more common in bureaucratic organizations, still to remove any ambiguities both private and public banking organizations have been taken into account for data collection. Sample size includes data from 350 employees in order to remove any biasness that can arise from collecting data from one subordinate. Lastly, convenient sampling has been carried out to cover more organizations.

#### 3.4 Data Collection Techniques

For this study primary data has been collected by following the Quantitative approach. Self-administered questionnaires have been used in this regard. The questionnaire has been developed by using already existing measures that will directly relate to the proposed variables in the hypothesized model. The questionnaire consists of various questions which measure the variables in the proposed theoretical framework.

#### 3.5 Measures

All responses for the variables Abusive Supervision and Employee Cynicism has been taken by using a 5-point Likert-scale with anchors of 1 = "Strongly disagree" through to 5 = "Strongly agree". Whereas the variable Relationship Conflict has been measured with a 5 Likert-scale with anchors of 1 = "Extremely" through to 5 = "Not at all" for more accurate responses. The questionnaire has been developed using existing questionnaires from the following researches for each of the variables.

#### 3.5.1 Abusive Supervision

The variable abusive supervision has been measured by a 15-item questionnaire developed with the help of a questionnaire relating to subordinates' perception of abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000). Example of the items includes, "Expresses anger at me when he/she is mad for another reason."

#### 3.5.2 Employee Cynicism

To measure the variable social cynicism existing items from the Social Axioms Survey by Leung et. Al (2002) has been used. The scale items are "Kind-hearted people usually

suffer losses"; "Powerful people tend to exploit others"; "Power and status make people arrogant".

#### 3.5.3 Relationship Conflict

To measure the variable Relationship Conflict (RC), items by Jehn and Mannix (2001) have been used. 4 items will be used to measure Relationship Conflict among supervisor and subordinate. Examples of these items include: "How much friction is there among members in your work unit?", "How much are personality conflicts evident in your work unit?", "How much tension is there among members in your work unit?" and "How much emotional conflict is there among members in your work unit?"

#### 3.6 Analytical Procedures

#### 3.6.1 Demographics

The Demographic Analytical procedure is used to understand the basic age, sex or any qualification and how it changes due to various factors. In this research the demographics that have been taken under consideration are Gender, Age, Sector, Qualifications, Tenure with Supervisor and Tenure with Organization.

#### 3.6.2 Reliability

To measure the internal consistency of the survey, a reliability test, Cronbach Alpha was conducted within SPSS. This type of test is mostly conducted when the survey uses instruments such as the Likert scale, in order to determine whether the scale taken is reliable or not. In the study a Likert scale from 1-5 is used to test the hypotheses.

The reliability of Cronbach's alpha coefficient is normally in the range between 0 and 1. If the co-efficient is closer to 1.0, the internal consistency of the variables in the scale are greater. The coefficient in Cronbach's alpha increases either with the increase in inter-item correlations or with the increase in the number of items.

#### 3.6.3 Correlation Analysis

In research, a statistical tool that is used is correlation analysis, through which the strength of linear relationship is measured between two variables while also computing the association between them. The level of change that is caused by one variable due to

another is calculated through correlational analysis. When there is a high correlation, the relationship between the two variable is high, while weak relation is indicated is there is a low correlation.

A Pearson correlation was performed to measure the strength between two continuous variables. Information about both the strength and the nature can be gained through the value of correlation with the range being between -1.0 and 1.0. The direction of the relationship is described by the sign which positive sign indicating that with the increase in one variable, the other also increases, while a negative sign indicates that if one variable increases, the other decreases. The strength of the relationship is described by the magnitude of the correlation, with indication of strong relationship when the correlation is further from zero while zero correlation indicates that the two variables aren't related.

#### 3.6.4 Regression

Multiple regression, which is an extension of linear regression was used in order to predict a variable's value, based on the value of two or more other variables. The dependent variable is the one for which prediction is made while the other variables there are independent variables used to predict value of the dependent variable. In this case the prediction for the dependent variable Abusive Supervision is done where independent variables Leader and Follower Social Cynicism are used.

Multiple regression also allows you to determine the overall fit (variance explained) of the model and the relative contribution of each of the predictors to the total variance explained. For example, you might want to know how much of the variation in exam performance can be explained by revision time, test anxiety, lecture attendance and gender "as a whole", but also the "relative contribution" of each independent variable in explaining the variance. In this particular research multiple regression is used whereas whole the mediating effect of Relationship Conflict is determined between Employee Cynicism and Abusive Supervision.

