

## **Blue Boss: A Mediating Role of Emotional Exhaustion Between Supervisor Undermining and Workplace Deviance**

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Current economy needs employees who can make efficient utilization of resources. Organization cannot ignore the importance of employee performance for an equivalent organizational performance. Although, researches proposed the point that negative behavior by a supervisor can lead to workplace deviance but unfortunately, the mechanism of how supervisor mistreatment can be translated into workplace deviance was unknown. Current study proposes that emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between workplace deviance and supervisor undermining. Supervisor undermining has been taken as a prominent type of workplace mistreatment for many years along all other organizational behavior researcher attempting to argue that it exercises various negative effects on employee attitudes and behaviors. Supervisor undermining, even if adopted as some strategy to get work done, always fails badly in long run, as it might take employee to depths of helplessness and to lose their ability to give a viewpoint on anything. First and primary implication of current study is managers responsibility to adopt strict rules against supervisor undermining. Current study found an emotional perspective related to supervisor undermining validating detrimental and toxic effect on employee emotions, that, in turn, leads to deviance.

**Keywords:** Blue boss, emotional exhaustion, supervisor, workplace deviance.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Romance of positive side of leadership gets shaky when reports of mistreatments or negative social interaction are reported by subordinates (Fatima et al., 2019). Managers behave differently in varying situations, demonstrating either supportive or non-supportive behaviour (Tepper, 2000; Páez & Salgado, 2016; Leó de Nalda, Guillen & Gil Pechuan, 2016) to manage distance or to build relationships with employees (Duan, Bao, Huang, & Brinsfield, 2018; Páez & Salgado, 2016; Tepper et al., 2009). Tierney and Tepper (2007, p. 171) reported that although the previous literature of leadership research focused on its constructive side, recent studies are increasingly confronting with reality that leader positions can exert capacity and motivation to go destructive.

A nascent approach that has been trending in research is supervisor-subordinate relationship that can be related to leaders abusing their power (Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007; Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006; Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2016) intimidating employees. Employee performance depends on many factors and one of the most important factors is managerial support. Supervisor undermine defined as behaviour directed on subordinates to delay or target's their ability to maintain and establish positive social interactions, career planning, project success and reputation (Duffy et al., 2002). If employees feel that they are mistreated by their supervisor their performance morale is impacted (Hashish, 2019). Supervisor undermining has been recently reported as one important predictor of workplace deviance (Abas & Otto, 2016). Current economy needs employees who can make efficient utilization of resources. Organization cannot ignore the importance of employee performance for an equivalent organizational performance. Workplace deviance and Emotional

exhaustion are getting huge attention due to negative impact of their relationship on organizations and their profits like; reduced productivity, lost job satisfaction, decrease in organizational commitment, and declining performance. Emotional exhaustion has been a topic of major interest to academicians, practitioners and researchers because of having a negative impact on workers and organizations (Halbesleben and Buckley, 2004). Although, researches proposed the point that negative behavior by a supervisor can lead to workplace deviance but unfortunately, the mechanism of how supervisor mistreatment can be translated into workplace deviance was unknown (Harvey et al., 2017). Current study proposes that emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between workplace deviance and supervisor undermining (Eissa et al., 2018). Therefore, an employee confronting undermining behavior by the supervisor will be reported low and emotionally exhausted resulting into a deviant work behavior.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Although previous researches have explored relationship between supervisor undermining and performance outcomes, little attention was paid to investigate if negative social interactions can be a source of negative behavioral outcomes (Greenbaum et al., 2015). Recent research in this area found its dysfunctional effect on work outcomes; for instance, turnover intentions, stress and antisocial work behavior along a decreased job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Duffy, Ganster, Shaw, Johnson, & Pagon, 2006; Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Rubenstein, & Song, 2013; Nahum-Shani, Henderson, Lim, & Vinokur, 2014). However, plethora of research ignored the fact that workplace mistreatments for instance supervisor undermining might leave employees helpless to level that they feel over extended or emotionally depleted.

