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ABUSIVE SUPERVISION, LEADER–MEMBER GUANXI, AND SUBORDINATE LOYALTY TO SUPERVISOR: THE MODERATING ROLE OF PARTICIPATIVE LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

Drawing on social exchange theory, this study examined the relationships of abusive supervision and leader–member guanxi (LMG) with subordinate loyalty to supervisors

and tested the moderating role of participative leadership. A two-wave time-lagged survey, separated by at least three weeks, yielded 169 valid matched responses from employees across 101 companies in Taiwan. Confirmatory factor analysis, regression analysis, and PROCESS were used. The results showed that abusive supervision was significantly and negatively related to subordinate loyalty, whereas LMG was significantly and positively related to subordinate loyalty; thus, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported. Participative leadership was also significantly and positively related to subordinate loyalty. Participative leadership did not significantly moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and subordinate loyalty, providing no support for Hypothesis 3. Although participative leadership significantly moderated the relationship between LMG and subordinate loyalty, the direction was opposite to that hypothesized: the positive relationship weakened as participative leadership increased. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was not supported. This pattern may reflect substitutability between participative leadership and LMG, although the mechanism was not directly tested. The findings indicate that positive leadership behavior and favorable supervisor–subordinate relationships do not necessarily produce a reinforcing effect. Organizations should reduce abusive supervision, cultivate positive supervisor–subordinate relationships, and provide meaningful opportunities for participation. Participative leadership should not be treated as a means of offsetting abusive supervision.

Keywords:

Abusive Supervision, Leader–Member Guanxi (LMG), Participative Leadership, Supervisor Loyalty, Moderation Effect, Social Exchange Theory