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# Employee Retaliation against Abusive Supervision: Testing the Distinction between Overt and Covert Retaliation

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Employee Retaliation against Abusive Supervision: Testing the Distinction between Overt  
and Covert Retaliation

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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## **Abstract**

This study attempted to expand previous research on employee retaliation against abusive supervision by evaluating both overt and covert retaliatory behaviors and the different mechanisms behind these behaviors. Initial confirmatory factor analysis did not find substantial support for a two-factor retaliation construct, but this may have been a result of the nature of behavioral retaliation items that composed the measures. Correlational analyses did not demonstrate clear discriminate validity between overt and covert retaliation; additionally, regression analyses did not find support for high performing or highly political skilled employees retaliating primarily through one form of retaliation. Highly political skilled and high performing employees performed less retaliatory behaviors overall when experiencing high amounts of abusive supervision. Although initial analyses did not support the distinction between overt and covert retaliation, mediation analyses did find some support for differential pathways. Specifically this investigation found that the relationship between abusive supervision and overt retaliation was mediated by feelings of hostility towards employees' supervisors, whereas the relationship between abusive supervision and covert retaliation was mediated by perceptions of interactional injustice. Overall, this investigation provides mixed support for the distinction between overt and covert employee retaliatory behavior.

## **Chapter One Introduction**

Supervisors within organizations have a great deal of influence over the work lives of their subordinates and directly shape the experience of their subordinates through the methods they utilize to allocate resources, assign tasks, and the manner in which they manage their interpersonal interactions. The same job can be very different depending on the management style of an employee's direct supervisor. Meta-analysis of the mistreatment literature has demonstrated the costly effects of sustained supervisor mistreatment in the workplace (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). Specifically, supervisor abuse has been found to be negatively related to physical well-being and to be more harmful to employee's attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, such as job satisfaction and counterproductive workplace behaviors, than both coworker and customer abuse. The strength of abusive supervision's influence on employee well-being may be a result of the power differential existing between subordinates and supervisors. It is often the most difficult for employees to effectively remedy supervisor abuse without intervening factors, and as a result of this lack of control, this form of abuse is the most damaging for employees. Thus, a more complete understanding of the methods available to employees to respond to an abusive supervisor, in addition to understanding the consequences of abusive supervision may give us a stronger opportunity to improve employee well-being.

Abusive supervision has been defined in the literature as an individual's perceptions of the extent to which his or her supervisor consistently engages in sustained non-physical



mistreatment (Tepper, 2000). Based on this definition, it is not necessary that the behaviors are directly intended by the supervisor to cause harm; it is only necessary that the subordinate perceives the behavior as harmful (Tepper, 2007). Extensive research into the effects of abusive supervision has found the construct to be related to decreased job satisfaction, feelings of injustice, lower organizational commitment, increased turnover intentions, and decreased overall well-being (Ashforth, 1997; Tepper, 2000). As a result of these negative psychological experiences it is natural for employees to attempt to resist abusive supervision; however, the complex power dynamics that exist in an organization often make it difficult for employees to respond to episodes of supervisor mistreatment without fear of bringing upon themselves direct and costly punishment; nevertheless, employees still engage in retaliatory behaviors in response to perceived mistreatment despite the fear of punishment (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006; Tepper et al., 2009). Meta analytic estimates of the relationship between experiencing supervisor abuse and engaging in interpersonal aggression directed at the supervisor suggest that the relationship is strong ( $r = .62$ ; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010).

The focus of the current investigation is on retaliation that is specifically directed at an abusive supervisor. Although overt retaliation (e.g., verbal confrontation) has been investigated in the mistreatment literature, research on more covert forms of retaliatory behavior has been neglected. This investigation intends to extend previous research on abusive supervision by disentangling overt retaliatory behavior from more covert retaliatory behaviors engaged in by subordinates in response to abuse from their supervisors. Additionally, this investigation proposes different potential mediating mechanisms (see Figure 1) through which these retaliatory behaviors operate; specifically

that covert retaliation is more influenced by perceptions of injustice, and overt retaliation is more influenced by hostility directed at the supervisor. Individual and situational moderators that may influence employees' retaliation style are also investigated. It is predicted that Individuals who are high performers, highly political skilled, and in organizations with a strict hierarchy of authority are more likely to resort to covert retaliation to restore their perceptions of fairness when they aggress against their supervisor.

### **Retaliation against Abusive Supervision**

Counterproductive workplace behaviors (CWB) have received the greatest amount of attention in the workplace aggression literature. CWB encompasses any verbal or physical aggression, hostility, or other behaviors in the workplace that negatively impact the organization or its representatives (Spector & Fox, 2005). At its core employee retaliation, which is the focus of this investigation, can be considered a form of CWB that assumes intent to restore perceptions of fairness in response to perceived mistreatment. In the case of employee retaliation in response to sustained supervisor mistreatment employee aggression is motivated by a desire to restore fairness by targeting their supervisor. Because this retaliation occurs in response to perceived mistreatment, these employees often believe their retaliatory actions are justifiable and fair given the context (Bies & Tripp, 2005; Tripp & Bies, 1997).

In previous research concerning employee retaliation in the workplace Skarlicki and Folger (1997) created the construct of organizational retaliatory behaviors (ORB). ORB was conceptualized by Skarlicki and Folger as a type of aggression directed towards the organization that is intended to harm the organization in response to perceptions of

unfairness. ORB differs from more general CWB because it implies a specific intent of directly harming the organization (Folger & Skarlicki, 2005), whereas more general employee retaliation is not specifically directed at the organization (Spector & Fox, 2005).

General retaliatory behaviors may still be harmful to an organization but organizational harm may not always be the primary goal. Retaliation is generally intended to punish whoever is perceived by the victim of aggression to be the source of the abuse.

Additionally, employee retaliation may not always be destructive to the organization as a whole. In their discussion of ORB Folger and Skarlicki (2005) note that although retaliation can result in a loss of resources for employees, these behaviors in some cases may bring about functional results by restoring equity of the employees before they engage in more severe forms of CWB, and ultimately hold management accountable for mistreatment. The current project sets itself apart from ORB research by attempting to disentangle general retaliation against an organization as a result of general perceptions of injustice from retaliation that is specifically aimed at an employee's supervisor in response to prolonged mistreatment. Additionally, many of the behaviors described as retaliatory in previous research, such as organizational withdraw (Jermier, Knights, & Nord, 1994), appear to be more general CWB aimed at the organization as a whole, rather than an employee's abusive supervisor. For example, behaviors such as employee withdrawal may very well occur in response to abusive supervision, but any harm these behaviors cause to a supervisor may be far more indirect. Withdrawal behavior operates closer to a form of emotion focused coping than retaliatory behaviors with the explicit intent to restore fairness (Boyd, Lewin, & Sager, 2009).

There are situations in which employees feel more empowered to retaliate against their supervisor, such as when an employee's turnover intentions are high (Tepper et al., 2009). However, it is not only when situational factors are in their favor that employees choose to retaliate. Employees with low intent to leave their organization have still been found to engage in aggressive behaviors targeted at their supervisor when subjected to abusive supervision. The potential coercive power of the supervisor is not an absolute deterrent to aggressive workplace behavior. A wronged employee may still feel a desire to retaliate, even if doing so is not objectively in the individual employee's best interests (Bies & Tripp, 2005). Additionally, research has found that employees are able to direct their retaliatory acts at the specific perpetrators of abusive supervision, rather than punishing all management because of the abusive acts of a single supervisor (Inness, Barling, & Turner, 2005). Although a supervisor can act as a representative of the organization, when it comes to interpersonal mistreatment employees are able to separate the organization from the abusive supervisor; however, if an organization does little to discourage supervisor abuse, then employees may choose to retaliate towards the organization in addition to the supervisor. Employees are readily able to identify the direct perpetrators of abusive supervision and will retaliate even if the enactment of retaliation could result in severe negative outcomes for the employee.

### **Different Manifestations of Retaliation: Overt and Covert**

To date the vast majority of research on subordinate retaliation against supervisor abuse has focused on overt and affective driven displays of aggression such as open verbal abuse or physical abuse (Lian et al., 2014; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007, 2012; Tepper, Duffy, & Breaux-Siognet, 2012). Although this form of retaliation style for many employees, it may

be an oversimplification of the range of possible retaliatory behaviors. This investigation proposes that some forms of employee aggression are more covert in nature and may be fueled by more instrumental motives than causing direct and observable harm (Fox & Spector, 2010; Tepper et al., 2012). Although not all covert forms of retaliation will have instrumental goals in mind, covert avenues of retaliation in response to abusive supervision will generally be better suited for achieving instrumental goals considering the uneven power distribution between employee and supervisor. Employees who retaliate overtly are much more likely to be terminated. To date covert retaliation has received little attention in the mistreatment literature. This lack of research is primarily the result of overt retaliatory behaviors being easier to observe and report. In Fact, if covert retaliatory behaviors were easily observable by the target then they cannot be considered covert. The same behavior (e.g., withholding information from a supervisor) may or may not be aggression depending upon if the individual intended to simply harm or obstruct the success of his or her supervisor (Neuman & Baron, 1997). For example, if an employee forgets to relay an important piece of information to his or her supervisor, this behavior is not aggressive in nature by definition because there was no purposeful intent to harm. Thus, the same behavior may or may not be considered retaliation depending on the circumstances and the motives of the employee.

Covert forms of aggression are better suited to be a more cognitive avenue for subordinates to retaliate against abusive supervision. Aggressive behaviors such as setting up your supervisor to fail (e.g., withholding critical information) while publically appearing to support your supervisor may potentially restores fairness perceptions of the subordinate while reducing the possibility of punishment (Arnold, Dupré, Hershcovis, &

Turner, 2011; Bies & Tripp, 1988). Covert retaliatory behaviors are more difficult to detect, and their intent can be more easily concealed to make any maliciousness ambiguous to the target. As a result, covert forms of retaliation can provide an opportunity for a lower power employee to exercise influence over a situation (Tepper et al., 2012); however, in the extant literature covert methods of workplace aggression have been studied from the perspective of the supervisor as the perpetrator rather than the subordinate (Scott, Colquitt, & Paddock, 2009). Nevertheless, covert retaliation behaviors are also available to subordinates to employ against their abusive supervisors. The lack of power available to a subordinate to directly confront a supervisor may motivate these employees to engage in covert retaliation more often (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Although some evidence suggests that fear of managerial punishment may result in increased CWB directed at the organization rather than an individual (Fox & Spector, 1999), abusive supervision is an experience that is primarily attributable to the supervisor. Taking action against a supervisor would be a more effective opportunity to restore employee perceptions of fairness.

### **Covert Retaliation as Social Undermining**

The distinction between overt and covert retaliatory behavior is meant to make the case that abused subordinates have a wider spectrum of responses in which to retaliate than has been usually studied. Not all behaviors fit perfectly into the categories of overt or covert; however, these two sets of behaviors are distinct enough to where it is meaningful to split up the construct space to investigate common differences between overt and covert retaliation. In an attempt to more clearly frame this distinction between types of retaliation in the current mistreatment framework and avoid unnecessary construct fragmentation

(Hershcovis, 2011) covert retaliation should be conceptualized as a particular case of retaliatory aggression similar to social undermining (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002).