The experience of feeling truly exhausted or drained out because of work has been set up to negatively affect work perspectives and practices (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). The management is often found to be bothered by the emotional fatigue since it influences both work execution and employee turnover (Lee, & Ashforth, 1996). The unavoidable impact of emotional exhaustion is especially obvious in jobs where workers are faced with direct interactions with clients that can influence the administration suppliers' psychological and physical prosperity (Rafaeli, & Sutton, 1987).

It is observed that emotionally exhausted workers in service industry hold negative work perspectives which are distinguished by clients and eventually result in lower consumer loyalty with the associated service administration (Grandey et al., 2004). Our examination recommends that corporation deviance is another negative result of emotional exhaustion. The organizational deviance is portrayed as worker conduct that abuses huge corporation standards and in doing so compromises the prosperity of an organization (Robinson furthermore, Bennett, 1995). Deviance incorporates activities like suppressing efforts of others, ignoring directions, working at a slower pace and getting involved in practices that dissolve corporation norms and drain out beneficial assets (Pearson and Porath, 2005). Organizational deviance has additionally achieved extended consideration due to its known influence on workers' efficiency and corporation accomplishments (Colbert et al., 2004; Dunlop, & Lee, 2004). The employees get baffled over time and show ominous impressions of while working and may respond by abusing corporation standards and retaining the efforts of their co-workers, therefore, causing business failures (Colbert et al., 2004; Dunlop, & Lee, 2004).

Industry and academia both are keen on acquiring comprehension of emotional exhaustion and discovering methods of diminishing its negative effect. The different elements that impact emotional exhaustion can be assembled as components that are linked with an organization and characteristic behaviour of a single individual. The factors such as role ambiguity, workload, work pressure and role conflict are attributed to emotional exhaustion caused by the organization itself (Witt et al., 2004; Wright, & Hobfoll, 2004). Another factor contributed by the organization, a participative administration style by organizational managerial staff, assumes a noteworthy job in making a low pressure and superior work environment where fulfilled representatives are focused on the firm (Avolio et al., 2004; Harris what's more, Ogbonna, 2001). Studies have likewise recommended that social and individual help both work as a positive hierarchical atmosphere, and group attachment can ease emotional exhaustion (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993; Wright, & Hobfoll, 2004). A person's work behaviour can diminish emotional exhaustion if that individual is fit for his job, where a worker's capacities coordinate with his work necessities. Observations demonstrate that workers with the correct aptitudes and job fitness are prepared to deal with expanded remaining tasks at hand what's more, can more readily adapt to work pressure (Brkich et al., 2002; Singh furthermore, Greenhaus, 2004). In any case, no investigation has analysed the joined

effect of the leadership style of managers and workers that are job-fit on emotional exhaustion. Likewise, there has not been an experimental examination researching how emotional exhaustion impacts hierarchical abnormality. This examination shows that workers' emotional exhaustion prompts higher occupation disappointment and lower corporation responsibility which prompts them to participate in deviant practices. Thus, work fulfilment and organizational responsibility intercede the connection between emotional exhaustion and organizational deviance. Results show that workers who are exceptionally happy with their occupations and focused on the association are less inclined to participate in deviant practices even at the point when they are genuinely exhausted. In this circumstance, the workers who are fulfilled and dedicated, contemplate the corporation, take part in activities that improve the betterment of the firm as opposed to hurt it. Then again, disappointed workers who are not dedicated to the firm can be not interested in an organization's betterment and prosperity and hence bound to take part in degenerate practices. This examination makes two significant commitments to the business writing. To start with, it exhibits that emotional exhaustion intervenes the connection between participative leadership and whether an individual is job-fit with work mentalities. Second, it shows that work fulfilment and organization duty go hand in hand in establishing the connection between emotional exhaustion and corporation deviance. This work investigates the joined impact of individual's worth of being job-fit and leadership style on worker emotional exhaustion just as the intervening job of employment fulfilment and their commitment towards the corporation. Emotional exhaustion is "the inclination of being genuinely exhausted and drained by one's work" (Maslach, & Jackson, 1981, p. 101). It frequently happens when workers perform "people-work" or something to that affect (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993).