#### 3.7 Statistical Tools Used

Reliability, Correlation, Regression and ANOVA statistical tools were used in this study. To test all the hypotheses regression is used. Correlation acted as a tool used to check the relationship among the variables. To check the controlled variable ANOVA test was done.

#### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the Methodology of the study in detail where sample, sample size, data collection techniques, measures used, analytical procedures and the statistical tools used were deliberated. The next chapter will put light on the detailed data analysis and discussion.

## Chapter 4

### 3 Analysis and Results

This chapter discusses Data Analysis part of the study. Results, Discussion, Analysis, Strengths and Limitations, Managerial Implications, Contribution of the study and Ethical Concerns are discussed in detail.

#### 4.1 Results

#### 3.1.1 Demographics

The analyzed data was gathered from 350 employees working at different positions i.e. Supervisors and Subordinates included. The data in the Table – shows that out of 300 employees 60.7% were male, 31% were female and 0.3% respondents did not reveal their gender. The average age of the respondents was found to be 30.1 with a standard deviation of 7.44. The data included the Public sector as well as the Private sector. The respondents that worked in public organizations comprised of 35.3% of the total. Whereas 64.7% respondents worked at private sector organizations. The qualifications of the respondents comprised of 33% Bachelors, 52.3% Masters and 2.3% had PhD or higher qualifications. The average tenure with a supervisor was recorded to be 3.53 with a standard deviation of 3.56. On the other hand average tenure of a respondent with the organization was reported to be 4.77 with a standard deviation of 4.88.

Table 4.1

Demographics Descriptive of Respondents

Variables	Count/Mean	Supervisors
Gender	Count	60.7% Male
		39% Female
		0.3% Prefer not to say
Age	Mean	30.1 (S.D: 7.44)
Sector	Count	35.3% Public
		64.7% Private
Qualifications	ns Count 33%%	
		52.3% Masters
		2.3% PhD or higher
Tenure with Supervisor	Mean 3.53 (S.D: 3.56)	
Tenure with Organization	Mean	4.77 (S.D: 4.88)

#### 3.1.2 Reliability

The scale set for reliability included all variables. There was a total of 350 cases that were processed, out of the 350 cases, 296 cases were valid. The other cases were excluded on the basis if there was a missing value for any of the participant. The case Processing Summary and Reliability Statistics can be seen in the table below.

Table 4.2 Number of Valid responses

		N	%	
Cases	Valid	296	84.5	
	Excluded	54	15.4	
	Total	350	100.0	

a. List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

**Table 4.3 Reliability Statistics** 

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
	0.848	44
Abusive		
Supervision	0.932	15
Employee		
Cynicism	0.872	18
Relationship		
Conflict	0.949	4

Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency ("reliability"). The Alpha's score of 0.848 shows that the data used for the reliability analysis is reliable and valid. Julie Pallant, in his book SPSS Survival Manual, notes that if we have less than 10 items on a scale, it is difficult to get a high Cronbach's Alpha score. Whereas it is easy to get better score with higher number of items. Therefore, any score above 0.5 is acceptable. The resulting  $\alpha$  coefficient of reliability ranges from 0 to 1 in providing this overall assessment of a measure's reliability. If all of the scale items are entirely independent from one another (i.e., are not correlated or share no covariance), then  $\alpha = 0$ ; and, if all of the items have high covariance, then  $\alpha$  will approach 1 as the number of items in the scale

approaches infinity. In other words, the higher the  $\alpha$  coefficient, the more the items have shared covariance and probably measure the same underlying concept. Consequently, it can be stated that the data used to conduct tests for the purpose of determining results of the role of relationship conflict between abusive supervision and Employee Cynicism is reliable for this study.

#### 3.1.3 Correlation

A test was run on SPSS to calculate the correlation matrix, depicting the way each item correlates to all of the other items. Pearson's Correlation (r) ranges between +1 and -1, where +1 is a perfect positive correlation while -1 is a perfect negative correlation. Zero means there is no linear correlation at all. There is a list of 1.000 across the diagonal (top left to bottom right). This shows instances where the item has been correlated with itself. is Since the scores identical. the correlation perfect (r =are of the items are measuring the same concept, it is expected to correlate well together. Any items that have consistently low correlations across the board may need to be removed from the questionnaire to make it more reliable.