Duffy's concept of social undermining in the workplace is conceptualized as an employee's attempt to obstruct workplace success, reputation, or hinder an individual's ability to maintain and develop productive interpersonal relationships in the workplace; additionally, these acts should be covertly executed and intentional in nature (Duffy, Ganster, Shaw, Johnson, & Pagon, 2006); however, Duffy and colleagues state that a behavior is not considered social undermining if the target does not directly perceive intent of the aggressor. This claim of the essentiality of perception of intent by the target of social undermining is an unnecessary constraint on the construct. A covert act by a subordinate with the intent to undermine a supervisor's success in the workplace (e.g., hindering a project or degrading social relationships with higher ups) should still be considered an act of social undermining even if the supervisor never discovers that the subordinate perpetrated the act. Often the perpetrator may find it ideal that the target never realizes his or her attempt to undermine. The perception of intent should only be relevant for the measurement of *perceived* experienced social undermining reported by the target (e.g., the supervisor), which was the focus of the author's creation of the construct, and it is no longer necessary when changing the focus of the construct from the target of social undermining to the perpetrator.

The current project is interested in social undermining from the perspective of the perpetrator of the undermining. In the Duffy et al. (2002) original conceptualization of social undermining the types of behaviors presented, as supervisor undermining look very similar to the set of behaviors in the abusive supervision literature. In fact, although the

authors state that their construct is unique because it was designed to measure intentional behavior designed to gradually hinder the target (Duffy, Scott, Shaw, Tepper, & Aquino, 2012), their scale shares a great deal of item content with Tepper's original abusive supervision scale (Tepper, 2000). In order to avoid redundancy with existing constructs in the mistreatment literature (Hershcovis, 2011), social undermining is best conceptualized as a specific type of covert aggression that is specifically intended to hinder the workplace and interpersonal success of a target. Several of the items Duffy and her colleagues created assessed this conceptualization of social undermining, while others seem to be more similar to overt aggression.

A reassessment of the types of behavior that are considered covert is necessary. A major issue with the current literature is that many of the behaviors presented as being examples of covert aggression do not appear to be very subtle (Duffy et al., 2002; Jensen, Patel, & Raver, 2014; Kaukiainen et al., 2001). For example, several researchers have grouped some version of "the silent treatment" as being a covert act of aggression. While certainly some aspects of ignoring a supervisor might be rightly considered covert aggression, such as the withholding of information, the act of actively avoiding your supervisor is very much an open display of incivility. Other proposed covert behaviors such as being standoffish and interrupting others (Kaukiainen et al., 2001) might better be thought off as acts of overt incivility or verbalized aggression. These forms of behaviors are easily noticeable and often meant to be noticed by the target to go about bringing their intended harm. Thus, Duffy et al. (2002) drew a more meaningful distinction of which behaviors should be considered covert aggression in their discussion of social undermining, even if not all of their items to measure this construct were ideal. Covert



aggression is intentionally secretive or disguised behaviors that are meant to harm over time or obstruct targets from completing their tasks and lowering performance (Baron & Neuman, 1998; Björkqvist, Österman, & Lagerspetz, 1994). Based on this theoretical distinction between covert and overt employee retaliation this investigation will attempt to test the appropriateness of a two-factor structure of employee retaliation.

*Hypothesis 1: A two-factor model consisting of both covert and overt subordinate retaliatory behavior will demonstrate superior fit to a one-factor model.*

### **Different Manifestations of Abusive Supervision: Overt and Covert**

Although research has found that supervisors often have a diverse set of motives behind their abusive behaviors (Scott et al., 2009; Tepper et al., 2012), the vast majority of the abusive supervision literature has approached abusive supervision as being a one-dimensional construct. One possible framework that could be used to expand our understanding of supervisor abuse is to distinguish between different styles of abusive supervision using the same overt and covert distinction presented for employee retaliation. Supervisors can be abusive by insulting and demeaning, or supervisors can be abusive by undermining and ruining the potential success of their subordinates. To lend support to this division, Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) performed an exploratory factor analysis on the data from Tepper's original scale development (Tepper, 2000; Tepper, Hoobler, Duffy, & Ensley, 2004) and found an interpretable two-factor emerged: passive and active abusive supervision. Of Tepper's original 15 items, five items loaded reasonably well onto each factor, while the five remaining items had mixed loadings. The passive aggression factor consisted of more cognitive behaviors, such as invading the privacy of his or her subordinates or shifting the blame for failure onto his or her subordinates. In contrast, the

active aggression factor included behaviors such as ridiculing or insulting subordinates in front of his or her work group. This division of the construct mirrors the distinction predicted for subordinate retaliatory behavior. Although the authors found evidence for this distinction in their investigation, Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) chose only to investigate the active abusive supervision component of abusive supervision. As a result, the differential impact of these two styles of abusive supervision has not been studied.

If this distinction between overt and covert abusive supervision is tenable then there may be meaningful differences in employee retaliation style in response to the specific form of supervisor abuse they themselves experience. Supervisors have a great deal of influence in shaping the psychological environment of the workplace with their behaviors and leadership style. Employees who experience covert supervisor abuse may be more likely to attempt to engage in covert forms of aggression themselves as a result of their supervisor creating a particular workplace climate for one form of aggression over another. Thus, employee retaliatory responses may be more likely to be matched to the type of abuse they themselves experience. Employee who experiences overt aggression may engage in more overt aggressive behaviors themselves when they realize these behaviors are not necessarily always punished. Similarly, supervisors who routinely engage in covert aggression against their subordinates may create an organizational climate within the workgroup where overt displays of aggression are discouraged, but more covert and subversive aggressive behaviors are not necessarily prohibited. Thus, although previous research has focused on abusive supervision as a one-factor construct, breaking down the construct into overt and covert components may explain meaningful

differences in employees' response to sustained mistreatment such as the type of retaliatory behavior employees choose to use to restore their perceptions of fairness.

*Hypothesis 2: A two-factor model consisting of both covert and overt abusive supervision will demonstrate superior fit to a one-factor model.*

*Hypothesis 3: Covert abusive supervision will be more strongly related to subordinate covert retaliation than overt retaliation.*

*Hypothesis 4: Overt abusive supervision will be more strongly related to subordinate overt retaliation than covert retaliation.*

### **Moderator Effect of Political Skill**

Individual differences influence how often and to what extent employees retaliate against abusive supervision. For example, previous research has found that employees' lack of self-control increased hostility towards their abusive supervisors (Lian et al., 2014), and that low conscientiousness employees tend to engage in more organizational directed CWB in response to abusive supervision (Mawritz, Dust, & Resick, 2014). To date, the literature has primarily investigated scales that either looked at behaviors directed at the organization as a whole (Bennett & Robinson, 2000) or that appear to be explicit or overt interpersonal retaliation (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). Studies have not frequently explicitly investigated the potential for more covert avenues of retaliation by subordinates, or investigated the type of individual who may be more likely to employ these methods of retaliation.

One potential individual difference variable that may impact employee retaliation style is political skill. Political skill is best understood as an individual's ability to understand and influence others in such a way as to help accomplish his or her own

organizational or personal goals, without necessarily possessing formal authority (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas, & Ammeter, 2004; Ferris et al., 2005; Kimura, 2014). Political skill is composed of four relatively distinct facets: social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity. The literature has found that political skill is related to a variety of organizational outcomes such as team performance (Ahearn et al., 2004), cognitive and somatic workplace anxiety (Perrewé et al., 2004), and job satisfaction (Perrewé et al., 2005). Political skill has also been found to be distinct from impression management, as both constructs contribute separately to a supervisor's assessment of a subordinate (Harris, Kacmar, Zivnuska, & Shaw, 2007). Political skill has also demonstrated sufficient discriminant validity from related constructs such as self-monitoring, self-efficacy, political savvy, conscientiousness, and general mental ability to rule out the possibility of construct redundancy (Ferris et al., 2005; Jawahar, Meurs, Ferris, & Hochwarter, 2008; Semadar, Robins, & Ferris, 2006).

If some forms of retaliatory behaviors are more covert than (Tepper et al., 2012), then individuals who are highly political skilled may be more likely to retaliate primarily through these covert avenues when they are the victims of supervisor mistreatment. Although in general politically skilled individuals may be more adept at avoiding becoming victims of mistreatment with their increased ability to navigate a political work environment, when these individuals do experience high amounts of abusive supervision highly politically skilled individuals may choose to retaliate covertly. Highly political skilled individuals have increased skill in persuasion, manipulation, and negotiations in the workplace and may be better equipped with the skills to carry out covert retaliatory behaviors when left with no other non-retaliatory option to restore fairness (Mintzberg,

1985). Highly political skilled individuals are more attuned to the inner workings of an organization, which would allow them to know which methods are the most effective to undermine their supervisor without directly placing themselves in danger of punishment. This can be accomplished in many ways, such as through successful networking and building relationships with higher-level management that might afford these abused employees the opportunity to bypass the normal chain of command. Political skill can work as a form of power or control for employees. Highly political skilled individuals are able to adapt their behavior to the particular contextual conditions necessary to achieve their goals, such as facilitating the removal of their supervisors through demotion or termination (Mintzberg, 1985; Pfeffer, 1981). These behaviors are still retaliatory because they are in response to mistreatment, and additionally are meant to harm the supervisor and restore the fairness perceptions of the perpetrator by terminating the employment of the supervisor; however, the implications are complex, because the removal of a poor supervisor from an organization's perspective may ultimately be beneficial for the organization.

Theoretically, higher self-control and perceived control over the work environment are important aspects of the beneficial outcomes of political skill. Previous research has found that individuals with higher amount of self-control capacity, or the ability to restrain from potentially damaging behaviors, were less likely to aggress against their abusive supervisors (Lian et al., 2014). It may be the ability to control affective based reactions that allows politically skilled individuals to achieve their long-term goals (Myrseth & Fishbach, 2009). This self-control component may play a significant role in politically skilled individuals' reduced tendency to aggress against an abusive supervisor overall, but

especially reduce the likelihood of engaging in overt aggression. In contrast, covert aggressive behaviors are a potential outlet for highly political skilled individuals when they decide to respond to abusive supervision with retaliation. These individuals not only have the ability to withhold immediate affect driven aggression, but also have the ability to plan more cognitively based retaliatory behaviors that may not be easy to detect or immediately punish.

*Hypothesis 5a: Political skill will be negatively related to overt and covert retaliation.*

*Hypothesis 5b: Political skill will moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and covert retaliation such that highly political skilled employees will engage in greater amounts of covert retaliation in response to abusive supervision.*

### **Moderator Effect of Task Performance**

Previous research on victimization and job performance suggest that high and low performing employees may themselves experience different forms of workplace aggression. Specifically, in their investigation Jensen et al. (2014) found that high performers experienced higher levels of covert victimization (e.g., sabotage), whereas low performers experienced higher levels of overt victimization (e.g., verbal argumentation). The investigation did not disentangle who was perpetrating these aggressive behaviors, and as a result, it is unclear whether coworkers or their immediate supervisor perpetrated the aggression. It is possible that in much the same way that high performers are the receivers of covert aggression in the workplace, they may also be more likely to be the perpetrator of covert aggression. By engaging in covert aggression high performing employees are minimizing the risk of tarnishing their standings within the organization (Björkqvist et al., 1994).

High performing employees may have the most to lose from continued supervisor abuse and the most to gain from its end. An abusive supervisor could make promotion or advancement within the organization more difficult if not impossible, and the removal of an abusive supervisor may also allow for one of the high performers within the workgroup to be promoted and fill the position. Beyond just a need to restore fairness, covert retaliation may be the most rational form of retaliation available to high performing employees to avoid punishment that could adversely affect how they are viewed by coworkers and management. Additionally, employees might perceive that their retaliation is functional for the organization as a whole by removing a poor supervisor (Folger & Skarlicki, 2005).

