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Understanding Abusive Supervision: The Impacts of Abusive Supervision on Employees' Engagement and Organizational Commitment in the Deluxe Hotel

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KEYWORDS

Abusive supervision,
Engagement,
Organizational
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of abusive supervision on employees' engagement and commitment in the deluxe hotel. Based on total 272 hotel employees obtained from the empirical research, this study verified total 3 hypotheses. The hypothesized relationships in the model were tested simultaneously by using structural equation modelling. Abusive supervision perceived by employees had negative effect on engagement and employees' engagement had positive effect on organizational commitment. Also, abusive supervision perceived by employees did not have a significant effect on organizational commitment, full mediation effect through engagement existed. The study results are expected to be used as data for searching for effective responding ways at an organizational level and find practical ways to further increase employees' positive organizational behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

Supervisor's behavior is one of the most influential factors on the attitude and behavior of members of an organization that directly determines the performance and survival of the organization. As abusive supervision is being regarded as the most destructive form of leadership that hinders success in hospitality industry (Jian, Kwan, Qiu, Liu, & Yim, 2012), research on abusive behavior of supervisors is receiving more and more attention (Lyu, Zhu, Zhong, & Hu, 2016). In particular, a recent study reported that as much as 62% of employees responded that they experienced rude treatment from their boss in the organization for more than once a month (Porath, 2016). Rude words and behavior from cowork-

ers or bosses can be frequently linked to displeasure in life at work (Sguera, Bagozzi, Huy, Boss, & Boss, 2016).

Employees in hospitality industry receive excessive stress as they are exposed to rudeness from coworkers or supervisors inside the organization (Rowley & Purcell, 2001). In case of deluxe hotel, employees are particularly more vulnerable to stressful situation due to the characteristics of work that takes place in restricted space and the top-to-bottom culture (Kim, Im, & Heang, 2015). The interesting thing is that rudeness from abusive supervisor can be learnt and copied as proven in Anderson and Thompson (2004). Their study showed that even good-natured subordinates can become similar to their supervisor when they work with aggressive and ill-natured supervisor for long time. Among the studies related to abusive

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supervision in hospitality industry, Leung, Wu, Chen, and Young (2011) reported that exclusivism and exclusionism from bosses in working environment of deluxe hotel has negative impact on the employees' work participation and service performance. Jian et al. (2012) argued that supervisor's violent behavior decreased employees' self-respect and service performance in case of hotels. Holm, Torkelson, and Backstrom (2015) found that supervisor's rudeness perceived by the employees in hospitality industry has a significant negative impact on performance through a medium of low social support and controllability. Chiu, Cheng, and Ko (2016) observed that supervisor's abusive supervision has a significant impact on work involvement and deviating behavior of employees. Lyu et al. (2016) noted that abusive supervision has a negative impact on work engagement of hotel employees in China, consequently diminishing customer-oriented organizational citizenship behavior. Their study also suggested that hostile attribution bias reinforces the negative relationship between abusive supervision and work engagement. Lee and Lee (2016) asserted that abusive supervision from supervisors, which is one of the abusive behavior of supervisors, increases burnout of employees in working environment in hotel and decreases the level of service provision. Most of the existing studies on abusive supervision in hospitality industry are focused on its relevance to negative performance. There is scarce study that is related to employees' positive behavior and performance.

This study examines the effect of abusive supervision, which means inhumane treatment that employees experience from their supervisor on employees' engagement and commitment using employees in food and beverage (F & B) section in deluxe hotels as a subject (See Fig. 1). The study results are expected to be used as data for searching for effective responding ways at an organizational level and find practical ways to further increase employees' positive organizational behavior.