The first set of results show that Abusive Supervision and Employee Cynicism are positively correlated to each other. As the table shows that the value of 0.442 ranges between the given positive range. Abusive Supervision will significantly and negatively affect and Employee's Cynicism, thus supporting the Hypothesis **H1**.

Table 4.4 Correlations

		AbusiveSup	EmpCyn
AbusiveSup	Pearson Correlation	1	.442**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	296	296
EmpCyn	Pearson Correlation	.442**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	296	296

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The second set of correlation between Abusive Supervision and Relationship Conflict also falls within the positive correlation range. The value of 0.138 depicts that Abusive

Supervision in any organization will eventually lead to Relationship Conflicts among the employees. Thus, supporting the Hypothesis **H2**.

Table 4.5 Correlations

		AbusiveSup	RelationCon
AbusiveSup	Pearson Correlation	1	.338*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.017
	N	296	296
RelationCon	Pearson Correlation	.338*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	
	N	296	296

<sup>\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

#### 3.1.4 Regression

A multiple regression was run to predict the relation between the three variables; Abusive Supervision, Employee Cynicism and Relationship Conflict. First Abusive Supervision was taken as an Independent variable and Employee Cynicism as a Dependent Variable as shown in the theoretical framework as well. The F (1, 298) = 72.328, p < .0005 values predict that the regression model is a good fit.

The "R" column represents the value of R, the multiple correlation coefficient. R can be considered to be one measure of the quality of the prediction of the dependent variable; in this first case, Employee Cynicism.

A value of 0.442 indicates a moderate level of prediction as shown in the tables below. The "R Square" column represents the R2 value (also called the coefficient of determination), which is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be

Table 4.6 Regression

			Adjusted R	Std. Error of the
Model	R	R Square	Square	Estimate
1	.442ª	.195	.193	.62218

a. Predictors: (Constant), AbusiveSup

explained by the independent variables (technically, it is the proportion of variation accounted for by the regression model above and beyond the mean model). The value of 0.195 shows that our independent variables explain 19.5% of the variability of our dependent variable, Employee Cynicism.

Table 4.7 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	27.999	1	27.999	72.328	.000b
	Residual	115.358	298	.387		
	Total	143.357	299			

a. Dependent Variable: EmpCyn

In the second case Relationship Conflict acts as an Independent Variable and Abusive Supervision as the Dependent variable. The F (1, 298) = 5.769, p < .0005 values predict that the regression model is also a good fit.

A value of 0.138 indicates a moderate level of prediction. The "R Square" column represents the R2 value. The value of 0.19 shows that our independent variables explain 19.0% of the variability of our dependent variable, Relationship Conflict.

Table 4.8 Regression

			Adjusted R	Std. Error of the
Model	R	R Square	Square	Estimate
1	.138ª	.019	.016	.87568

a. Predictors: (Constant), AbusiveSup

b. Predictors: (Constant), AbusiveSup

Table 4.9 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.424	1	4.424	5.769	.017 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	228.508	298	.767		
	Total	232.932	299			

a. Dependent Variable: RelationConb. Predictors: (Constant), AbusiveSup

For both hypotheses testing, ANOVA was also used to test the results that whether the values and the model itself is a good fit or not. The results showed that both the sets being used showed a good fit in comparison to the model. Other than this it also helped to determine that both the hypothesis was accepted.