One component of job performance is whether or not an individual engages in CWB behaviors such as retaliatory behaviors (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997), which is the main focus of this investigation. Retaliation against an abusive supervisor is a type of CWB, and as a result, individuals who engage in retaliation are to an extent demonstrating lower levels of organization performance by definition. To avoid overlap of the constructs measured this investigation focused on task specific performance instead of job performance as a whole. In addition, only task performance, or performance ratings of specific job tasks, was measured to reduce potential overlap with another moderator (political skill). In individual studies and meta-analysis, political skill has been found to have a stronger relationship with contextual than with task performance (Bing, Davison, Minor, Novicevic, & Frink, 2011; Jawahar et al., 2008).

*Hypothesis 6a: Task performance will be negatively related to overt and covert retaliation.*

*Hypothesis 6b: Task performance will moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and covert retaliation such that high performing employees will engage in greater amounts of covert retaliation.*

### **The Mediating Effects of Justice and Supervisor Directed Hostility**

Although originally conceptualized as a two dimensional construct (Moorman, 1991; Niehoff & Moorman, 1993), recent research suggests that organizational justice is a multi-dimensional construct that can be broken into as many as four distinct factors (Colquitt, 2001). These dimensions include: fairness concerning the distribution of outcomes (distributive justice), fairness concerning the process in which these outcomes are allocated (procedural justice), fairness of interpersonal treatment in the process of decision making (interactional justice), and fairness concerning the way in which information is communicated (informational justice). Although not conducted specifically on retaliatory behaviors, meta-analysis of the organizational justice literature has found that both distributive and procedural justice dimensions are related to general CWB ( $r = -.24$  and  $r = -.29$ , respectively); however, only these two dimensions could be examined because of an insufficient number of available studies for additional dimensions (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Nevertheless, primary studies have found that the relationships between informational, interactional, and interpersonal justice and CWBs are similar in strength to the meta-analytic estimates for the other organizational justice dimensions (Chang & Smithikrai, 2010; Le Roy, Bastounis, & Poussard, 2012).

Previous mistreatment research has provided evidence that suggests overt retaliatory behaviors are primarily driven through affective mechanisms. For example Lian et al. (2014) found support consistent with mediation for subordinate's hostility towards



his or her supervisor on the relationship between abusive supervision and overt retaliation. This is consistent with research in the CWB literature that has consistently found CWB to be the product of affective drivers like anger (Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch, & Hulin, 2009; Spector & Fox, 2002). Although feelings of anger are still an essential component in understanding all forms of aggression, the relationship between abusive supervision and covert retaliatory behaviors may work primarily through additional mechanisms. Generally, previous theoretical work suggests employees' organizational justice perceptions operate as one of the primary mechanisms to transmit the effects of perceived abusive supervision into employee retaliatory behavior (Tepper, 2007). Thus, in addition to the influence of employee anger or hostility the abusive supervision literature has found a consistent mediating relationship of organizational justice between perceptions of abusive supervision and a variety of outcome variables (Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007; Tepper, 2000). Specifically, these studies found evidence for mediation for both a global measures of organizational justice (Tepper, 2000) and the distributive and procedural justice dimensions between abusive supervision and other work outcomes such as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) and organizational commitment (Aryee et al., 2007).

It is possible that all dimensions of organizational justice interact to predict the retaliation by employees (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997); however, these results may be best explained as an additive effect resulting from not only an abusive supervisor, but also an unjust organization with poor procedures and a biased distribution of employee outcomes (Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002). Interpersonal justice may be the strongest factor in an employee's ability to justify his or her retaliatory attitudes and behaviors against his

or her abusive supervisor, as this form of organizational justice violation is the easiest to blame entirely on the supervisor. Organizational procedures and ways in which outcomes are distributed may be dictated by factors outside the control of a supervisor, but the way in which the supervisor chooses to interact with his or her employees is directly under the discretion of the supervisor. As a result, interactional justice perceptions are the most likely mechanism behind covert retaliation against abusive supervision. Interpersonal justice involves whether or not an employee's supervisor chooses to treat his or her subordinates with respect and whether or not they choose to explain the rationale behind their decisions (Bies, 2001; Bies & Moag, 1986). Many of the other dimensions of organizational justice may be at least partially out of the sphere of influence of an employee's direct supervisor. This relationship has been supported by previous research that has found that the distributive and procedural justice dimensions better predict CWB aimed specifically at harming the organization itself, whereas interactional justice better predicts interpersonal CWB (Ambrose et al., 2002; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Jones, 2003).

Covert retaliatory behavior is often times a more cognitive process than overt behavior, as the act of concealing aggression requires the conscious decision to control behavior, evaluate the situation, and to plan the best method to retaliate to avoid punishment. As a result, although hostility and anger still play a role in retaliation as a whole, covert retaliation may operate more through perceptions of interactional unfairness originating from the supervisor than other forms of retaliation. Overall retaliation is most likely fueled by both perceptions of injustice and hostility, but different individual reactions may be more strongly related to different retaliatory behaviors than others. The most compelling support for the greater importance of interactional justice perceptions on

covert retaliation was found in a recent study conducted by Burton, Taylor, and Barber (2014). In their investigation there was stronger evidence for a mediating influence of interactional justice between abusive supervision and indirect aggression targeting the supervisor than direct aggression. Although the path between interactional justice and direct aggression was significant ( $\beta = -.11$ ), the path between interactional justice and indirect aggression was more than twice as large ( $\beta = -.23$ ). Thus, while it appears that both hostility and interactional injustice contribute to employee retaliatory behavior, the strength depends on the type of behavior.

*Hypothesis 7: The relationship between abusive supervision and overt retaliation will be mediated by hostility.*

*Hypothesis 8: The relationship between abusive supervision and covert retaliation will be mediated by interpersonal justice perception.*

### **Moderator Effect of Hierarchy of Authority**

The structure of an organization may also play an important role in what style an abused employee chooses to utilize to retaliate against his or her abusive supervisor. Some organizational structures may centralize the majority of the power with the supervisor of a workgroup, and in the event that this supervisor enacts abusive behavior, the individual subordinates may have little to no organizational resources to circumvent the control of their supervisors and effectively end mistreatment. In other words, employees afforded low amounts of power by an organization are unable to appeal to higher management to end abuse, and may perceive that their direct supervisors have unlimited power to continue to abuse. The frustration caused by organizational structure failing to provide a legitimate avenue for an employee to end abuse may amplify employees' feelings of

injustice and hostility. Under these organizational conditions employees may feel that retaliating against their supervisors is the most viable option to restore their perceptions of justice in the workplace. In this manner organizational structure increases employee strain through increased unfairness, hostility and ultimately removes a potential resource for employees to respond to abuse without harming the organization.

In their research on organizational structure Hage and Aiken (1967) presented several different dimensions to assess the structure of an organization. The one dimension they present that most clearly assesses the structure of an organization that may influence occurrences of retaliatory behaviors is organizational hierarchy of authority. Hierarchy of authority is specifically concerned with the level of autonomy and decision latitude an organization's procedural properties afford to its employees. If work decisions must rigidly follow the chain of organizational command and first go through employees' supervisors, then this organization can be considered to have a great amount of hierarchy of authority. Abusive supervisors may use the centralized authority given to them by a rigid chain of command as a tool to keep abused subordinates from effectively petitioning higher management to help end abuse, and as a result, increase employee's feelings of injustice and anger. Lending some support for this notion, previous research has found a significant relationship between interactional injustice and organizational structure hierarchy of authority (Schminke, Ambrose, & Cropanzano, 2000). This suggests that a lack of decision latitude given to employees may worsen an already toxic work environment and result in increased amounts of retaliation by employees by removing a potential employee resource; however, the greater power afforded to supervisors may also influence employee retaliation style. Instead of engaging in overt retaliation which is much more likely to bring

about punishment, these employees may instead choose to retaliate covertly to sabotage their supervisors in an attempt to draw the attention of higher management, or even if the retaliatory behaviors do not result in a reaction from higher management, this form of retaliation still likely to restore the fairness perceptions of the employees while minimizing the potential for punishment.

*Hypothesis 9a: Hierarchy of authority will be related to greater amounts of both covert and overt retaliatory behaviors.*

*Hypothesis 9b: Hierarchy of authority will moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and retaliation, such that organizations with highly centralized hierarchies of authority will have higher rates of covert retaliatory behaviors when abusive supervision is high.*

## **The Current Study**

The current investigation intends to make several contributions to the mistreatment literature by investigating two forms of employee retaliatory behaviors in response to abusive supervision. The first goal was to elaborate the distinction between overt and covert forms of retaliation by creating and using measures that reflect these proposed dimensions. Conceptually covert retaliation differentiates itself from overt retaliation because these behaviors are meant to harm or to sabotage the success of the target while their intent remains ambiguous to reduce employee vulnerability to punishment. Covert retaliation is a form of aggressive behavior available to subordinates of abusive supervisors to undermine their supervisors and restore fairness to the workplace, and although it has been alluded to in previous investigations, it has not been adequately studied (Fox & Spector, 2010; Tepper et al., 2012). Thus, in this investigation it is proposed that retaliatory

behaviors can be broken down into two meaningful types: covert and overt, and that these forms of retaliation are not only different in the types of aggressive behaviors employed, but they also operate primarily through separate pathways (see Figure 1). Specifically, expanding previous research (Lian et al., 2014), this investigation will test if overt retaliation is an affect driven behavior, and if covert retaliation is primarily driven by perceptions of interpersonal injustice.

In addition, this investigation will evaluate if individual differences and environmental factors influence the occurrences of these two forms of retaliation. Specifically, it is proposed that high performing and highly politically skilled employees are less likely to engage in retaliation overall and are more likely to engage in covert retaliation as opposed to overt retaliatory behaviors. Highly political skilled individuals are better equipped to navigate the political arena in a workplace, and as a result, have additional avenues available to them to retaliate. Highly political skilled employees have increased ability to network and persuade, which may open up avenues of retaliation to undermine their supervisors without bringing negative repercussions onto themselves. Similarly, high performers may be motivated to engage in covert retaliation in order to avoid tarnishing their reputations within the organization. High performers have more to lose if their aggressive behaviors are detected, and possibly have more to gain if an abusive supervisor is removed from his or her position.

## **Chapter Two Method**

### **Participants and Procedure**

Eighteen thousand emails were sent to email address listed on the Florida Board of Nursing website (<http://www.floridasnursing.gov>). These emails were added to Florida's online database when the nurses applied for and renewed their license in the State of Florida. Four hundred and twenty active registered nurses completed the survey for a total response rate of 2.3%. The sample was 90% female, the majority of participants worked a full time position at a hospital as a floor staff nurse, 22% of nurses reported working a night shift, 71% reported working a day shift, and 7% reported working neither days or nights. Considering the nature of the database, there is no way to be certain that the emails addresses are functioning or current, or how many individuals checked them. Email servers rejected several hundred emails, and as a result, not all emails were delivered successfully. Although the response rate was not particularly high like many email-based surveys, previous research has found that low response rates have little to no impact on results (Yang, Levine, Xu, & Lopez Rivas, 2009)

When opening the survey participants were presented with a consent form that they must acknowledge before proceeding to the survey. After receiving consent, all measures (Appendices) were presented along with instructions for completing each section. At the end of the survey participants were thanked and given the contact information of the principle investigator. Half of 18,000 recruitment emails offered a \$5 Starbucks gift card as

an incentive to boost recruitment. Offering an incentive increased the response rate by nearly 30%. Participation was completely voluntary regardless if participants were offered an incentive for participation.

## **Measures**

**Abusive Supervision.** Abusive supervision was assessed with Tepper's original (2000) 15-item scale (Appendix A). Participants were instructed to indicate the frequency their supervisors performed behaviors such as "ridicules me" and "invades my privacy" on a scale ranging from 1, "I can't remember him/her ever using this behavior with me," to 5, "he/she uses this behavior very often with me". Additionally, in the analyses the abusive supervision scale was split into covert and overt abusive behaviors using Mitchell and Ambrose's (2007) factor analytic results of Tepper's original scale validation data.