The professionals linked with service industry are needed to advance the betterment of their customers which forces an assortment of psychological, enthusiastic, and social requests (Jonge, & Dormann, 2003). For instance, workers in service industry are inclined to emotional work since firms regularly expect them to show feelings that are desired by the corporation during interactions with clients (Arnold and Barling, 2003). This brings about occupation estrangement, particularly when organizational emotions do not exhibit the worker's actual sentiments (Adelmann, 1996). The aggravation and customers' demand both get excessive for the employees in service industry and it can prompt both physical and enthusiastic consumption (Wright, & Cropanzano, 1998). All things considered, laborers in service industry may experience negative client responses and verbal animosity, which can make them considerably more inclined to emotional exhaustion (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993). This investigation utilizes conservation resources theory (COR) to investigate the effect of individual's worth of being job-fit and leadership style on emotional exhaustion. COR theory recommends that emotional exhaustion happens when workers see that they need assets to play out their occupations (Halbesleben, & Buckley, 2004; Janssen et al., 2004). At the

point when laborers accept that assets are deficient to fulfil their work needs or when an individual's exertion doesn't give anticipated outcomes, emotional exhaustion can happen (Lee, & Ashforth, 1996; Wright, & Hobfoll, 2004). It can be concluded from the discussion above that these two variables can add to bringing down emotional exhaustion: (1) a worker's observation that she/he can perform well — individual 'worth of being job-fit, and (2) the worker's assumptions that a participative leader will consider their contributions towards asset management to be valuable, give satisfactory assets to satisfy work needs — participative leadership.

It is suggested by the Stress-Non-Equilibrium-Compensation Approach (Golparvar et al., 2008), that individuals consistently show certain conduct when they see that they are out of physical and mental equilibrium due to work pressure. In addition, if workers experience emotional exhaustion, they may decide to take an interest in degenerate conduct to make up for this nonequilibrium state (Golparvar et al., 2008; Golparvar, 2015; Yoo, & Frankwick, 2013). Henceforth, the Stress-Non-Equilibrium-Compensation Approach gives a proper structure to clarifying the intervening component of the connection between workplace ostracism and deviant conduct. Thus, this investigation suggests that emotional exhaustion may play an interceding job in the connection between workplace ostracism and deviant conduct.

### Theory and Hypothesis Building

Theoretical support for the explained phenomenon can be obtained from affective event theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). According to affective event theory (AET), when an employee is confronted with a depressing/intimidating experience that will hit their emotions and feeling they will show behaviors that have hidden intentions (Khattak et al., 2019).

### Supervisor Undermining and Workplace Deviance

If employees feel that they are mistreated by their supervisor their performance morale is impacted (Hashish, 2019). Supervisor undermining has been recently reported as one important predictor of workplace deviance (Abas & Otto, 2016). Study argues that when an employee is undermined by the supervisors, he/he feels detached from the organizations and a feeling of revenge develops that can be a cause of workplace deviance, hence study computes here its first hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1:** Supervisor Undermining of employee leads to workplace deviance.

### Supervisor Undermining and Emotional Exhaustion

Study entails that when an employee is undermined by the supervisor, he/she feel tht they are losing their inner resources and they are emotionally exhausted. This argument leads to hypothesis 2 of the study:

**Hypothesis 2:** Supervisor Undermining of employee leads to emotional exhaustion.

### Mediating Role of Emotional Exhaustion

An important implication of the study comes from the mechanism developed here that explains how supervisor undermining leads to workplace deviance. Study entails path from supervisor undermining to workplace deviance is mediated

through emotional exhaustion. That leads study to its third hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 3:** emotional exhaustion mediated the relationship between supervisor Undermining and workplace deviance.