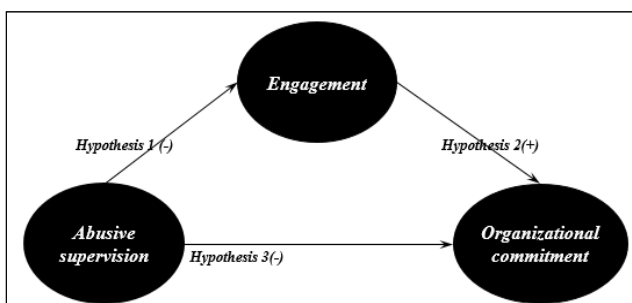


Fig. 1. Research model.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Abusive Supervision and Engagement

Sakurai and Jex (2012) reported that rudeness in workplace decreases employees' efforts and engagement for work. Griffin, Bell, and Marusz (2007) showed that engagement exponentially decreased according to the level of abusiveness in interpersonal relationship with supervisor at work. Martynowicz (2016) argued that supervisor's rudeness that employees experience in an organization is closely related to the employees' work engagement. Park and Ono (2016) found that rudeness from supervisor increases anxiety over work to consequently decrease the employees' engagement. Scheuer, Burton, Barber, Finkelstein, and Parker (2016) noted that employees' engagement decreases when they perceive and experience supervisor's violent behavior or language. Based on the above previous studies, this study established the following study hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Abusive supervision negatively influences the employees' engagement.

2.2. Engagement and Organizational Commitment

Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, and Xanthopoulou (2007) argued that employees who are engaged in their work and devote themselves also have excellent commitment to the organization. Schaufeli, Taris, and Rhenen (2008) reported that employees who are immersed and devoted to their work and have enthusiasm also have significantly higher work satisfaction and organizational commitment. Kim and Yoo (2009) asserted that employees' engagement and commitment are closely related to each other. Albdour and Altarawneh (2014) demonstrated that work engagement of employees at service contact point has a significant relationship with emotional organizational commitment. Kim (2015) noted that commitment to organization increased when work engagement among cabin attendants in airline was higher. Chae (2016), which interpreted the concept of engagement among employees in deluxe hotel as a motivation that makes the employees actively use their personal capacity that is relevant to the role and responsibility, argued that devotion and commitment to organization increases with stronger engagement.

Hypothesis 2: Employees' engagement positively influences the employees' organizational commitment.

2.3. Abusive Supervision and Organizational Commitment

Ogunfowora (2013) argued that abusive supervision has negative impact on employees' commitment. Kim and Lee (2015) conducted an experiment using employees in travel agency as a sample and reported that abusive supervision decreases employees' commitment. Kernan, Racicot, and Fisher (2016) suggested that abusive supervision experienced in organization has a very strong negative correlation with organizational commitment and that employees' commitment to organization decreases as a result of abusive supervision. There are several studies related to abusive supervision and employees' behavior, although these studies did not investigate organizational commitment. Ahmed and Muchiri (2014) noted that organization citizenship behavior decreased due to impersonal supervisor. Penny and Spector (2005) argued that trouble with supervisor in workplace or rudeness from supervisor is in positive relationship with deviating behavior, such as reducing efforts for work. Berthelsen, Skogstad, Lau, and Einarsen (2011) found that employees who experienced rudeness from supervisor, such as being excluded from work, are more likely to commit deviating behavior like leaving the workplace than those who did not. Berry, Gillespie, Gates, and Schafer (2012) observed that harassment that employees experience from supervisor in working environment decreases their ability to manage workload and consequently increases deviating behavior. Sims and Sun (2012) suggested that situations in workplace such as bullying increases possibility of taking action against the organization by increasing employees' stress level.

Hypothesis 3: Abusive supervision negatively influences the employees' organizational commitment.

3. METHODS

3.1. Sample and Data Collection

For this study, 11 deluxe hotels located in Seoul, South Korea were selected. We conducted survey on employees in food and beverage section in the chosen hotels. Prior to the main survey, 50 copies of preliminary questionnaire were first distributed for preliminary survey, whose purpose was to test the validity and reliability of the survey questions. The main survey was implemented for one month of July 2017. A total of 330 copies of questionnaire were distributed, 30 copies per hotel. Among them, 272 copies that can be statistically ana-

lyzed were used for the final analysis. Data were coded and then analyzed by using SPSS and AMOS program. To check the validity and reliability of the measured items, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis and reliability analysis. A correlation analysis was implemented to measure the correlation among the extracted factors. For research hypothesis test, we analyzed structural equation model.