#### Chapter 5

#### 5 Discussion

This study shows that there is a significant impact of abusive supervision on both employee cynicism and relationship conflict. Based on the findings of this study, both the hypotheses that have been mentioned are accepted as abusive supervision does affect employee cynicism and relationship conflict. Employee cynicism can be seen as an attitude that is not only characterized by negative beliefs but also frustration, primarily if we see, it stems from expectations that are unmet and can be directed towards an organization. Cynicism can be seen as a lack, in feelings, among the employees of being righteous, being fair, sincere and having confidence in the place that they work in. It can be seen that, when there is any sort of treatment that is unfair or ill in any way, it creates not only cynical expressions but also distrust amongst the employees causing them to show disloyalty and displeasure. Even the Role Stressors theory states a link in foundation to better understand how role ambiguity and clarity can translate into stress for the employee and if repeated often, can become a form of abuse. Employee cynicism becomes both a specific and general attitude which is further characterized with hopelessness, anger, disappointment while also not having trust on individuals, ideologies, social institutions, groups or even institutions themselves. These aforementioned can cause not only loss of trust by the employee, but also loss of confidence and belief in the organization and its goals. It wouldn't be incorrect to state that employee cynicism affects the process of human interaction in an organization, eventually leading to lack of team work and solidarity while also affecting the delegation of authority. Abusive supervision also causes relationship conflict within an organization as it affects behavior in the workplace. Furthermore, it is also observed that whenever conditions in the workplace move towards greater stress, those that are faced with higher abusive supervision tend to attach a motive that is more malicious which in turn gives rise to more emotions towards the negative side, consequently leading to behavior in the workplace that is counterproductive. While if we see, on the flip side, those that are faced with less abusive supervision tend to give benefit of doubt, which enables them to continue without causing any disruptions in work or within the organization. From the above findings it can be said that abusive supervision has an impact on employee cynicism and relationship conflict.

#### **5.1 Theoretical Implications**

Abusive Supervision is further studied with different variables studied i.e., Employee Cynicism and Relationship Conflict for this particular research. A key focus has been taken into account and Employee's individual values and beliefs. The research has contributed specifically to the employee related outcomes in the banking sector. The Affective Events Theory (AET) should be taken specifically into account in this case/variables/sector so that more in-depth results can come.

In an organization, any interaction involving humans is a critical variable especially when it comes to an organization's success. The employees determine through their collective efforts as a team as without them having trust especially when it comes to the superiors and their subordinates, it is impossible to meet organizational goals. There is a chance of loyalty and human trust being lost where the superiors direct abuse towards the employees, which could also cause other deviant behaviors in the organization while directly affecting organizational effectiveness. It has been witnessed that both counterproductive workplace behaviors and organizational cynicism affect behavior, outcomes, and procedures in an organization adversely. Relationship conflict can arise due to issues such as abusive behavior, aggression that can be both verbal and physical, incorrect work on purpose, absence, decreased turnover or lateness. If we look at other examples of abusive supervision that can cause cynicism in employees, they are bullying, aggression, mobbing or intimidation and a number of job stressors can be linked to development of cynicism in employees that can cause role conflict, role ambiguity, workload, interpersonal conflict and organizational constraints.

#### **5.2 Practical Implications**

Firstly, results can help in understanding the relationships, how Abusive Supervision in the banking sector effects Employee's cynical beliefs in the organization and understanding the conflicts that arise between various relations. Results can also help in understanding the need to address and rectify the issues pertaining to a Supervisor and their Subordinate for the policy makers. Decisions specially for the subordinates should be taken keeping in view the factors studied in the research. Better understanding of employee's views about the organization and his/her peers. Organizations should take into account the employee's perception about his/her peers and the environment of the organization. These studies can help in understanding how the mind and views about a

particular employee differ with time and situations. That is why it is important to take into account them.

### 5.3 Strengths and Limitations

A major strength of this study is that this study can contribute towards our collectivist society and organizations can use the findings to plan differently in order to create a more knowledgeable environment. A major limitation that occurred was of the Covid Pandemic which caused changes to the data collection methods. Initially the data was to be collected with to different questionnaires, one being leader centered and the other being follower centered. But due to the Covid limitation a single questionnaire was developed, and results were interpreted according to them. Online responses were collected which at times do not depict accurate information as compare to physical data collection.

### 5.4 Contribution of the Study

The main contribution of this study would be that employee's congruence in social cynicism is based on the assumption that similarity in cynicism between a leader and follower will give rise to positive relationships between the two. But on the contrary if this does not occur and a relationship conflict arises, then the leader might opt to use abusive supervision to make his or her view clear on the follower.

#### 5.5 Ethical Concerns

While completing any research there can be different moral issues for the researcher. A portion of the primary issues that may emerge sufficiently incorporate access to the respondents, their privacy, classification of the reactions given, obscurity of both the respondent and the association being reviewed, no unlawful utilization of the information and for the most part significantly to do the exploration with complete genuineness and impartial from the researcher's perspective. No names will be given in any part of the research to ensure the anonymity of the respondents. An appropriate cover letter will be furnished with the survey as to guarantee unwavering quality of the researcher and if the respondents need to contact the researcher for the outcomes, they may do as such effortlessly and at any time. Different issues can also emerge while directing the research, yet privacy of the respondents will be kept anonymous in any circumstance.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed in detail the results through demographics, Reliability, Correlation, Regression, ANOVA and Mediation Analysis. Further it also highlighted the strengths and limitations of the research with contribution of the study as well. The next chapter gives an overall conclusion of the research done.