### METHODOLOGY

Current study was conducted using a population from education sector of Pakistan. Study decided to target public sector universities in twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. There were 28 public sector universities, list was validated with Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan. Unit of analysis for the current study was faulty members working in those universities. Unfortunately, updated list of faculty members was neither available with HEC nor with university website. Hence, study has an unknown population. Sample for current study was determined using formula as below.

$$N_s = \frac{(Np)(p)(1-p)}{(Np-1)\left(\frac{B}{C}\right)^2 + (p)(1-p)}$$

$$N_s = \frac{8278(.5)(1-.5)}{(8278-1)\left(\frac{0.05}{1.96}\right)^2 + (.5)(1-.5)}$$

$$N_s = \frac{2070}{5.63}$$

$$N_s = 367$$

Therefore, 400 questionnaires were floated to the faculty member of Bahria University Islamabad, National Defence University Islamabad and Pir Mehr Ali Shah University Rawalpindi. After 3 weeks 371 completed questionnaires were received and were used for the purpose of analysis. Study decided to use PLS SEM for the following two reason firstly, study must do mediation testing through software secondly, as it was already known that distribution of data is not normal.

### Supervisor Undermining

It was measure using (Duffy et al., 2002) 13-item scale of supervisor undermining. Sample items were "How often has your supervisor intentionally undermined your effort to be successful on the job?" All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of this scale was 0.905.

### Emotional Exhaustion

It was measured using Maslach and Jackson (1981) 7-items scale. Sample items included, "I feel emotionally drained from my work". All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of this scale was 0.89.

### Workplace Deviance

It was measured using (Yu et al., 2020) 18-items scale. Sample items included, "I am nasty or rude to a patient sometimes". All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of this scale was 0.949.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 shows values for mean, standard deviation, average variance extracted (AVE), and reliability. AVE for some variables was lesser than 0.5 but greater than 0.4 for all. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), AVE values if greater than 0.4 they are acceptable. Correlation results indicated supervisor undermining has a significant positive relationship

with emotional exhaustion ( $r = 0.18, p < 0.01$ ) and workplace deviance ( $r = 0.35, p < 0.01$ ).

Study followed two-step approach by Anderson and Gerbing (1991) to investigate data and hypotheses, employing structural equation modeling (SEM). First step established a good model fit for a 3-factor model that allowed for investigating proposed path model. Study analyzed hypothesized serial mediation model and results were as follows.

**Table 1: Reliability and validity**

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	(AVE)
DEV	0.922	0.935	0.933	0.503
EE	0.905	0.915	0.924	0.606
SU	0.870	0.885	0.897	0.524

Below table 2 and table 3 provided the loadings for the items against each variable of the study. All variables were reflective and loaded well on the variable with a loading greater than 0.4 (Hair et al., 2014). Table 2 is result through Fornier and Larcker (1981). Table 3 provided HTMT value for each variable

**Table 2: Discriminant validity (Fornier and Larcker)**

Var	DEV	EE	SU
DEV	0.710		
EE	0.501	0.779	
SU	0.537	0.690	0.724

**Table 3: Discriminant validity (HTMT)**

Var	DEV	EE	SU
DEV			
EE	0.525		
SU	0.563	0.740	

Inner VIF values reported by the study were all less than 2 establishing no issue of multicollinearity between the variables of study. The acceptable range is between +2/-2.

