LEADERSHIP IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES ON PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

Carole Sénéchal[1], Luc Brunet[2], Denis Morin[3], Jean-Sébastien Boudrias[4] , & Serge Larivée[5]
[1]Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa (Canada)
[2]Department of Psychology, University of Montreal (Canada)
[3]Organization and Human Resources Department, University of Québec in Montreal (Canada)
[4]Department of Psychology, University of Montreal (Canada)
[5]Department of Psychoeducation, University of Montreal (Canada)

Abstract

Abusive supervision involves the expression of multiple verbal and nonverbal aggressive behaviours of a supervisor towards employees. As a stressor in the workplace, such leadership results in organisational inefficiency, absenteeism, and voluntary staff turnover. The cost of this supervision for American organisations is estimated at $2.3 billion (Seckyoung et al., 2016). An understanding of the predictors of abusive supervision in the workplace allows for intervention amongst organizations in order to significantly reduce the cost associated with these destructive behaviours. Empirical data shows that the perception of abusive supervision is associated with psychological distress, reduced workplace wellbeing, and low-quality supervisor-subordinate relationships. This study proposes an empirical exploration of the antecedents and consequences of abusive supervision in the education sector, which has been identified by certain studies (ACTU, 2000) as being a work environment where destructive leadership by school officials is particularly pronounced. Several variables, such as managerial overload or work intensification, the setting of imposing or unrealistic work objectives, high-performance human resource management practices or the frustration of managers facing a lack of resources can potentially predict the perception of abusive supervision. Supervisors' personality traits constitute mediating variables in this framework. The personality traits and attributions of subordinates influences the perception of abusive supervision. This study derives from a narrative literature review (1980-2020) on three keywords: abusive supervision, school management, and teachers. For this purpose, the databases PsychINFO, PubMed, ERIC (ProQuest), and Web of Science were consulted. References were sorted in the data processing software EndNote.

Keywords: Abusive supervision, school management, teachers.

1. Introduction

An American Psychological Association survey of 1,562 employees explored the nature of leadership within organisations. 29% of respondents highlighted that supervisors represent a significant source of stress at work. Furthermore, 32% of employees believe that their supervisors are not honest with them. Finally, 24% of employees had very little faith in their supervisors (American Psychological Association, 2014). These challenges related to personnel supervision have contributed to the scientific community's increased interest in the darker and more destructive side of leadership (Schyns et Schilling, 2013). Destructive leadership involves repeated behaviours that violate the legitimate interests of the organisation or its stakeholders (such as employees, administrative staff, etc.) by minimising or sabotaging organisational objectives; tasks, resources, and wellbeing in the workplace; workplace satisfaction; and/or efficiency of members of the organisation. Perceptions of abusive supervision constitute one of the components of destructive leadership. Subordinates' perceptions focus on the supervisory style of the manager as it pertains to teamwork. Perceptions of abusive supervision are guided by observation or the manifestation of several hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviours (except for physical aggression) of the supervisor towards employees. The measurement instrument associated with perceptions of abusive supervision involves asking employees about the frequency of these hostile behaviours. It is pertinent to present a sample of statements from this measurement instrument: 1) my supervisor shares negative comments about me with team members; 2) my supervisor lies to me; 3) my supervisor reminds me of my mistakes and failures; and 4) my supervisor undermines me in front of others (Tepper et al., 2017). Several