3.2. Measurement Development

Next summarizes the operational definition of the variables used in this study and questionnaire composition. Abusive supervision can be defined as perception of subordinate on the extent to which his supervisor continues hostile verbal or non-verbal behavior, except for physical contact (Tepper, 2000). Behaviors from abusive supervisor include use of dismissive language to subordinates, getting angry to, embarrassing, disgracing, and ignoring subordinates in workplace, ridiculing subordinates in public occasion, or stealing away subordinate's deserved success (Tepper, 2007). We measured abusive supervision using a total of 15 questions in Likert 7-point scale by referring to Tepper (2000) and Lyu et al. (2016) (Likert 7-point scale was used to measure the other variables too). The concept of engagement was first introduced by Kahn (1990) and it refers to a state of being related to positive and progressive work (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). In our study, engagement was measured in four questions based on Schaufel, Martinez, Marques-Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker (2002). Organizational commitment refers to one's desire to remain as a member of an organization through efforts such as identifying him with the organization that he belongs to, being committed to the organization, and accepting the goal and value of the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In this study, we measured organizational commitment in five questions developed by Allen and Meyer (1990).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive Statistics of Samples

A total of 272 questionnaires (82.4%) except for ones with incomplete responses were used for analysis. Of those, 53.3% were male and 46.7% were female. The percentages of the respondents who were in their 20s (44.5%) and who had been working in the deluxe hotel less than 5 years were 54.7%.

Table 1. General characteristics of samples (N=272)

Classification		Total(%)
Gender	Male	145 (53.3)
	Female	127 (46.7)
Age (yr)	20~29	121 (44.5)
	30~39	102 (37.5)
	40~	49 (18.0)
Education level	~College	68 (25.0)
	~University	150 (55.1)
	~Graduate university	54 (19.9)
Job position	Front of house	142 (52.2)
	Back of house	130 (47.8)
Job-tenure	~5	149 (54.7)
	6~10	89 (32.7)
	11~	34 (12.6)

4.2. Measurement Model

We conducted confirmatory factor analysis and reliability analysis to test the validity and reliability of the measurement items in this study (Table 2). In the analysis result, standardized factor loading of all of the 23 items was over .0.7 and *t*-value was also significant ($p < 0.001$). Composite construct reliability (CCR) of the three factors extracted from the confirmatory factor analysis was over 0.7 and average variance extracted (AVE) value was also over 0.6. Cronbach's alpha was higher than 0.8 in case of all items. All of these results satisfy the validity criterion (Anderson & Gerbin, 1988). Goodness of fit of the model was satisfactory with $\chi^2=675.032$, $\chi^2/df= 2.974$, $GFI=.805$, $NFI=.900$, $IFI=.931$, $CFI=.931$, $RMR=.064$. We compared the square of the correlation coefficients and AVE value to examine the discriminant validity (Table 3). Range of the square of the correlation coefficients was .306~.509, which is relatively smaller than that of AVE value. Hence, discriminant validity of the extracted factors was also confirmed (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

4.3. Structural Equation Model

Before hypothesis test, we first check whether the correlation among the factors coincides with the hypothesis through correlation analysis (Table 3). Abusive supervision showed negative correlation with engagement, organizational commit-