**Political Skill.** Political skill was measured with the 15-items scale developed by Ferris et al. (2005) that included four relatively distinct facets: social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity. Social astuteness is concerned with having accurate knowledge of social interactions, interpersonal influence is concerned with being convincing in social interactions, networking ability is concerned with developing effective networks of people in the workplace, and apparent sincerity is concerned with appearing to others to be sincere. This scale utilizes anchors ranging 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A sample item: "I always seem to instinctively know the right thing to say or do to influence others" (Appendix B).

**Overt Retaliation.** Overt supervisor-directed aggression was assessed with Mitchell and Ambrose's (2007) ten-item supervisor directed deviance scale. The authors created this scale by modifying items from two established interpersonal and organizational



aggression measures (Aquino, Lewis, & Bradfield, 1999; Bennett & Robinson, 2000). The language of these items was adapted to specify that these behaviors be directed at the employee's current supervisor. One item asking participants if they gossiped about their supervisor was removed because it was included under this investigation's conceptualization of a covert retaliatory behavior. Participants indicated the frequency with which they had engaged in each behavior over the past year ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (daily). A sample item: "Made an obscene comment or gesture toward my supervisor" (Appendix C).

**Covert Retaliation.** To the author's knowledge there is no measure of covert retaliation has been constructed in the literature. For the current investigation a measure of covert supervisor directed retaliation was created by modifying and combining two existing measures: Duffy's (2002) social undermining scale and Jensen's et al. (2014) adaptation of a workplace aggression scale originally created by Glomb (2002). Items were written so that the employee's supervisor was the target of the behavior, and participants were given the instruction to only report behaviors that were a direct response to perceived abuse or mistreatment. All items that could be considered overt were removed (e.g., "Belittled you or your ideas" and "avoiding you"). This procedure left a total of 12 items that covered a diverse set of covert retaliatory behaviors (Appendix D).

**Task Performance.** Task performance was measured using a modified version of job performance measure designed specifically for nursing samples. The measure of nursing performance developed by Greenslade and Jimmieson (2007) follows Borman and Motowidlo's (1997) framework by dividing job performance into two separate measures: nursing specific task and contextual performance. Because of the length of the original

scale, an 11-item version of the original 23-item was created to measure nursing task performance. This scale ranged from 1 (poor) to 7 (excellent). The full version of the original scale consisted of four distinct dimensions: providing information, coordination of care, social support, and technical care (Appendix E). In order to create a smaller item pool similar items within dimensions were combined together to try and best exemplify the four distinct performance dimensions. The new shorten version of the scale was given to a subject matter expert (i.e., a floor nurse at a local hospital) to assure that the items seemed general and inclusive enough to measure general job performance of the nursing profession.

Only the task performance component of Greenslade and Jimmieson's (2007) measure was measured to minimize any confounds with measuring CWB type outcomes with contextual performance items that often times measure CWB type behaviors. Additionally, another moderator (political skill) correlates moderately with contextual performance, but relatively low with task performance (Bing et al., 2011; Jawahar et al., 2008).

**Organizational Justice.** Justice perceptions were assessed using the items presented in Colquitt (2001) measuring distributive (4 items), procedural (7 items), informational (5 items), and interpersonal (4 items) justice dimensions (Appendix E) in order to find which type best explains the mechanisms behind covert forms of retaliatory behaviors. Participants indicated the amount to which they agree with these statements from 1 (to a small extent) to 5 (to a large extent).

**Supervisor Directed Hostility.** To measure employees' affective hostility towards their immediate supervisor this investigation employed the hostility component of the

expanded form of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson & Clark, 1994). Using the same methods as Lian et al. (2014), participants were instructed to indicate to what extent the hostile words (e.g., anger, scornful, disgusted) of the PANAS-X represent their feelings towards their primarily supervisor (Appendix G). This measure asks participants to report hostility targeted at their supervisor over the past several weeks, and was not intended as a measure of individual employee's general trait hostility.

**Hierarchy of Authority.** Hierarchy of authority is a component of organizational structure (Hage & Aiken, 1967, 1969). Conceptually hierarchy of authority measures the components of organizational centralization that specifically influence employees' levels of autonomy and decision latitude. Items were measured using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1, definitely false, to 4, definitely true (Appendix H).

**Demographics.** At the conclusion of the survey participants were asked to complete a questions about basic demographic information. Participants were asked their age (in years), gender, ethnicity (Black, Hispanic, Asian, White, or other), hours worked per week, and tenure (in years and months) with their organization, as well information specific to their position nursing. The demographics questionnaire included questions asking their role as a nurse (e.g., floor nurse, nursing manager, office), their specialty (e.g., ER, ICU, medical surgical, pediatrics), and the shift they work (i.e., nights or days). If participants did not fit into any of the provided categories they were given a blank to input their position, specialty, or shift type. Additionally, participants were asked what type of organization they are employed at (e.g., hospital, private office, school).

## Chapter Three Results

### Dimensionality of Supervisor Directed Retaliation and Abusive Supervision

Hypothesis 1 and 2 employed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test if a two-factor solution (i.e., overt and covert) had a superior fit to a single factor solution for both supervisor directed retaliatory behaviors measures and abusive supervision. First, as expected, initial correlational analysis found that overt and covert retaliation subscales had a moderately strong relationship ( $r = .65$ ; see Table 3). All descriptive statistics and the reliability estimates for all measures included in this investigation can be found in Table 2, and the correlations among all variables can be found in Table 3. The fit statistics of the CFA for both the single factor solution  $\chi^2 (189) = 1279.23, p < .001, CFI = .59, RMSEA = .12$ , and the two-factor solution were poor  $\chi^2 (188) = 1233.91, p < .001, CFI = .61, RMSEA = .12$  (Table 4). Although both models demonstrated unacceptable fit, a chi-square difference test demonstrated that the two-factor retaliation measure resulted in a significantly better fitting model  $\chi^2 (1, N = 402) = 45.32, p < .001$ , partially supporting the first hypothesis. A possible explanation for the lack of good model fit in the supervisor directed retaliation scale might be that the items are not reflective indicators of a latent construct. Instead, these results suggest that employee retaliation items may be more appropriately conceptualized as a formative latent variable or a composite variable (Kline, 2010).

The CFA results for Tepper's (2000) abusive supervision scale demonstrated better model fit for both a one-factor  $\chi^2 (35) = 238.48, p < .001, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .12$  and two-

factor solution  $\chi^2(34) = 196.09, p < .001, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .11$  than the supervisor directed retaliation items when comparing the chi-square and the CFI, but not the RMSEA. A chi-square difference test demonstrated that a two-factor (i.e., overt and covert abusive supervision) solution had significantly better fit than a one-factor solution  $\chi^2(1, N = 409) = 42.40, p < .001$ . These findings partially replicate the results of the investigation by Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) and supported the second hypothesis. However, the RMSEA value greater than .1 suggests that Tepper's (2000) abusive supervisor scale did not have excellent fit in this sample. This is surprising considering that this scale has been validated consistently in the literature.

### **Predicting Overt and Covert Supervisor Directed Retaliation**

Correlational analyses and multiple regressions were used to test hypotheses 3-6 and 9. The correlation matrix for all variables can be found in Table 3. Contrary to hypothesis 3, the correlations between covert abusive supervision and both covert and overt retaliation were identical  $r = .40$ . The correlations between overt abusive supervision and both covert and overt retaliation were also nearly identical ( $r = .36$  and  $r = .37$ , respectively) leaving hypothesis 4 unsupported. And finally, for hypothesis 5a, the correlation between both overt and covert retaliation and overall political skill were both non-significant ( $r = -.09$  and  $r = -.07$ , respectively). The Moderated regression analysis found no support for hypothesis 5b. Tables 6 and 7 show that the main effect of the overall political skill composite did not predict above abusive supervision for both covert and overt retaliation, but for covert retaliation the interaction term remained significant. However, the relationship was opposite the predicted direction (see Figure 2). When highly

political skilled nurses experienced high abusive supervision they reported performing lower amounts of covert retaliatory behaviors.

In order to more thoroughly investigate political skill's ability to predict covert and overt retaliation above and beyond abusive supervision additional multiple regression analyses were conducted that broke political skill down to the facet level (see Table 8 and 9). The results of this analysis found that for overt retaliation all main effects and interactions were non-significant, whereas for covert retaliation both the main effect for apparent sincerity and the interaction between networking ability and abusive supervision remained significant. The interaction between networking ability and abusive supervision was found to be in same direction as the interaction of the overall political skill composite (see Figure 3). Nurses with higher levels of networking ability performed less covert retaliatory behaviors than nurses with high levels of networking ability when experiencing high amounts of abusive supervision. Additionally, the significant main effect of the apparent sincerity facet suggests that nurses with higher amounts of apparent sincerity performed less covert retaliatory behavior overall. These relationships were not significant for overt retaliatory behaviors; however, it is important to realize that the standardized beta weights of the interaction terms between abusive supervision and networking ability are similar for both overt and covert retaliatory behaviors ( $\beta = -.08$  and  $\beta = -.12$ , respectively).

The analyses found mixed results for job performance's relationship with overt and covert retaliation. Job performance was not significantly negatively related to overt retaliation ( $r = -.08$ ), but was significantly negatively related to covert retaliation ( $r = -.15$ ) partially supporting hypothesis 6a. A dependent samples t-test was conducted to test the

equality these two dependent correlations. The results of this analysis found that the correlation between job performance and overt retaliation was not significantly larger than the correlation between job performance and covert retaliation,  $t(399) = -1.69, p > .05$ . The results of the moderated regression for job performance did not support the hypothesis 6b. For both overt and covert retaliation (see Table 10 and 11) job performance had a significant main effect and interaction term; however, the interaction effect was opposite to the hypothesized direction (see Figure 4 and 5). Low performers performed greater amounts of both overt and covert retaliation when experiencing high amounts of abusive supervision.

Analyses for the influence of hierarchy of authority on overt and covert retaliation also demonstrated mixed results. Correlational analyses found that hierarchy of authority was positively related to both overt and covert retaliatory behaviors ( $r = .29$   $r = .24$ , respectively) supporting hypothesis 9a; however, hypothesis 9b was not supported, as the moderation results were non-significant. The main effect of hierarchy of authority was also significant for overt retaliation ( $\beta = .12$ ), but the main effect was not significant for covert retaliation ( $\beta = .04$ ).

### **Differential Pathways of Overt and Covert Retaliation**

Structural equation modeling was used to test the different pathways between overt and covert abusive supervision and overt and covert retaliation of the hypothesized model (see Figure 1). The initial hypothesized model did not demonstrate adequate fit,  $\chi^2(771) = 2598.64, p < .001, CFI = .80, RMSEA = .08$  (see Figure 6). Inspection of the residual variances and covariances suggested that the poor measurement model of the overt and covert retaliation latent variables largely fueled the unacceptable model fit. To remedy this

issue and properly test the structural component of the model these two constructs were reinputted into the model as measured composite variables instead of latent variables. This resulted in significantly better model fit (see Figure 7),  $\chi^2(203) = 766.57, p < .001, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .08$ . These results provide support for the structural component of the model and supported both hypothesis 7 and 8. The relationship between abusive supervision and covert retaliation was mediated by interactional justice perceptions, and the relationship between abusive supervision and overt retaliation was mediated by nurses' hostility towards their supervisor. However, contrary to the hypotheses, both forms of abusive supervision did not lead to both styles of employee retaliation, and supervisors' mistreatment style did not lead to greater amounts of the same style of retaliation subordinates. Overall, the results of the analyses provide mixed support for the overt and covert retaliation distinction.