authors recommend measuring the incidence of inter-rater reliability in a work team in order to determine the extent of these abusive supervisory behaviours (Martinko et al., 2013). However, such an index does not guarantee the measurement's objectivity. Descriptive statistics reveals that a proportion of 10 to 16% of employees regularly experience abusive supervision. As a workplace stressor, abusive supervision fosters organisational inefficiency, absenteeism, and voluntary staff turnover. The costs of abusive supervision are estimated at 2.3 billion dollars for American organisations (Seckyoung et al., 2016). An understanding of the predictive variables associated with abusive supervision in the workplace allows for intervention in organisations with the purpose of significantly reducing the costs associated with these destructive behaviours. The collective research essentially focuses on the consequences of perceptions of abusive supervision. Empirical data shows that the perception of abusive supervision is associated with psychological tension (e.g., emotional exhaustion), diminished wellbeing in the workplace, and lower quality supervisor-subordinate relationships. Perceptions of abusive supervision are also associated with subordinates' predisposition to engage in counterproductive behaviour (e.g., intentionally wasting departmental resources). Employees that perceive abusive supervision obtain unfavourable performance reports. These employees partake in few team-building exercises compared to employees who do not perceive abusive supervision (Mackey et al., 2017). In sum, perceptions of abusive supervision are associated with a diversity of negative organisational outcomes. It is thus necessary to obtain a thorough understanding of the variables susceptible to predict perceptions of abusive supervision given the negative repercussions in the workplace. There exists a significant quantity of research on the consequences of perceptions of abusive supervision; however, few studies have been conducted on the antecedents or predictors of perceptions of abusive supervision (Zhang et Bednall, 2016). Studies by ACTU (2000) and Blase and Blase (2004) identified that 50 to 90% of bullying problems targeting teachers stemmed from administration. Several variables, such as an increased or intensified workload for managers, the defining of unrealistic or imposing work objectives, high-performance and potentially restrictive human resource management practices, and managers' frustration regarding lack of resources, are all possible predictors of perceptions of abusive supervision.

2. Objective

The objective of this research is to present a portrait of the situation.

3. Methods

This research is a narrative literature review (2010-2020) based on three keywords: abusive supervision, school management, and teachers. For this purpose, the databases PsychINFO, PubMed, ERIC (ProQuest), and Web of Science were consulted. References were sorted in the data processing software EndNote. Results obtained to-date suggest that the risk and protective factors for burnout observed in other types of populations (teachers, other management positions) also apply to school principals. In addition, previously unstudied factors have shown an association with burnout in this population (Boily-Legris, 2022).

4. Discussion

Every manager is confronted at one time or another with difficult situations in the workplace. They need to possess organisational and personal resources, such as perceptions of organisational support, political abilities in the workplace, work-life balance, psychological detachment from work, feelings of personal efficacy, and resiliency. Several authors recommend additional studies on the role of supervisor and employee personality traits on the development of perceptions of abusive supervision. Supervisor personality traits (professional conscientiousness, congeniality, neuroticism, narcissism, malignancy) are all potential moderating variables in the context of the relationship between antecedents and consequences of perceptions of abusive supervision (Eissa et Lester, 2017). It is also possible that many personality traits of employees (positive affect, notable professional conscientiousness and congeniality, low neuroticism) allow employees to better contend with various abusive supervisory behaviours. The work climate (e.g., psychological climate) constitutes a contextual variable that is likely to predict perceptions of abusive supervision (Kenan et al., 2016).

5. Conclusion

Abusive supervision is therefore linked to the manager's limited support amidst team members. This gradually becomes a source of stress or tension amongst employees. Indeed, this management style leads to considerable adaptative efforts on the part of employees in response to the manager's profile. Employees do not have sufficient psychological resources to contend with a reduced sense of personal efficacy, diminished self-esteem, and psychological distress generated by abusive supervision. Yet, personal resources such as feelings of self-efficacy and -esteem are associated with workplace engagement as well as the capacity to overcome stressful situations in the workplace (Seckyoung et al., 2016). Abusive supervision also reduces workplace performance and team-building behaviours amongst employees. In addition, it fosters the expression of counterproductive behaviours in employes (e.g., low investment in work, incivility) as well as symptoms of anxiety and depression and burnout. Employees confronted with abusive supervision seek to leave the organisation (Mackey et al., 2017). The conservation of resources theory posits that employees who do not possess adequate emotional resources to contend efficiently with abusive supervision are predisposed to experiencing emotional exhaustion. These employees prefer to create a psychological and physical distance between them and the abusive supervisor, who reduces the quality of exchanges and increases unpredictability in the workplace. The inability of employees to request feedback from an abusive supervisor contributes to a loss of resources. Indeed, feedback is essential to performance management and optimal coaching in the workplace (Whitman et al., 2014). Employees can conceivably avoid requesting feedback from an abusive supervisor to preserve the few resources currently available.

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