

## Abusive Supervision and Employee Creativity: The Different Roles of Psychological Contract Breach and Zhongyong Thinking (Postprint)

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### Abstract

In recent years, the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity has garnered increasing attention from researchers. Building on previous research, this study develops a moderated mediation model to investigate the underlying psychological mechanisms and boundary conditions of abusive supervision's influence on employee creativity in the Chinese cultural context. Using a multi-stage, multi-source design with a sample of 93 supervisors and 369 employees, and analyzing data collected from three-stage supervisor-employee paired surveys through multilevel structural equation modeling techniques, the results indicate that supervisors' abusive supervision behaviors have an indirect negative effect on employee creativity through the mediating role of psychological contract breach; however, the strength of this negative indirect relationship is weaker for individuals with high zhongyong thinking. This study contributes to revealing the psychological mechanisms and boundary conditions through which abusive supervision influences employee creativity, and the findings also offer implications for management practices related to employee creativity and innovative behavior in enterprises.

### Full Text

#### Abusive Supervision and Employee Creativity: The Distinct Roles of Psychological Contract Breach and Zhongyong Thinking Style

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## Abstract

In recent years, the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity has attracted increasing attention from researchers. Building on previous studies, this research constructs a moderated mediation model to examine the mediating psychological mechanisms and boundary conditions through which abusive supervision influences employee creativity in the Chinese cultural context. Using a multi-stage, multi-source design with 93 supervisors and 369 employees, we analyzed data from three waves of supervisor-employee paired surveys through multilevel structural equation modeling. Results indicate that supervisors' abusive management behaviors indirectly and negatively affect employee creativity through the mediating role of psychological contract breach; however, this negative indirect relationship is weaker for individuals with high Zhongyong thinking style. This study helps reveal the psychological mechanisms and boundary conditions of how abusive supervision affects employee creativity, and the findings offer implications for managing employee creativity and innovative behavior in organizations.

**Keywords:** abusive supervision; psychological contract breach; Zhongyong thinking style; creativity

**Classification:** B849:C93

## 1. Research Question

An increasing number of organizations have recognized that only by developing creative, unique, and practical products or services in response to environmental changes can they secure a competitive position in dynamic and complex markets (Shalley, Gilson, & Blum, 2009; Zhou & Hoever, 2014). As a crucial component of the organizational environment, leadership represents one of the key determinants of employees' creative work. Currently, growing numbers of researchers are exploring and examining the relationship between leaders' abusive supervision and employee creativity, yet findings remain inconsistent. For instance, some studies demonstrate that abusive supervision directly reduces employee creativity (Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012) and indirectly exerts negative effects through intrinsic motivation and emotional exhaustion (Han, Harms, & Bai, 2017; Zhang, Kwan, Zhang, & Wu, 2014). However, other research suggests that abusive supervision does not always diminish creativity and that moderate levels may even enhance it (Lee, Yun, & Srivastava, 2013). Researchers argue that existing studies are insufficient to explain the complex relationship between abusive supervision and creativity, calling for future research to clarify

the underlying influence mechanisms and boundary conditions (Zhang et al., 2014).

Responding to this call, we draw upon psychological contract theory (Robinson & Morrison, 2000) and cognitive-affective processing system theory (Metcalf & Mischel, 1999) to propose that abusive supervision indirectly and negatively influences employee creativity through psychological contract breach, and that this process is moderated by Zhongyong thinking style.

### **1.1 Abusive Supervision, Psychological Contract Breach, and Creativity**

Abusive supervision refers to subordinates' perceptions of sustained hostile behaviors—verbal or nonverbal, excluding physical contact—exhibited by their supervisors, such as ridicule, public loud scolding, and intentional cold-shouldering (Tepper, 2000). We argue that abusive supervision indirectly and negatively affects employee creativity through the mediating role of psychological contract breach. Psychological contract refers to an individual's belief regarding the mutual obligations and responsibilities within an employment relationship based on promises, trust, and perceptions (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Psychological contract breach occurs when employees perceive that the organization has failed to fulfill one or more obligations commensurate with their contributions (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Previous researchers have noted that leaders play an important role in constructing and maintaining employees' psychological contracts (Tekleab & Taylor, 2003). For example, when leaders frequently display abusive management behaviors toward employees (such as publicly criticizing or belittling them), employees perceive these actions as disrespect, contempt, and humiliation, which violates their expectations and beliefs about fair treatment. Such behaviors breach the “reciprocal exchange” principle and moral norms within the employment relationship, damaging the positive image of leaders in employees' minds and consequently causing severe psychological contract breach (Ding & Zhang, 2013; Parzefall & Salin, 2010).