## **Chapter Four Discussion**

Previous research on employee retaliation has focused on one particular form of retaliation against abusive supervision (Jensen et al., 2014). The purpose of this investigation was to explore if there is a meaningful distinction between overt and covert retaliatory behaviors available to employees to retaliate against abusive supervisors, and to see if these different behaviors operate through different mechanisms. Additionally, this study aimed to investigate different individual and environmental factors that may contribute to an individual engaging in one specific form of retaliation over another.

The first goal was to test the appropriateness of a two-factor retaliatory behavior measure. Although the results of a chi-square difference test did find that the two-factor model demonstrated significantly superior fit to a one-factor model, the model fit for both models was poor (see Table 4). One possible explanation for the poor fitting factor structure may be the nature of supervisor directed retaliatory behaviors. Both overt and covert retaliation are low base rate incidents. The mean number of both overt (1.59) and covert (1.15) retaliatory behaviors reported by the nurses in the sample was very low. Most nurses reported performing no retaliatory behaviors, and those who did report retaliating against their supervisor, did not respond highly to more than one or two items. As such, it may be inappropriate to consider each form of behavior as an indicator of a reflective retaliation construct. It may be more appropriate to treat retaliation items as formative in nature. In other words, employee retaliation items should be treated as a

composite variable composed of independent, but still related behaviors. Employees may choose to retaliate against their abusive supervisors using a specific set of behaviors that work best within the confines of their organization, and choose not to use other behaviors. It is highly unlikely that any one individual would choose to perform the whole set of either overt or covert behaviors, as doing so greatly increases the risk of being punished.

Analysis of the distinction between overt and covert behaviors in Tepper's (2001) replicated the two-factor model originally found by Mitchell and Ambrose (2007). A two-factor solution of abusive supervision broken down into overt and covert components provided superior fit to a one-factor solution (see Table 5). The superiority of a two-factor model supports the notion that supervisors have at least two potentially distinct forms of behaviors available to them to mistreat their employees. Nevertheless, because the RMSEA values exceeded .1 for both models, model fit cannot be considered acceptable even though other fit indices suggested model fit was adequate. It is possible that the abusive supervision items may have suffered from a low base rate the same way as the retaliation items. One possible explanation for why the abusive supervision scale demonstrated better model fit for some fit statistics than the retaliation items may be a result of the content of the items that compose each of these scales. The retaliation items created for this investigation such as "Sabotaged your supervisor's work" or "Gave your supervisor incorrect or misleading information" may have been too severe when compared to items in the abusive supervision scale (see Appendix C and D). In general the abusive supervision items appear to be less aggressive actions. Another potential explanation is that the employee retaliation items used in this investigation may not be the most complete set of

behaviors available specifically to nurses. On average nurses are more autonomous and have less interaction with their direct supervisor than many other occupations.

Initially it was hypothesized that the different forms of supervisor abuse would lend themselves to similar behavior in their employees, but the analyses did not support this hypothesis. Both overt and covert abusive supervision were equally related to both overt and covert employee retaliatory behavior. This suggests that employees do not necessarily match their method of retaliation to that of their supervisors, or that a supervisor who engages more frequently in one form of abuse creates an environment or climate where one particular form of abuse becomes the norm. Individual preferences for a particular retaliatory style and the confines of the work environment may be more important in determining the type of retaliation employees enact in response to abusive supervision than the supervisor's mistreatment style.

The next portion of this investigation focused on the relationships between the independent variables and both overt and covert retaliation. Several hypotheses predicted that overt and covert retaliation would differ in magnitude of their relationship with a number of independent variables. However, upon examination of the correlation matrix (see Table 3) it appears that the relationships between overt and covert retaliation are similar for all independent variables. In fact, there is not a single case in which the relationships between the retaliation variables and another variable were significantly different from each other. However, the correlation between overt and covert retaliation was not so high as to suggest that these variables were completely redundant ( $r = .65$ ). It is possible that with a more diverse set of variables the overt and covert retaliation scales would have demonstrated greater discriminant validity.

Surprisingly the direct relationships between both overt and covert retaliation and global political skill were non-significant. When political skill was broken down into the facet level the correlations remained non-significant in all cases except for one, but even in this case the relationship was small ( $r = -.10$ ). This suggests that perceptions of an individual's political skill ability does not directly relate to an individual engaging in overt and covert retaliation behaviors across all situations. However, the regression analyses for overall political skill suggest that political skill may work as a buffer to reduce covert retaliation under conditions of high abusive supervision (See Figure 2), but once again this effect was small ( $\beta = -.11$ ). It is worth noting that although the interaction term did not reach significance for overt retaliation ( $\beta = -.08$ ) the effect was close in strength and in the same direction as covert retaliation. Nevertheless, this interaction effect for covert retaliation was opposite the hypothesized direction. Instead of covert retaliation being a more subversive avenue of retaliation for highly political skilled employees to use in lieu of more overt retaliation, it appears that highly political skilled employees engage in less retaliation than low political skilled employees regardless of the type of retaliation.

In order to take a finer grained approach to the influence of political skill on retaliatory behavior the political skill inventory was broken down to the facet level in subsequent regression analyses. When the regression equation was modified to include the facets of political skill it appeared that the interaction between political skill and abusive supervision in predicting covert retaliation was primarily explained by an individual's networking ability (see Table 7). Individuals who were able to network effectively may have been better able to avoid putting themselves in situations when they needed to retaliate against their abusive supervisors through their connections with higher status

individuals within the organization. Thus, instead of retaliating through covert means these employees may instead rely on their connections to minimize their exposure to supervisor mistreatment. In addition to the potentially protective aspects of networking ability the analyses found a main effect of apparent sincerity. This effect suggests that individuals who actively tried to appear to their coworkers and supervisors as sincere performed less covert retaliation across all levels of abusive supervision. Individuals who put forward a front of sincerity may have reduced their likelihood of becoming a target of mistreatment from both non-abusive and abusive supervisors. It is possible that employees who are cognizant of the need to appear sincere may be less likely to engage in ambiguous behaviors that might incite supervisor abuse. Interestingly, both of these effects did not reach significance for overt retaliation, but it is important to avoid over interrupting this distinction because all of the effects for covert retaliation were not significantly larger than those for overt retaliation.

There were no specific predictions about differences in the strength of relationships between job performance and both overt and covert retaliation. The hypothesis concerning the existence of a direct negative relationship between job performance and both forms of retaliation was only partially supported because the relationship between overt retaliation and job performance did not reach significance. The results of the moderated regression analyses did, however, find consistent results for both overt and covert retaliation. For both forms of retaliation, higher levels of job performance predicted lower levels of retaliatory behaviors in response to high levels of abusive supervision. Thus, job performance of employees only influenced employee retaliatory behavior when supervisors were highly abusive. When supervisors were not highly abusive both high and

low performers retaliated almost equally. Additionally, contrary to the hypotheses, this investigation did not find support for high or low performers possessing different retaliation styles in response to abusive supervision (i.e., high performers engaging in more covert than overt retaliation). The relationships for both overt and covert retaliation for both high and low performers were the same across all levels of abusive supervision (see Figures 4 and 5).

To explore impact of environmental factors on employees' choice of retaliatory behavior the influence of organizational hierarchy of authority on both overt and covert retaliation was examined. Analyses found a significant positive relationship between an organization's hierarchy of authority and both forms of retaliation. These results suggest that perceptions of a rigid hierarchy of authority were positively related to employees' engagement in both overt and covert retaliation. It was specifically hypothesized that employees would retaliate more when they feel their organization's hierarchy of authority is limiting their ability to prevent and control abuse from an abusive supervisor; however, when hierarchy of authority was entered into the regression equation with abusive supervision all effects were non-significant for covert retaliation; however, although the effect was small, the main effect of overt retaliation did reach significance (see Table 11 and 12). This suggests that the majority of the variance between hierarchy of authority and covert retaliation is shared with perceptions of abusive supervision, and that there is some evidence that hierarchy of authority may significantly predict overt retaliation even after controlling for abusive supervision. Causality cannot be determined with these analyses, but a possible explanation for this this lack of significant relationship with covert retaliation and the small relationship with overt retaliation may be that abusive

supervisors cause employees to feel as if their organization has a narrower hierarchy of authority, even if this is not necessarily true, by purposefully not communicating organizational policies that give subordinates autonomy in the workplace. Even if an organization has instituted policies that make the hierarchy less rigid, these policies may not get conveyed to employees by abusive supervisors in order for the supervisor to maintain their ability to mistreat.

The final portion of this investigation tested the possibility for different driving mechanism behind both overt and covert retaliation. Specifically, It was hypothesized that overt retaliation would primary operate through supervisor directed hostility and covert retaliation would primarily operate through perceptions of interpersonal injustice. When testing the proposed model there was initially poor fit directly resulting from the measurement component of the retaliation measures. In the initial model it was proposed that the retaliation scales would operate as reflective latent variables (Figure 6), but based upon the CFA results the model was modified to include both overt and covert retaliation as measured composite variables (Figure 7). The modified model demonstrated superior fit to the model that included retaliations items as indicators of a latent variable. All hypothesized paths were significant except for the path from overt abusive supervision to supervisor directed hostility; however, the path from overt abusive supervision to interactional injustice was still significant and similar in strength to that of covert abusive supervision and interactional justice. The results suggest that both overt and covert abusive supervision lead to covert retaliation through interactional injustice, but only covert abusive supervision leads to overt retaliation through hostility. One possible alternate explanation for this lack of a significant path may be attributed to the covert

abusive supervision component soaking up a large portion of the shared variance between the two forms of abusive supervision as a result of their large standardized covariance ( $\phi = .93$ ). The final model provides some support for the hypotheses that the primary mechanisms behind employees' overt and covert retaliation may be different. When employees feel a high amount of interactional injustice during interactions with their supervisors, they are more inclined to rely on covert mechanisms to retaliate instead of directly confronting their supervisor. In contrast, high amounts of hostility towards their supervisor are more likely to lead to overt retaliation such as physically confronting the supervisor. Although the two retaliation scales did not demonstrate differential relationships with the variables included in this investigation, this model provides at least some cursory evidence that there may be different primary mechanisms behind both forms of employee retaliation.

### **Future Directions and Limitations**

Additional research is needed in order to help clarify the distinction between overt and covert retaliation in response to supervisor abuse. Researchers who conduct future scale development may want to consider including behaviors that are less severe and more general in order to better capture the different forms of retaliatory behaviors available to employees. Additionally, future research may benefit from testing these measures in non-nursing samples. Some of the items included the retaliatory behavior scales in this investigation may not be strictly applicable to nurses. For example, a nurse purposefully delaying work would do little to make a supervisor look poorly like it may in other industries. Instead, a nurse who slows down their work will only increase the difficulty of his or her own job and could potentially harm the well-being of their patients. Perhaps the



measure employed by this investigation would fare better in a sample of employees that have more consistent and sustained contact with their immediate supervisor.

Future research should also consider investigating the outcomes for employees who experience one form of abusive supervision over another. In the analyses both overt and covert abusive supervision were nearly identically related to the other variables included in this investigation, but it is possible that other variables may have distinct relationships with one particular form of abuse. Additionally, future research should consider other individual differences and environmental factors that may impact employees' willingness to engage in one form of retaliation over another.