ment, which is consistent with the hypothesis in this study. In the hypothesis test based on the structural equation model (Table 4), goodness of fit of the research model was $\chi^2=675.032$ ($df=227$), $GFI=.805$, $IFI=.931$, and $CFI=.931$, which is an acceptable level considering that no modification index was used. The hypothesis test result can be summarized as follows. Hypothesis 1, which assumes that abusive supervision perceived by the employees in deluxe hotel will have a significant negative impact on engagement, was accepted ($\beta=-.736$, $t=-13.245$, $p < .001$). This implies that employees' experience of impersonal supervisor decreases their engagement in work situation, which is consistent with Griffin et al. (2007), Martynowicz (2016), and Park and Ono (2016). Hypothesis 2, which assumes that employees' engagement will have a significant positive impact on organizational commitment ($\beta=.637$, $t=8.124$, $p < .001$), was also accepted. This is consistent with a number of existing studies that reported that employees' commitment can be hanced through engagement (Bakker et al, 2007; Kim & Yoo, 2009; Kim, 2015). Meanwhile, hypothesis 3 was rejected as abusive supervision did not have a significant impact on organizational commitment ($\beta=-.125$, $t=-1.726$, $p > .05$). This contrasts with the previous literature including Ogunfowora (2013), Kim and Lee (2015), and Kernan et al. (2016) which argued that abusive supervision has negative impact on organizational commitment. We believed that even if no direct impact from abusive supervision on organizational commitment was observed in this study, there can be an indirect effect through a medium of engagement. We conducted additional analysis whose result is described in Fig. 2. Bootstrapping test was implemented to check the indirect effect of abusive supervision on organizational commitment through the mediating role of engagement. In the test result, power of indirect effect was $\beta=-.469$, indicating a significance ($p < 0.05$). Sobel test also confirmed the existence of full mediation effect with $Z\text{-score}=-6.006$.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the effect of abusive supervision perceived by employees on the employees' engagement and commitment in case of in deluxe hotels in South Korea. The study result can be summarized as follows. First, three factors including abusive supervision, engagement, and organizational commitment showed excellent reliability and validity. Correlation among the three factors was also proven to be consistent

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis and reliability analysis results

Items (Cronbach's α)	Standardized estimate	t value	CCR	AVE
Abusive supervision (.969)				
AS1 My supervision ridicules me.	.764	Fixed		
AS2 My supervision tell me my thoughts or feelings are stupid.	.782	13.970		
AS3 My supervision give me silent treatment.	.801	14.387		
AS4 My supervision puts me down in front of others.	.840	15.255		
AS5 My supervision invades my privacy.	.845	15.368		
AS6 My supervision reminds me of my past mistake and failure.	.832	15.056		
AS7 My supervision doesn't give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort.	.858	15.672	.951	.675
AS8 My supervision blames me to save himself/herself embarrassment.	.859	15.656		
AS9 My supervision break promises he/she makes.	.766	13.621		
AS10 My supervision expresses anger at me when he/she is mad for another reason.	.797	14.290		
AS11 My supervision makes negative comments about me to others.	.808	14.536		
AS12 My supervision is rude to me.	.837	15.169		
AS13 My supervision does not allow me to interact with my coworkers.	.862	15.750		
AS14 My supervision tells me I am incompetent.	.841	15.279		
AS15 My supervision lies to me.	.837	15.188		
Engagement (.965)				
EG1 I am proud on the work that I do.	.917	Fixed		
EG2 I am highly engaged in this job.	.939	28.213	.934	.874
EG3 At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	.944	28.641		
EG4 I get carried away when I am working.	.942	28.512		
Organizational commitment (.891)				
OC1 I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.	.815	Fixed		
OC2 I am proud to tell others I work at my organization.	.770	14.128	.715	.679
OC3 I care about the fate of this organization.	.810	15.119		
OC4 I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.	.898	17.275***		

Note: CCR=composite construct reliability; AVE=average variance extracted; $\chi^2=675.032$ ($df=227$); $\chi^2/df=2.974$; GFI=.805; NFI=.900; IFI=.931; CFI=.931; RMR=.064.

Table 3. Correlation analysis

Items	M±SD	1	2	3
1. Abusive supervision	3.44±1.05	1	.509 ¹⁾	.306
2. Engagement	4.67±1.34	-.714**	1	.456
6. Organizational commitment	4.54±1.48	-.554**	.676**	1

Note: ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed), ¹⁾ R^2 .

Table 4. Structural equation model

Hypothesis	Standardized estimate	t value	p value
H1 Abusive supervision → Engagement	-.736	-13.245	.000
H2 Engagement → Organizational commitment	.637	8.124	.000
H3 Abusive supervision → Organizational commitment	-.125	-1.726	.084

Note: $\chi^2=675.032$ ($df=227$); $p < 0.001$; GFI=.805; IFI=.931; CFI=.931; RMR=.064.

with the hypothesis. Second, abusive supervision perceived by employees had negative impact on engagement and employees' engagement had positive impact on organizational commitment. Third, although abusive supervision perceived by employees did not have a significant impact on organizational commitment, full mediation effect through engagement existed.