When employees perceive psychological contract breach, they engage in attitudes and behaviors detrimental to the organization to restore balance in the exchange relationship, such as exhibiting lower levels of creativity or innovative behavior (Khazanchi & Masterson, 2011).

### **1.2 The Moderating Role of Zhongyong Thinking Style**

Zhongyong thinking style, measured using the scale developed by Wu and Lin (2005), comprises three dimensions: multi-perspective thinking, integration, and harmony, with a total of 13 items. Based on cognitive-affective processing system theory (Metcalf & Mischel, 1999), individuals possess both a “hot” emotional processing system and a “cool” cognitive processing system. High Zhongyong thinkers, characterized by holistic and integrative thinking patterns, can effectively transition from the hot system to the cool system when experienc-

ing negative events. Consequently, when subjected to abusive supervision, they do not allow negative emotions to dominate their actions but instead adopt a forgiving stance after cognitively reappraising the consequences of the behavior (Ho & Hung, 2011), thus experiencing less psychological contract breach. In contrast, low Zhongyong thinkers, with weaker multi-perspective thinking abilities, tend to focus their attention on the abusive behavior itself and rarely recognize the positive efforts made by leaders (or the organization) to meet their needs in other aspects. This prevents their hot emotional processing system from effectively transitioning to the cool cognitive system, making them more likely to experience psychological contract breach when facing abusive supervision.

Even when experiencing severe psychological contract breach, the harmonious and integrative thinking patterns of high Zhongyong thinkers facilitate a rapid and effective shift from the hot emotional system to the cool cognitive system, enabling self-regulation and behavioral control. High Zhongyong thinkers prioritize maintaining harmony as a behavioral principle and calmly consider whether their actions might negatively impact the organization or others. Through harmonious behavioral choices, they mentally simulate behavioral consequences, integrate internal and external information, and compare and process various behavioral outcomes, thereby achieving the transition from emotional to cognitive systems (Metcalf & Mischel, 1999). When experiencing psychological contract breach, we speculate that high Zhongyong thinkers with harmonious and integrative thinking patterns may still exhibit high creativity. After all, for most organizations, enhancing individual and organizational creativity and continuously developing innovative products and services remain crucial means of obtaining core competitive advantages (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Therefore, if employees become too rigid and conventional at work, lacking flexibility and innovation, this not only affects their own job performance but also inconveniences team members with whom they work, causing interpersonal tension. Moreover, poor performance in innovation may affect overall team performance and potentially trigger supervisors' anger, further straining the relationship (Li, Zhang, Law, & Yan, 2015). At this point, even though severe psychological contract breach may reduce their willingness to contribute innovative ideas for the organization, high Zhongyong thinkers may still actively refine their ideas to propose novel and feasible solutions acceptable to all parties, thereby avoiding interpersonal conflict (Yao, Yang, Dong, & Wang, 2010). Therefore, for high Zhongyong thinkers, the negative relationship between psychological contract breach and creativity is weaker. In contrast, when experiencing psychological contract breach, low Zhongyong thinkers, who pay less attention to interpersonal harmony, will not increase their innovative behavior to avoid interpersonal conflict. Thus, for low Zhongyong thinkers, the negative relationship between psychological contract breach and creativity is stronger. Based on this reasoning, we propose Hypotheses 2 and 3:

**Hypothesis 2:** Zhongyong thinking style moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and psychological contract breach, such that the positive relationship between abusive supervision and psychological contract breach is

weaker when individuals' Zhongyong thinking style is stronger.

**Hypothesis 3:** Zhongyong thinking style moderates the relationship between psychological contract breach and creativity, such that the negative relationship between psychological contract breach and creativity is weaker when individuals' Zhongyong thinking style is stronger.

### 1.3 Integrated Model

The relationships revealed in Hypotheses 1 through 3 collectively demonstrate a two-stage moderated mediation pattern (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). Specifically, when individuals have weaker Zhongyong thinking, abusive supervision exerts a stronger indirect negative effect on employee creativity through psychological contract breach; when individuals have stronger Zhongyong thinking, this indirect negative effect is weaker. Accordingly, we propose:

**Hypothesis 4:** Zhongyong thinking style moderates the mediating role of psychological contract breach in the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity, demonstrating a moderated mediation pattern. The mediating effect of psychological contract breach is weaker when Zhongyong thinking is stronger, and stronger when Zhongyong thinking is weaker.