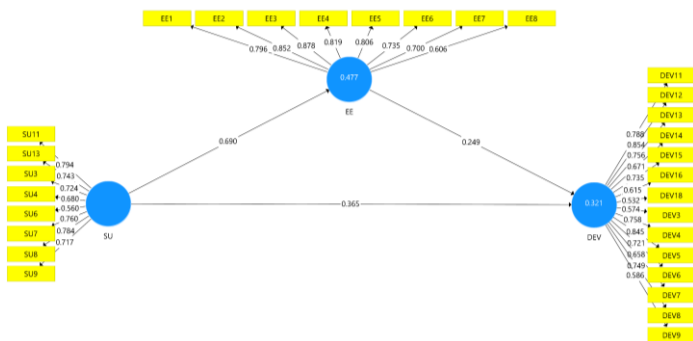
**Table 4: Inner VIF**

Var	DEV	EE	SU
DEV	1.00		
EE	1.911	1.00	
SU	1.911	1.000	1.00

Overall fitness of model is a measure used to evaluate how good hypothesised models of study fits the data and assists in identifying of model misspecification, if any. In PLS-SEM, standardized mean square residual (SRMR) is a criterion proposed for measuring model fit (Henseler et al., 2014). An absolute measure of fitness is SRMR therefore, value of zero indicates a perfect fit. Value lower than 0.08 is seen as a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1998). Another technique as proposed that can be used to measure a model fit is root means square residual covariance (RMS<sub>theta</sub>). Value of RMS<sub>theta</sub> below 0.12 indicate a well-fitting model (Henseler et al., 2014). For the current model, values of SRMR and RMS<sub>theta</sub> were 0.085 and 0.159 respectively showing a good fit for model overall.

**Table 5: Overall fitness of model**

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.085	0.085
d_ULS	3.372	3.372
d_G	2.531	2.531
Chi-Square	2919.881	2919.881
NFI	0.590	0.590



**Figure 1: Measurement Model**

Study found that there exists a partial mediation in the variables of study. Hence, if employees are confronting supervisor undermining, they will enter a zone of emotional and physical resource depletion leading that is emotional exhaustion that ultimately leads to workplace deviance. Results supported the argument as shown in table 6 of the study.

**Table 6: Mediation Analysis**

Path	Beta	T Statistics	P-Values
SU -> EE -> DEV	0.172	3.268	0.001

## Conclusion

Supervisor undermining has been taken as a prominent type of workplace mistreatment for many years along all other organizational behavior researcher attempting to argue that it exercises various negative effects on employee attitudes and behaviors (Abas & Otto, 2016; Duffy et al., 2002). Current study attempted to extend negative outcomes of supervisor undermining through proposing emotional exhaustion being rarely studied in work settings. Empirical results also supported the idea that victims of supervisor undermining go for avoidance in behaviors might show deviant workplace behaviour. The results are also in accordance with previous studies identifying negative outcomes of supervisor undermining (Frazier & Bowler, 2015; Salin & Hoel, 2013).

Although little previous research work also exists examining mediating role of emotional exhaustion between supervisor undermining and negative outcomes (Greenbaum et al., 2015), little was known about mechanisms, specially imparted through emotions leading employees to exhibit negative behaviors (Eissa et al., 2017). Study attempted to relate supervisor undermining and emotional exhaustion by proposing, supervisor undermining causes feelings of emotional exhaustion in employees and, in return, workplace deviance.

## Theoretical Implications

Current study makes contribution in theory in multiple ways. It is the innovative study that extend theory by investigating emotional exhaustion as a negative effect of supervisor undermining in workplace. *Firstly*, it helps in comprehending how employees will go for avoidance behaviour after confronting workplace victimization and that also particularly from supervisor. *Secondly*, contribution is exploration of emotions-based decision making between supervisor undermining and workplace deviance.

## Managerial Implications

Supervisor undermining, even if adopted as some strategy to get work done, always fails badly in long run, as it might take employee to depths of helplessness and to lose their ability to give a viewpoint on anything. Ultimate result is workplace deviance, which is found to be harmful for the organization both in short and long run. Main goal that a manager must have is to use any hidden potential and skill of worker rather than to undermine it. First and primary implication of current study is managers responsibility to adopt strict rules against supervisor undermining. Current study found an emotional perspective related to supervisor undermining validating detrimental and toxic affect on employee emotions, that, in turn, leads to deviance.

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