## Chapter 6

#### **Conclusion**

It is not incorrect to state that if an organization does not effectively manage its human resource, the outcomes that it is trying to achieve are rendered incomplete and insufficient as without a positive organizational culture for the employees, organization effectiveness can be put into doubt. The most common types of outcomes in terms of employees in terms of negativities are employee cynicism and relationship conflict within and organization. One of the most common outcomes of abusive supervision is how an employee behaves and it is eventually the behavior that determines whether an organization will be able to achieve its goals or not as it can give rise to counterproductive workplace behavior, not only causing cynicism but also relationship conflict. If we see the Role Stressors Theory and the Retaliation theory we can see that they provide a foundation of a sort by creating a link first between abusive supervision and employee cynicism and second between abusive supervision and relationship conflict within an organization. These variables have been examined by the current study; the two hypotheses have been formed with regards to the research questions, by using statistical tools to obtain results regarding the variables. The result of this study has confirmed that there is evidence that abusive supervision does lead to relationship conflict and employee cynicism within an organization. Consequently, we can accept the model provided in this study along with the managerial implications with reference to the management practice. Pakistan being a culturist society played a vital role in determining the results as sometimes abuse is not reported in organizations due to many personal and financial constraints of the individuals working in the organization.

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**Appendix: Thesis Questionnaire** 

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**Survey** 

Dear Respondents,

A researcher from National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) Islamabad is

studying the workplace attitudes and behavior. You can help in pursuing this research by

completing the attached questionnaire. Let me assure you that, strictly following the

research ethics, your replies will be kept strictly confidential and the data acquired

will only be used for academic research purposes. Moreover, your identity will not be

disclosed to anyone and the data will be summarized on a general basis only. Please note

that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please feel free to decline if

you do not want to participate for any reason. Please read the instructions carefully and

answer all the questions. There are no "trick" questions, so please answer each item as

frankly and as honesty as possible. It is important that <u>all</u> the questions be answered. I

once again thank you for your assistance and cooperation in this noble cause.

Sincerely,

Marvee Hafeez

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The following statements concern your perception about yourself and others in a variety of situations. Please encircle the appropriate box against each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement by using the following scale. 1.Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Slightly Disagree 4. Slightly Agree 5. Agree 6. Strongly Agree Statement Sr. Powerful people tend to exploit others. 1. Power and status make people arrogant. 2. Kind-hearted people are easily bullied. 3. Significant achievement requires one to show no concern for the 4. means needed for that achievement. 5. Kind-hearted people usually suffer losses. Old people are usually stubborn and biased. 6. Young people are impulsive and unreliable. 7. 8. It is easier to succeed if one knows how to take shortcuts. Females need a better appearance than males. 9. It is rare to see a happy ending in real life. 10. People will stop working hard after they secure a comfortable life. 11. 12. People deeply in love are usually blind. To care about societal affairs only brings trouble for you. 13. 14. Most people hope to be repaid after they help others. Harsh laws can make people obey. 15. Old people are a heavy burden on society. 16. The various social institutions in society are biased toward the rich. Humility is dishonesty. 18. 1. How much friction is there among members in your work unit. How much are personality conflicts evident in your work unit. 2. How much tension is there among members in your work unit. 3. How much emotional conflict is there among members in your work 4. unit. **MY SUPERVISOR...** 1. Ridicules me Tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid 2. 3. Gives me the silent treatment 4. Puts me down in front of others 5. Invades my privacy Reminds me of my past mistakes and failures 6. Doesn't give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort 7. 8. Blames me to save himself/herself embarrassment 9. Breaks promises he/she makes Expresses anger at me when he/she is mad for another reason 10. Makes negative comments about me to others 11. 12. Is rude to me Does not allow me to interact with my coworkers 13.

14.

15.

Tells me I'm incompetent

Lies to me

# SECTION B: Demographic Data

Name:			
Gender: Male	Female	Age:	Years
Organization: Public	Private		
Department:			
Qualifications:			
Experience (Years):			