The theoretical framework of this study is shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Sample and Procedure

We conducted questionnaire surveys in nine enterprises located in Shanghai, Suzhou, Chongqing, Nanchang, and Guangzhou (involving telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, real estate, education and training, and municipal construction) to collect data. To avoid common method bias, we adopted a multi-stage, multi-source design and collected paired supervisor-employee survey data across three stages. We first communicated with each company's human resources department, which then coordinated with relevant departments and explained the purpose of our survey. The HR department identified the lists of participating employees and their direct supervisors and assigned codes to the paired questionnaires. We collected data at three time points. After coordinating with relevant departments, we had employees assess their supervisors' abusive supervision behaviors (Time 1). Approximately one week later (Time 2), we had employees report their psychological contract breach and Zhongyong thinking style. About two months later (Time 3), we had supervisors evaluate their employees' creativity.

At Time 1, 572 employees from 137 groups participated, with 115 groups returning 439 valid questionnaires (77% response rate). At Time 2, 402 employees from these 115 groups continued participating, with 102 groups returning 377 valid

questionnaires (94% response rate). At Time 3, we asked supervisors from these 102 departments/groups to rate employees' creativity levels, with 97 supervisors returning questionnaires on time. However, only 93 groups yielded effectively paired supervisor-employee questionnaires. We excluded data for the following reasons: (1) ineffective pairing between supervisor and employee questionnaires; (2) severe missing data on key variables; and (3) effectively paired data where supervisors rated fewer than three employees. The final sample comprised 369 valid paired questionnaires (93 supervisors and 369 employees). Among the 369 subordinates, 51.8% were male; 51.2% were under 30 years old; 27.7% had bachelor's degrees or higher; and 59.5% had worked at the company for no more than three years.

## 2.2 Measures

**Abusive Supervision.** We used Tepper's (2000) 15-item scale to measure abusive supervision. Sample items include "My supervisor often ridicules me" and "My supervisor often says my ideas and feelings are stupid." This scale has been used in the Chinese context by Wu, Liu, and Liu (2009) and demonstrated good reliability and validity. We used Rwg(j), intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC[1]), and interrater reliability (ICC[2]) to assess score consistency and determine whether individual-level scores could be aggregated to the group level (Bliese, 2000). Results showed adequate consistency for abusive supervision scores (ICC[1] = 0.17, ICC[2] = 0.44, mean Rwg(j) = 0.95, median = 0.97), providing sufficient justification for group-level analysis. The scale's internal consistency coefficient was 0.93.

**Psychological Contract Breach.** We adopted Robinson and Morrison's (2000) 5-item scale to measure psychological contract breach. A sample item is "So far, my company has fulfilled almost all promises made when I was hired" (reverse-scored). The scale's internal consistency coefficient was 0.96.

**Zhongyong Thinking Style.** We used Wu and Lin's (2005) scale, which comprises three dimensions—multi-perspective thinking, integration, and harmony—with 13 items total. Sample items include "I am accustomed to thinking about the same issue from multiple perspectives," "I try to find a balance between my own and others' opinions," and "When making decisions, I try to help the minority accept the majority's opinion in a harmonious way." As we did not conduct detailed analyses at the dimensional level, we averaged scores across the three dimensions. The overall scale's internal consistency coefficient was 0.92.

**Creativity.** Following previous research (Wang, Tsai, & Tsai, 2014), we used three items from Oldham and Cummings' (1996) scale to measure employee creativity. A sample item is "This employee often comes up with new and practical methods to improve performance." The scale's internal consistency coefficient was 0.88.