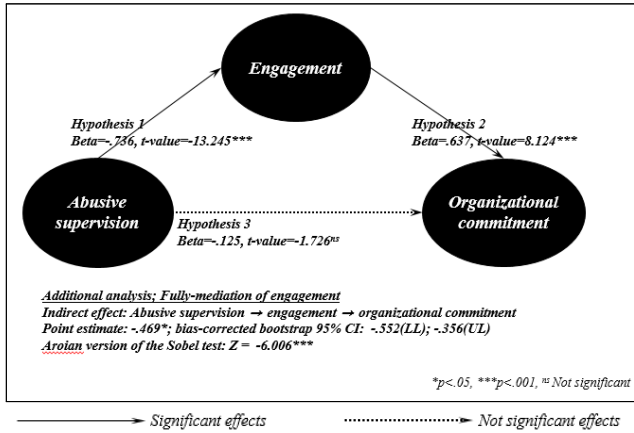


Fig. 2. Structural equation model with estimate.

This study provides several academic implications. This study is meaningful as the subject of this study, which is employees in F & B section in deluxe hotels, has received no profound debate on so far. Considering that works in deluxe hotels particularly involve continuous interaction with supervisor within a restricted working space, this study has more significance as it focuses on the case of deluxe hotels. This study result can ignite discussion on the organization culture, which comes from abusive supervision that is prevalent in deluxe hotels, at an organizational level. Previous studies mainly put stress on negative work performance induced by abusive harassment from supervisor focusing on the role and responsibility. This study investigated transfer effect from reaction to behavior by examining employees' engagement and commitment that originates from abusive supervision. The study result can provide basic data that is necessary to stimulate and expand future studies. This study provides several practical implications that can be used to find political response to the timely issue at present. Summarizing the previous studies, assault rate by upper level (supervisor) inside an organization is very high in Korea, which implies that wrongdoing of power group is often acknowledged and con- nived in organizational culture in Korea. Harassment behavior that occurs in workplace is an organizational problem, rather than a personal problem. In particular, subjective damage probability that is lower than operational damage probability is a peculiar phenomenon observed only in Korea. This implies that large proportion of members inside an organization does not recognize the fact that they are being harassed even when they experience it. Restaurant and accommodation industry (27.5%) and health and social service industry (26.0%), which cover hospitality industry, showed highest operational

damage probability. It is difficult to distinguish criminal behavior of harassment and rudeness in workplace from the conflicts and stress experienced by the workers in the frontier of service in deluxe hotels. Moreover, organizational culture that connives at abusive behavior is prevalent in deluxe hotel, which caused the current problematic situation. At this point, this study proved that abusive supervision perceived by employees in deluxe hotel decreases the employees' engagement, which further decreases their commitment to the organization. Based on this study result, realistic response to abusive supervision will have to be prepared at company level. Specifically, systematic guideline should be prepared such that victims of low-level employees can report and testify supervisor's rude treatment or behavior without being concerned over the supervisor's retaliation or unreasonable measure. Supervisor's inhumane behavior that cannot be described as a normally executed management behavior should be controlled by a clear regulation through an establishment of guideline at an acceptable level (existence of repressive labor management, authoritative and violent leadership, and invasion of privacy). Systematization is also required so that problems can be solved through a separately prepared grievance settlement committee. Harassment in every aspect that can occur in hospitality industry should be prevented and discussed company wide so that employees will not commit harmful behavior to the organization.

One of the limitations in this study is the potential error of generalization of sample as the survey was conducted on employees in deluxe hotels located in Seoul, South Korea. In this study, only engagement and commitment was used as positive outcome variable from abusive supervision. Future studies will have to provide implications by incorporating diverse performance variables at organizational level using more specific performance variable. Despite a few limitations from an aspect of research design, this study is expected to provide several implications for future studies as a pioneering research on employees in deluxe hotels that used abusive supervision and positive performance.

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