## **Conclusions**

This study attempted to expand our conceptualization of employee retaliation against supervisor mistreatment by evaluating a more diverse set of behaviors, potential mediating variables, and potential individual and environmental factors that contribute to different forms of retaliation by employees. Confirmatory factor analysis did not find much support for a two-factor retaliation construct, but this may have been a result of the nature of behavioral retaliation items. The final model provides support for the existence of different primary mechanisms behind employees' overt and covert retaliation. When employees feel a high amount of interactional injustice during their interactions with their supervisors they are more inclined to rely on covert mechanisms to retaliate instead of directly confronting their supervisor. In contrast, employees who have high amounts of hostility towards their supervisor are more likely to engage in overt retaliation such as physically confronting the supervisor. Thus, different negative experiences by employees are more likely to result in different forms of retaliation by employees. Additionally, this

investigation did not find support for high performing or highly political skilled employees retaliating primarily through a one form of retaliation. It appears that the individual differences of job performance and political skill are related to both reduced overt and covert retaliatory behaviors at high levels of abusive supervision.

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## Tables

Table 1. Hypotheses and Analyses

Hypothesis 1	<i>A two-factor model consisting of both covert and overt subordinate retaliatory behavior will demonstrate superior fit to a one-factor model</i>	Confirmatory factor analysis
Hypothesis 2	<i>A two-factor model consisting of both covert and overt abusive supervision will demonstrate superior fit to a one-factor model</i>	Confirmatory factor analysis
Hypothesis 3	<i>Covert abusive supervision will be more strongly related to subordinate covert retaliation than overt retaliation</i>	Correlation
Hypothesis 4	<i>Overt abusive supervision will be more strongly related to subordinate overt retaliation than covert retaliation</i>	Correlation
Hypothesis 5a	<i>Political skill will be negatively related to overt and covert retaliation</i>	Correlation
Hypothesis 5b	<i>Political skill will moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and covert retaliation such that highly political skilled employees will engage in greater amounts of covert retaliation in response to abusive supervision</i>	Moderated regression
Hypothesis 6a	<i>Task performance will be negatively related to overt and covert retaliation</i>	Correlation
Hypothesis 6b	<i>Task performance will moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and covert retaliation such that high performing employees will engage in greater amounts of covert retaliation</i>	Moderated regression
Hypothesis 7	<i>The relationship between abusive supervision and overt retaliation will be mediated primarily by hostility</i>	Structural equation modeling
Hypothesis 8	<i>The relationship between abusive supervision and covert retaliation will be mediated primarily by interpersonal justice perception</i>	Structural equation modeling
Hypothesis 9a	<i>Hierarchy of authority will be related to greater amounts of covert and overt retaliatory behaviors</i>	Correlation
Hypothesis 9a	<i>Hierarchy of authority will moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and retaliation, such that organizations with highly centralized hierarchies of authority will have higher rates of covert retaliatory behaviors when abusive supervision is high</i>	Moderated regression



**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Mean	SD	Coefficient Alpha
Abusive Supervision	1.68	0.84	0.95
Overt Abusive Supervision	1.88	0.97	0.89
Covert Abusive Supervision	1.50	0.78	0.87
Political Skill Total	5.53	0.66	0.89
Social Astuteness	5.72	0.78	0.78
Interpersonal Influence	6.06	0.73	0.78
Networking Ability	4.60	0.96	0.80
Apparent Sincerity	6.40	0.70	0.78
Total Retaliation	1.16	0.22	0.84
Overt Retaliation	1.59	0.25	0.72
Covert Retaliation	1.15	0.24	0.74
Job Performance	4.33	0.53	0.92
Interactional Justice	4.26	0.82	0.93
Hostility towards Supervisor	1.54	0.76	0.91
Hierarchy of Authority	2.82	1.02	0.86

**Table 3. Correlation Matrix of Measured Variables**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Abusive Supervision	-														
2. Overt Abusive Supervision	.94**	-													
3. Covert Abusive Supervision	.94**	.82**	-												
4. Political Skill	-.04	.00	-.06	-											
5. Social Astuteness	-.01	.01	-.03	.82**	-										
6. Interpersonal Influence	.00	.05	-.02	.80**	.59**	-									
7. Networking Ability	-.07	-.03	-.09	.87**	.57**	.53**	-								
8. Apparent Sincerity	-.01	.05	-.03	.65**	.43**	.61**	.38**	-							
9. Total Retaliation	.46**	.40**	.44**	-.08	-.06	-.07	-.06	-.09	-						
10. Overt Retaliation	.41**	.37**	.40**	-.09	-.08	-.08	-.07	-.06	.89**	-					
11. Covert Retaliation	.40**	.36**	.40**	-.07	-.04	-.05	-.05	-.10*	.92**	.65**	-				
12. Job Performance	.12*	.11*	.12*	.38**	.36**	.34**	.28**	.27**	-.13**	-.08	-.15**	-			
13. Interactional Justice	-.80**	-.77**	-.75**	.09	.08	.05	.09	.04	-.45**	-.41**	-.40**	.01	-		
14. Hostility towards Supervisor	.72**	.66**	.69**	-.09	-.05	-.04	-.10*	-.06	.62**	.58**	.55**	.05	-.66**	-	
15. Hierarchy of Authority	.50**	.45**	.51**	-.17**	-.15**	-.11*	-.17**	-.07	.29**	.29**	.24**	.02	-.44**	.43**	-

Note:  $N = 402$  \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 4. CFA Analysis of Overt and Covert Retaliation

Item	Covert Retaliation	Overt Retaliation	Single-Factor Retaliation
Made fun of my supervisor at work		.55	.57
Played a mean prank on my supervisor		.17	.14
Made an obscene comment or gesture toward my supervisor.		.58	.58
Acted rudely toward my supervisor		.56	.54
Made an ethnic, religious, or racial remark against my supervisor		.32	.30
Publicly embarrassed my supervisor		.64	.60
Swore at my supervisor		.36	.32
Refused to talk to my supervisor		.63	.60
Said something hurtful to my supervisor at work.		.74	.71
Physically confronted my supervisor at work		.47	.47
Withheld information from your supervisor	.51		.47
Made your supervisor look bad	.63		.60
Sabotaged your supervisor's work	.48		.52
Withheld resources (e.g., supplies, equipment) your supervisor needs	.46		.50
Spread rumors about your supervisor	.48		.43
Delayed work to make your supervisor look bad or slow him/her down	.30		.27
Did not give as much help as promised to your supervisor	.50		.50
Gave your supervisor incorrect or misleading information	.22		.20
Spoke poorly of your supervisor to management	.57		.51
Undermined your supervisor's effort to be successful on the job	.31		.29
Made others think your supervisor is incompetent	.76		.70
Chi-square	1233.91 (188), $p < .001$		1279.23 (189), $p < .001$
RMSEA	.12		.12
CFI	.61		.59
Chi-square difference test	45.32 (1), $p < .001$		

Note.  $N = 402$ .

Table 5. CFA Analysis of Overt and Covert Abusive Supervision

Item	Covert Abusive Supervision	Overt Abusive Supervision	Single-Factor Abusive Supervision
Ridicules me.		.84	.81
Tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid		.77	.75
Puts me down in front of others		.87	.84
Invades my privacy.	.58		.72
Doesn't give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort	.66		.64
Blames me to save himself/herself embarrassment.	.88		.87
Breaks promises he/she makes	.77		.74
Makes negative comments about me to others		.83	.84
Tells me I'm incompetent		.70	.68
Lies to me	.76		.73
Chi-square	196.09 (34), $p < .001$		238.48 (35), $p < .001$
RMSEA	.11		.12
CFI	.94		.93
Chi-square difference test	42.40 (1), $p < .001$		

Note.  $N = 409$ .

Table 6. Moderated Regression of Political Skill Predicting Covert Retaliation

Variable	Step 1	Step 2
Abusive Supervision	.40**	.42**
Political Skill	-.06	-.06
Abusive Supervision x Political Skill		-.11*
$\Delta R^2$		.01
$R^2$	.16	.17
Adjusted $R^2$	.16	.17
$F$	40.71**	29.23**

Note.  $N = 416$ . Standardized beta coefficients are reported. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .001$

Table 7. Moderated Regression of Political Skill Predicting Overt Retaliation

Variable	Step 1	Step 2
Abusive Supervision	.41**	.42**
Political Skill	-.07	-.08
Abusive Supervision x Political Skill		-.08
$\Delta R^2$		.01
$R^2$	.17	.18
Adjusted $R^2$	.17	.17
$F$	43.32**	29.23**

Note.  $N = 416$ . Standardized beta coefficients are reported. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .001$

Table 8. Facet level Political Skill Predicting Covert Retaliation

Variable	Step 1	Step 2	Final Model
Abusive Supervision	.40**	.42**	.42**
Social Astuteness	.00	.00	
Interpersonal Influence	.02	.00	
Networking Ability	.00	.00	.00
Apparent Sincerity	-.12*	-.10	-.10*
Social Astuteness x Abusive Supervision		.10	
Interpersonal Influence x Abusive Supervision		-.10	
Networking Ability x Abusive Supervision		-.14*	-.12*
Apparent Sincerity x Abusive Supervision		.03	
$\Delta R^2$		.03	-.01
$R^2$	.17	.20	.19
Adjusted $R^2$	.16	.18	.18
$F$	17.10**	11.00**	23.60**

Note.  $N = 416$ . Standardized beta coefficients are reported. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .001$

Table 9. Facet level Political Skill Predicting Overt Retaliation

Variable	Step 1	Step 2	Final Model
Abusive Supervision	.41**	.43**	.42**
Social Astuteness	-.04	-.05	
Interpersonal Influence	-.05	-.06	
Networking Ability	.01	.01	-.03
Apparent Sincerity	-.01	.00	-.05
Social Astuteness x Abusive Supervision		.03	
Interpersonal Influence x Abusive Supervision		-.05	
Networking Ability x Abusive Supervision		-.08	-.08
Apparent Sincerity x Abusive Supervision		.00	
$\Delta R^2$		.01	.00
$R^2$	.17	.18	.18
Adjusted $R^2$	.16	.17	.17
$F$	17.42**	10.16**	22.25**

Note.  $N = 416$ . Standardized beta coefficients are reported. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .001$



Table 10. Moderated Regression of Job Performance Predicting Covert Retaliation

Variable	Step 1	Step 2
Abusive Supervision	.42**	.45**
Job Performance	-.19**	-.20**
Abusive Supervision x Job Performance		-.12*
$\Delta R^2$		.01
$R^2$	.20	.21
Adjusted $R^2$	.19	.20
$F$	50.31**	36.21**

Note.  $N = 410$ . Standardized beta coefficients are reported. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .001$

Table 11. Moderated Regression of Job Performance Predicting Overt Retaliation

Variable	Step 1	Step 2
Abusive Supervision	.42**	.46**
Job Performance	-.13*	-.14*
Abusive Supervision x Job Performance		-.14*
$\Delta R^2$		.02
$R^2$	.18	.20
Adjusted $R^2$	.18	.20
$F$	46.23**	34.55**

Note.  $N = 410$ . Standardized beta coefficients are reported. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .001$

Table 12. Moderated Regression of Hierarchy of Authority Predicting Covert Retaliation

Variable	Step 1	Step 2
Abusive Supervision	.39**	.41**
Hierarchy of Authority	.04	.04
Abusive Supervision x Hierarchy of Authority		-.03
$\Delta R^2$		.00
$R^2$	.17	.17
Adjusted $R^2$	.16	.16
$F$	41.60**	27.75**

Note.  $N = 405$ . Standardized beta coefficients are reported. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .001$

Table 13. Moderated Regression of Hierarchy of Authority Predicting Overt Retaliation

Variable	Step 1	Step 2
Abusive Supervision	.35**	.34**
Hierarchy of Authority	.12*	.12*
Abusive Supervision x Hierarchy of Authority		.01
$\Delta R^2$		.00
$R^2$	.18	.18
Adjusted $R^2$	.17	.17
$F$	43.98**	29.37**