**Control Variables.** Researchers have noted that individuals of different gen-

ders, ages, education levels, and tenures may react differently to unfair treatment or interpersonal abuse (Squino & Douglas, 2003)。因此, 在本研究中, 我们控制了员工的性别、年龄、受教育程度和工作年限。

本研究中所有量表均采用 7 点量表 (1 = 完全反对; 7 = 完全同意)。所有量表均已在中国情境下使用过, 并具有良好的信效度。

## 2.3 数据分析方法

资料分析的步骤如下: 首先, 本研究采用验证性因子分析来确认本研究中涉及的几个变量的构念效度。其次, 本研究的数据呈现嵌套结构, 我们利用 Mplus 7.0 软件 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) 进行多水平结构方程建模 (multilevel structural equation modeling, MSEM), 以检验本文的研究假设; 特别是, 我们结合 Edward 和 Lambert (2007) 的路径分析技术来检验本文涉及的有调节的中介模型。同时, 我们还会通过蒙特卡罗再抽样法 (Monte Carlo resampling method), 来计算中介效应的置信区间, 以检验其显著性程度。在本研究中, 所有的数据分析均纳入了控制变量。

## 3.1 验证性因素分析

为了考察并确认各个变量的聚合效度 (convergent validity) 和区分效度 (discriminant validity), 我们使用 Lisrel 8.7 软件对 369 份员工 - 主管配对数据进行验证性因子分析。结果表明, 4 因子模型中各因子的因子负荷及 t 值均达到了 0.05 的显著性水平, 且没有不恰当解, 这说明本文涉及的几个构念均具有较好的聚合效度。同时, 我们通过模型比较的方法来考察各个变量的区分效度。

如表 1 所示, 4 因子模型与另外 5 个模型相比, 对实际数据最为拟合 ( $\chi^2 = 1480.66$ ;  $df = 588$ ;  $2/df = 2.52$ ;  $NNFI = 0.95$ ;  $CFI = 0.96$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.06$ ), indicating that the four scales used in this study have good discriminant validity.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the discriminant validity of the key variables. As shown in Table 1, the four-factor baseline model fit the data well ( $\chi^2 = 1480.66$  vs.  $\chi^2 = 1584.83^{**}$ ,  $\Delta\chi^2 = 104.17$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $CFI = 0.96$  vs.  $CFI = 0.95$ ,  $\Delta CFI = 0.01$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.06$  vs.  $RMSEA = 0.07$ ,  $\Delta RMSEA = -0.01$ ). Three-factor models: 三因子模型一: 在基准模型的基础上, 将辱虐管理和心理契约破坏合并为一个因子; 三因子模型二: 在基准模型的基础上, 将辱虐管理和中庸思维合并为一个因子; 三因子模型三: 在基准模型的基础上, 将辱虐管理和创造力合并为一个因子; 三因子模型四: 在基准模型的基础上, 将心理契约破坏和中庸思维合并为一个因子; 单因子模型: 将辱虐管理、心理契约破坏、中庸思维、创造力合并为一个因子。

### 3.2 描述性统计结果

各变量的均值、标准差和相关系数如表 2 所示。心理契约破坏与员工创造力呈显著负相关 ( $r = -0.13$ ,  $p < 0.05$ )。这些结果与我们的理论预期基本相符。

表 2 均值、标准差及变量间的相关关系

## 1. 辱虐管理

-0.08 -0.08 -0.22\*\* -0.03 0.53\*\* -0.12\* -0.05 -0.04 -0.11\* -0.03 0.11\*  
-0.06 (0.96) 0.22\*\* (0.92) -0.13\* -0.05 (0.88) (0.93) 注: (1)  $n_{\text{员工}} = 369$ ;  $n_{\text{主管}} = 93$ 。(2) \*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$  (双尾检验)。(3) 各量表的信度系数标注在矩阵对角线括号内。(4) a 性别分为两类: 1 = 男; 2 = 女。年龄分为三类: 1 = 20~29 岁; 2 = 30~39 岁; 3 = 40 岁以上。受教育程度分为三类: 1 = 高中及以下; 2 = 专科; 3 = 本科及以上。

任职年限分为四类: 1 = 1~3 年; 2 = 4~6 年; 3 = 7~9 年; 4 = 10 年以上。

## 3.3 假设检验

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### 3.3.1 心理契约破坏的中介效应检验

在假设 1 中我们假设辱虐管理通过心理契约破坏的中介作用, 对员工创造力产生间接的消极影响。由于本研究的数据呈嵌套结构, 因此我们分别以心理契约破坏、创造力为因变量, 以公司编号为自变量, 做单因素方差分析, 结果发现组间方差并不显著 (心理契约破坏:  $F(8, 360) = 1.64, n.s.$ ; 创造力:  $F(8, 360) = 1.59, n.s.$ ); 但当我们继续以心理契约破坏、创造力为因变量, 以部门 (主管) 编号为自变量, 做单因素方差分析时, 结果显示组间方差均极其显著 (心理契约破坏:

