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CURRENT EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

You and Your Supervisor: Why Is the Relationship Important?

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In this issue of *OMJ*, the two articles in the Current Empirical Research section highlight the supervisor–employee relationship on important organizational outcomes but from two different perspectives. In “Are You Actually Helping or Just Looking Out for Yourself?: Examining the Individual and Interactive Effects of Relationship Quality and Political Skill on Supervisor Motive Attributions,” Rebecca L. Badawy, Brooke A. Shaughnessy, Robyn L. Brouer, and Stephanie R. Seitz examine motive attributions from supervisor to subordinate and how subordinate political skill and leader–member exchange impact performance ratings, while in “Linking Abusive Supervision to Employee Engagement and Exhaustion,” Melinda L. Scheuer, James P. Burton, Larissa K. Barber, Lisa M. Finkelstein, and Christopher P. Parker look at abusive supervision in relation to engagement and exhaustion. Both of these studies have important implications for researchers and practitioners, as they examine previously underinvestigated relationships that are important for managers to understand.

In the first article, Badawy and colleagues conduct two experiments in a study to examine the motive attributions of supervisors on employee organizational citizenship behaviors. Utilizing leader–member exchange (LMX) theory, the authors look at political skill to develop a clearer understanding of attributions of employees’ organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). Specifically, are employees being self-serving or others-serving in their actions? Then they look at how these attributions influence supervisory perceptions of their performance. They test four hypotheses and find support or partial support for the hypotheses posed. Findings indicate that political

skill and LMX have an impact on how supervisors attribute OCB motives of their subordinates, with political skill being the stronger of the two.

In the second article, “Linking Abusive Supervision to Employee Engagement and Exhaustion,” Melinda L. Scheuer, James P. Burton, Larissa K. Barber, Lisa M. Finkelstein, and Christopher P. Parker examine employee engagement versus employee exhaustion based on whether an abusive supervisor provides “challenge demand” appraisals or “hindrance demand” appraisals. They develop the abusive supervision demand appraisal measure (ABSDAM) to assess the relationships they posit and conduct two studies to test those relationships. The first study develops and validates the measure, while the second tests their two hypotheses. The 22-item ABSDAM scale shows two distinct constructs (challenge and hindrance demands) that were useful in measuring abusive supervision. Using this new measure, the authors found support for the two hypotheses proposed. More specifically, the authors found that challenge demands fully mediate the relationship between abusive supervision and engagement, while hindrance demands fully mediate the relationship between abusive supervision and exhaustion.

In sum, both of these articles expand their respective literatures by finding support for relationships that were previously not examined. Additionally, future scholars can look to these articles to better understand the relationship between supervisors and managers. For organizations, these two studies provide some guidance for how the relationship between supervisors and managers may influence how employee performance ratings are conducted, as well as whether an employee experiences exhaustion or engagement from work.