Note.  $N = 405$ . Standardized beta coefficients are reported. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .001$

## Figures

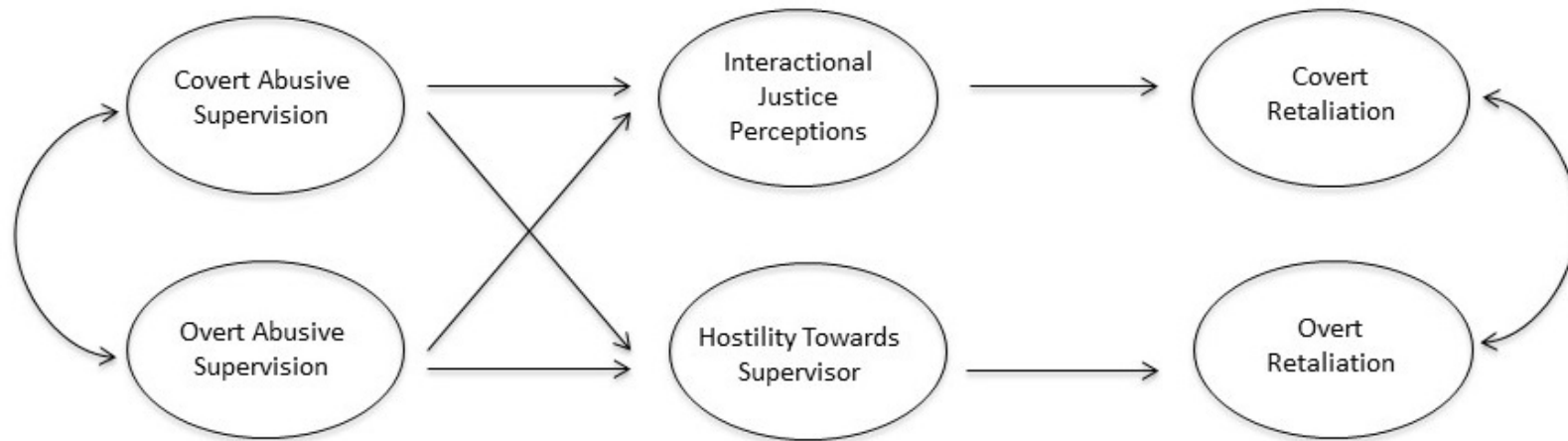


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

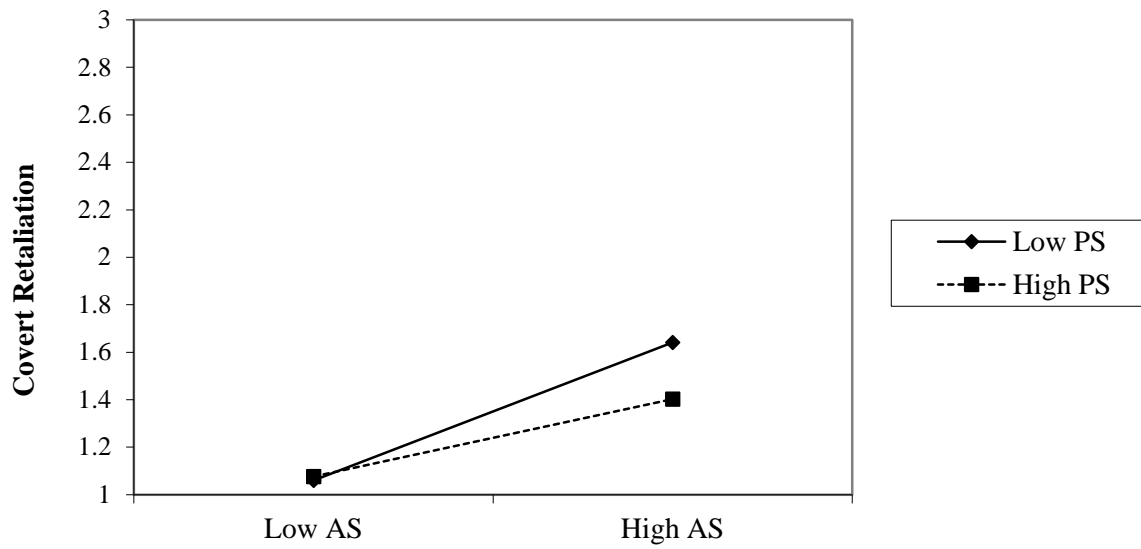


Figure 2. Interaction between Abusive Supervision and Overall Political Skill Predicting Covert Retaliation

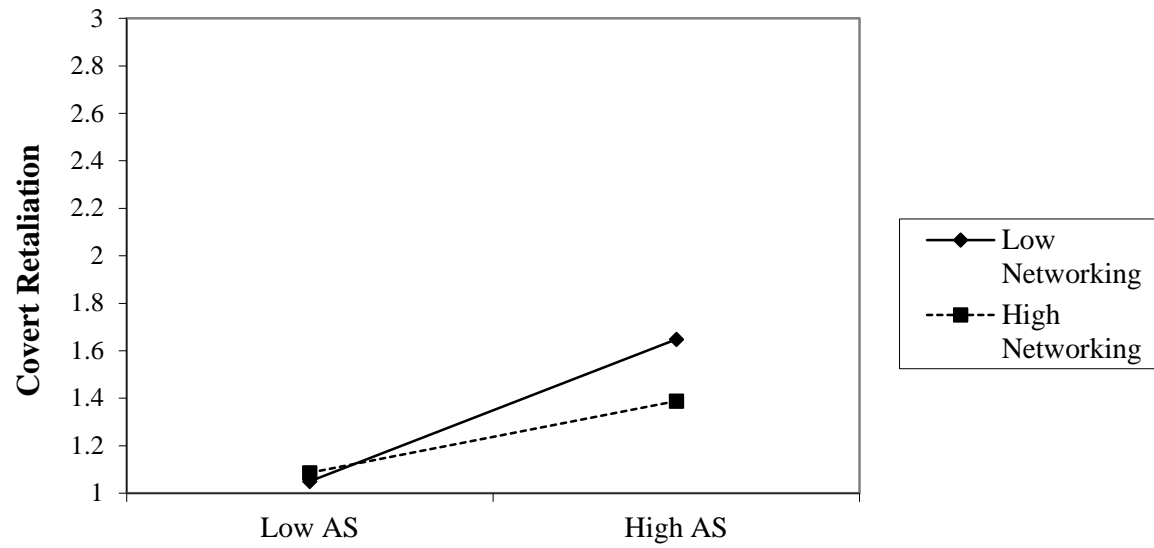


Figure 3. Interaction between Abusive Supervision and Networking Ability Predicting Covert Retaliation

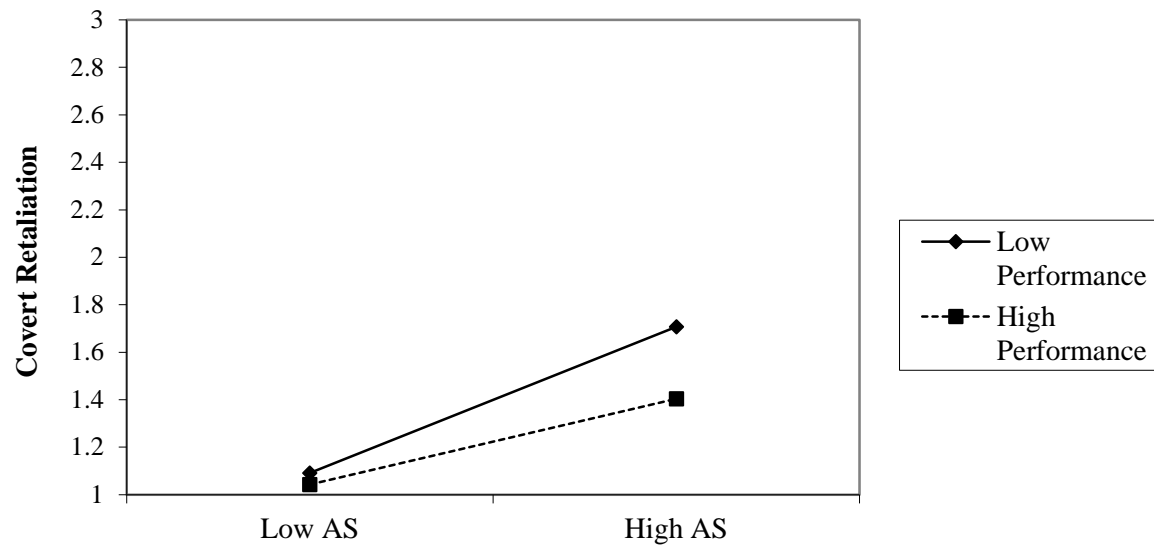


Figure 4. Interaction between Abusive Supervision and Task Performance Predicting Covert Retaliation



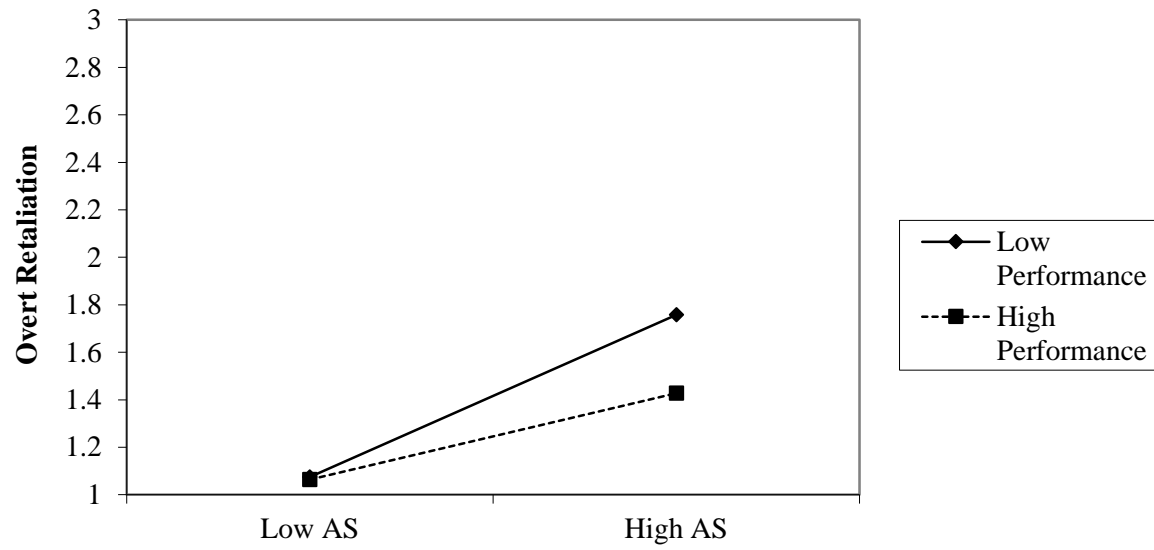
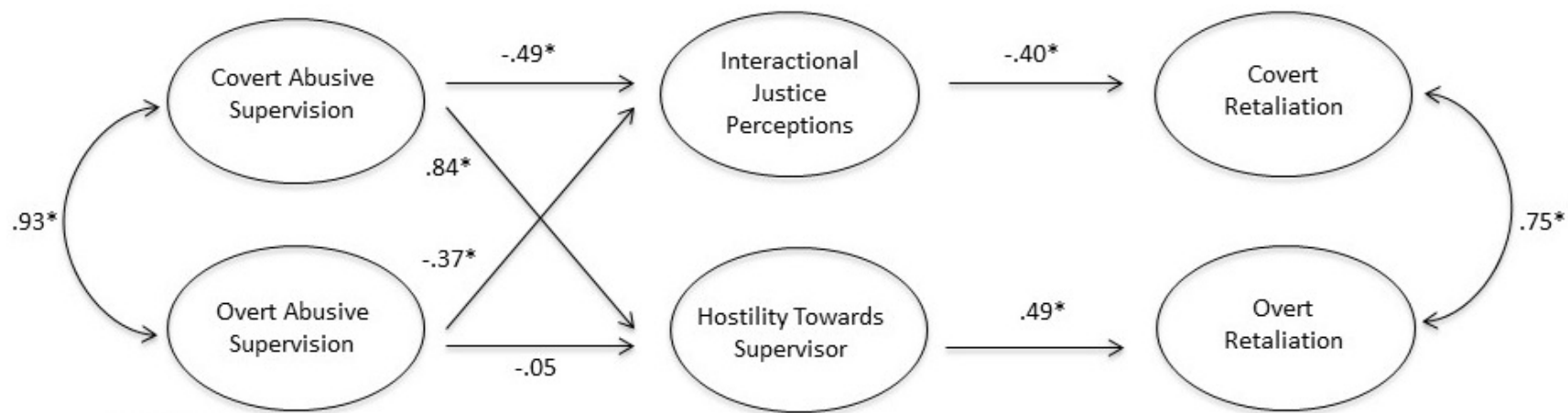