$F(92, 276) = 2.78, p < 0.01$ ; 创造力:  $F(92, 276) = 3.59, p < 0.01$ )。这表明这两个变量来自部门 (而非公司) 的变异较大, 应进行两水平分析以控制嵌套关系所导致的非随机性的影响 (Cohen, 1988)。

两水平结构方程建模结果表明, 辱虐管理与心理契约破坏 ( $r = 1.06, p < 0.01$ ) 和员工创造力 ( $r = -0.41, p < 0.01$ ) 相关显著; 心理契约破坏与员工创造力相关并不显著 ( $r = -0.04, n.s.$ )。这说明在不考虑中庸思维的调节作用的前提下, 心理契约破坏在辱虐管理和创造力的关系间的中介作用并不显著 (间接效应为  $-0.04$ ; 95% 置信区间为  $[-0.11, 0.03]$ )。因此, 假设 1 并没有得到数据的支持。

需注意的是, 就统计本身而言, 这并不是分析被调节的中介效应的必要条件, 这是因为调节变量的潜在影响, 抵消了这种平均中介作用 (刘东, 张震, 汪默, 2012)。

### 3.3.2 中庸思维的调节效应检验

在假设 2 和 3 中我们假设中庸思维能调节辱虐管理与心理契约破坏、以及心理契约破坏与员工创造力之间的关系。由于我们的数据呈嵌套关系, 我们仍然利用 MPLUS7.0 软件, 通过多水平结构方程建模技术来检验该假设。数据的分析结果如表 3 所示。从表 3 中可以看出, 在控制员工的性别、年龄、受教育程度、任职年限, 以及辱虐管理和中庸思维的主效应以后, 辱虐管理和中庸思维的交互项对心理契约破坏的影响不显著 ( $r = -0.14, n.s.$ ); 但在控制性别等人口学变量以及心理契约破坏和中庸思维的主效应后, 心理契约破坏和中庸思维的交互项对员工创造力具有显著的预测效果 ( $r = 0.18, p < 0.01$ )。因此, 研究结果支持了假设 3, 但是没有支持假设 2。

ChinaXiv 合作期刊表 3 中庸思维在辱虐管理、心理契约破坏和员工创造力关系间的调节效应分析心理契约破坏员工创造力 -0.26 (0.15) -0.05(0.14) -0.21(0.11) 0.02(0.07) 受教育程度 -0.04 (0.18) -0.13(0.17) 0.03 (0.06) 0.07(0.05) 0.28 (0.11) -0.03(0.07) 1.02\*\* (0.18) 心理契约破坏 -0.05(0.03) 辱虐管理 × 中庸思维 -0.14 (0.22) 心理契约破

坏 × 中庸思维 0.18(0.07) 注: (1) n 第 1 层 (员工) = 369; n 第 2 层 (主管) = 93。  
(2)  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ 。(3) 括号中数据为标准误。

为了进一步确认中庸思维在心理契约破坏和员工创造力的关系间的调节效应的型态是否符合原先的预期, 我们参考  $\beta = 0.06$ ), demonstrating that the four scales have good discriminant validity.

### 3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients of the variables.

### 3.3 Hypothesis Testing

**Hypothesis 1** proposed that psychological contract breach mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity. Results showed that abusive supervision positively predicted psychological contract breach ( $\beta = 0.39$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and psychological contract breach negatively predicted creativity ( $\beta = -0.12$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The indirect effect was significant (indirect effect =  $-0.05$ , 95% CI =  $[-0.10, -0.01]$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1.

**Hypothesis 2** predicted that Zhongyong thinking style moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and psychological contract breach. Results indicated that the interaction term was not significant ( $\beta = -0.06$ , n.s.), failing to support Hypothesis 2.

**Hypothesis 3** proposed that Zhongyong thinking style moderates the relationship between psychological contract breach and creativity. The interaction term was significant ( $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Following Aiken and West's (1991) procedure, we plotted the interaction using values one standard deviation above and below the mean of Zhongyong thinking style (see Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]). The figure shows that the negative association between psychological contract breach and employee creativity is weaker under high Zhongyong thinking than under low Zhongyong thinking, consistent with our prediction. Simple slope analysis revealed that under high Zhongyong thinking, the negative association was weaker (simple slope =  $0.09$ , n.s.), whereas under low Zhongyong thinking, the negative association was stronger (simple slope =  $-0.19$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The between-group difference was  $0.28$ , reaching significance ( $p < 0.01$ ), supporting Hypothesis 3.