Figure 5. Interaction between Abusive Supervision and Task Performance Predicting Overt Retaliation

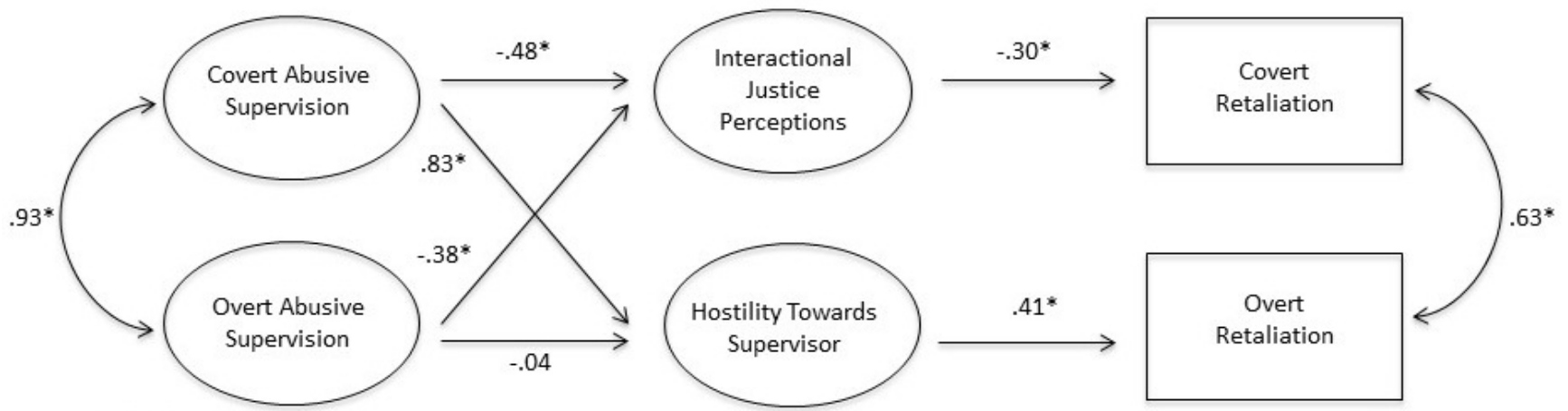


Model Fit

$\chi^2$	DF	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
2598.64	771	.80	.08	.08

*N* = 395. Standardized coefficients are reported. \*  $p < .001$ .

Figure 6. Hypothesized SEM Model



Model Fit

$\chi^2$	DF	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
766.57	203	.93	.08	.07

*N* = 395. Standardized coefficients are reported. \*  $p < .001$

Figure 7. SEM Model without Retaliation Measurement Model

## **Appendices**

## **Appendix A: Abusive Supervision**

My Supervisor . . .

1. Ridicules me.
2. Tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid.
3. Gives me the silent treatment.
4. Puts me down in front of others.
5. Invades my privacy.
6. Reminds me of my past mistakes and failures.
7. Doesn't give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort.
8. Blames me to save himself/herself embarrassment.
9. Breaks promises he/she makes.
10. Expresses anger at me when he/she is mad for another reason.
11. Makes negative comments about me to others.
12. Is rude to me.
13. Does not allow me to interact with my coworkers.
14. Tells me I'm incompetent.
15. Lies to me.

NOTE: Based on the exploratory factor analysis by Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) Items 1, 2, 4, 11, and 14 were treated as overt abusive supervision and items 5, 7, 8, 9, and 15 were treated as covert abusive supervision. All other items were not included in these subscales.

## Appendix B: Political Skill Inventory

1. I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others.
2. At work, I know a lot of important people and am well connected.
3. I am good at using my connections and networks to make things happen at work.
4. I have developed a large network of colleagues and associates at work who I can call on for support when I really need to get things done.
5. I spend a lot of time at work developing connections with others.
6. I am good at building relationships with influential people at work.
7. It is important that people believe I am sincere in what I say and do.
8. When communicating with others, I try to be genuine in what I say and do.
9. I try to show a genuine interest in other people.
10. I always seem to instinctively know the right thing to say or do to influence others.
11. I have good intuition or savvy about how to present myself to others.
12. I am particularly good at sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others.
13. I pay close attention to people's facial expressions.
14. I understand people very well.
15. It is easy for me to develop good rapport with most people.
16. I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me.
17. I am able to communicate easily and effectively with others.
18. I am good at getting people to like me.

### **Appendix C: Overt Supervisor Directed Retaliation**

In response to your supervisor's actions or treatment towards you and your coworkers, how often have you done the following?

1. Made fun of my supervisor at work.
2. Played a mean prank on my supervisor.
3. Made an obscene comment or gesture toward my supervisor.
4. Acted rudely toward my supervisor.
5. Made an ethnic, religious, or racial remark against my supervisor.
6. Publicly embarrassed my supervisor.
7. Swore at my supervisor.
8. Refused to talk to my supervisor.
9. Said something hurtful to my supervisor at work.
10. Physically confronted my supervisor at work

## **Appendix D: Covert Supervisor Directed Retaliation**

In response to your supervisor's actions or treatment towards you and your coworkers, how often have you done the following?

1. Withheld information from your supervisor?
2. Made your supervisor look bad?
3. Sabotaged your supervisor's work?
4. Withheld resources (e.g., supplies, equipment) your supervisor needs?
5. Spread rumors about your supervisor?
6. Delayed work to make your supervisor look bad or slow him/her down?
7. Did not give as much help as promised to your supervisor?
8. Gave your supervisor incorrect or misleading information?
9. Spoke poorly of your supervisor to management?
10. Undermined your supervisor's effort to be successful on the job?
11. Made others think your supervisor is incompetent?



## **Appendix E: Nursing Task Performance**

How proficient do you believe you are at the following tasks?

1. Explaining to patients what to expect when they leave the hospital
2. Explaining to families what to do if the patient's problems or symptoms continue, get worse, or return.
3. Communicating to patients the purpose of nursing procedures.
4. Informing patients of the possible side-effects of nursing procedures.
5. Explaining to nurses in the unit the nature of the patient's condition (e.g., when giving report).
6. Informing nurses in the unit about changes in a patient's treatment.
7. Showing care and concern to families and patients.
8. Listening to patients and families concerns.
9. Taking patient observations (e.g. blood pressure, pulse, temperature).
10. Assisting patients with activities of daily living (e.g. showering, toileting and feeding).
11. Administering medications and treatments.

## Appendix F: Organizational Justice

To what extent:

### *Procedural justice*

1. Have you been able to express your views and feelings during those procedures?
2. Have you had influence over the (outcome) arrived at by those procedures?
3. Have those procedures been applied consistently?
4. Have those procedures been free of bias?
5. Have those procedures been based on accurate information?
6. Have you been able to appeal the (outcome) arrived at by those procedures?
7. Have those procedures upheld ethical and moral standards?

### *Distributive justice*

8. Does your (outcome) reflect the effort you have put into your work?
9. Is your (outcome) appropriate for the work you have completed?
10. Does your (outcome) reflect what you have contributed to the organization?
11. Is your (outcome) justified, given your performance?

The following items refer to your supervisor. To what extent.

### *Interpersonal justice*

12. Has (he/she) treated you in a polite manner?
13. Has (he/she) treated you with dignity?
14. Has (he/she) treated you with respect?
15. Has (he/she) refrained from improper remarks or comments?

### *Interpersonal justice*

16. Has (he/she) been candid in (his/her) communications with you?
17. Has (he/she) explained the procedures thoroughly?
18. Were (his/her) explanations regarding the procedures reasonable?
19. Has (he/she) communicated details in a timely manner?
20. Has (he/she) seemed to tailor (his/her) communications to individuals' specific needs?

## **Appendix G: Supervisor Directed Aggression**

Indicate to what extent you have felt this way during the past few weeks at work about your direct supervisor.

1. Angry
2. Hostile
3. Irritable
4. Scornful
5. Disgusted
6. Loathing

## **Appendix H: Hierarchy of Authority**

The following items refer to the policies and procedures of your organization. To what extent.

1. There can be little action here until a supervisor approves a decision.
2. A person who wants to make his own decisions would be quickly discouraged.
3. Even small matters have to be referred to someone higher up for a final answer.
4. I have to ask my boss before I do almost anything.
5. Any decision I make has to have my boss's approval.

## Appendix I: Demographics

Please indicate the following:

1. Gender (circle one): Male    Female
2. What is your age in years? \_\_\_\_
3. Race:
  - Asian
  - Black
  - Hispanic
  - White
  - Other (please specify)
4. Please indicate how long you have been working at your current job:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Years \_\_\_\_\_ Months
5. Please indicate how many hours you work at your current job:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Hours per week
6. What is your role as a nurse? (e.g., floor staff nurse, charge nurse, office, nursing manager)  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your specialty? (e.g., emergency room, intensive care unit, medical surgical, pediatrics)  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What is the type of organization do you work for? (e.g., hospital, office, school)  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What shift do you work?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix J: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter**

January 8, 2015

Derek Hutchinson Psychology Tampa, FL 33625

**RE: Exempt Certification**

IRB#: Pro00020478

Title: Covert and Overt Retaliation Against Abusive Supervision: The Moderating Effects of Political Skill and Job Performance

**Study Approval Period: 1/8/2015 to**

Dear Mr. Hutchinson:

On 1/8/2015, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that your research meets USF requirements and Federal Exemption criteria as outlined in the federal regulations at 45CFR46.101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

### **Approved Items:**

Thesis Proposal

Consent form

Your study qualifies for a waiver of the requirements for the documentation of informed consent as outlined in the federal regulations at 45CFR46.117(c) which states that an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it finds either: (1) That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or (2) That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

As the principal investigator for this study, it is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted as outlined in your application and consistent with the ethical

principles outlined in the Belmont Report and with USF IRB policies and procedures.

Please note, as per USF IRB Policy 303, "Once the Exempt determination is made, the application is closed in eIRB. Any proposed or anticipated changes to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB review must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change."

If alterations are made to the study design that change the review category from Exempt (i.e., adding a focus group, access to identifying information, adding a vulnerable population, or an intervention), these changes require a new application. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant an amendment or new application.

Given the determination of exemption, this application is being closed in ARC. You will receive notification stating that the study has been closed; however, this does not limit your ability to conduct your research project. Again, your research may continue as planned; only a change in the study design that would affect the exempt determination requires a new submission to the IRB.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John A. Schinka, Ph.D.".

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson USF Institutional Review Board