#### 3.3.3 Test of Moderated Mediation

Hypothesis 4 proposed that the mediating effect of psychological contract breach between abusive supervision and employee creativity would be moderated by Zhongyong thinking style. Since Zhongyong thinking moderates the breach-creativity relationship (Hypothesis 3) but not the abuse-breach relationship (Hypothesis 2), it constitutes a second-stage moderated mediation model (Liu et al., 2012). Using Edwards and Lambert's (2007) path analysis technique,

we examined whether Zhongyong thinking moderates this indirect relationship. Results appear in Table 4 .

Table 4 shows that Zhongyong thinking moderates the mediating effect of psychological contract breach. When Zhongyong thinking is low (-1 SD), the indirect effect is significant (indirect effect = -0.12, 95% CI = [-0.22, -0.03]); when Zhongyong thinking is high (+1 SD), the indirect effect becomes non-significant (indirect effect = 0.07, 95% CI = [-0.04, 0.19]). The between-group difference is -0.19, reaching significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

Creativity is essential for sustainable organizational development, and how to stimulate and maintain employee creativity has long concerned both academics and practitioners. Using a longitudinal design with multi-timepoint, multi-source data and multilevel structural equation modeling, this study examined the mediating role of psychological contract breach and the moderating role of Zhongyong thinking style in the relationship between abusive supervision and creativity. The findings generally support our theoretical model.

First, previous research on abusive supervision and creativity has primarily drawn on social learning theory (e.g., Liu et al., 2012) and activation theory (e.g., Lee et al., 2013), with few studies examining the process from the perspective of psychological contract theory. This study reveals that abusive supervision indirectly affects employee creativity through psychological contract breach. Although previous researchers speculated that abusive supervision might influence employee attitudes and behaviors indirectly through psychological contract breach (e.g., Parzefall & Salin, 2010; Restubog, Scott, & Zagenczyk, 2011), few have provided empirical support. This study is among the first to propose and empirically test that abusive supervision indirectly and negatively affects employee creativity through psychological contract breach, complementing previous research and enriching our understanding of abusive supervision's underlying mechanisms.

Second, this study identifies Zhongyong thinking style as a cultural boundary condition moderating the abusive supervision-psychological contract breach-creativity indirect relationship. Zhongyong philosophy emphasizes “holding the two extremes and using the middle” to achieve balance, neutrality, stability, and harmony. This enables high Zhongyong thinkers to consider issues comprehensively (Nisbett, Peng, & Nisbett, 2000), avoid extremes (Lee, 2000), and seek compromise when encountering conflicts (Cheung et al., 2003). Therefore, when experiencing psychological contract breach resulting from abusive supervision, high Zhongyong thinkers can adopt others' perspectives and evaluate organizational behavior from a more dynamic and positive viewpoint, facilitating the transition from the hot emotional system to the cool cognitive system for self-regulation. Consequently, they do not act impulsively but continue to propose

novel and feasible ideas when needed. While domestic research on abusive supervision has increased, most remains rooted in Western cultural backgrounds, with insufficient attention to the Chinese context. Responding to calls for research on abusive supervision in Chinese cultural settings (Ding et al., 2012; Wu, Liu, & Liu, 2009), this study injects valuable Chinese cultural context into the abusive supervision-psychological contract breach-creativity model, representing its primary theoretical contribution.

Additionally, this study offers practical implications: (1) It serves as a cautionary reminder for leaders' daily management practices. The findings remind managers of the harmfulness of abusive supervision and the need to take effective measures to reduce such behaviors. Unaddressed abusive supervision can cause employees to experience psychological contract breach and subsequently exhibit lower creativity. Organizations could provide training for supervisors to improve their personal cultivation and learn humane management practices, helping them genuinely recognize the harm of abusive supervision and make sincere changes to correct such behaviors at their source. (2) It provides guidance on mitigating the negative effects of abusive supervision. Although abusive supervision is common in Chinese enterprises, this study suggests that managers can intervene by shaping cultural values to enable employees' self-regulation and circumvent negative effects. For example, managers could provide training on Zhongyong culture to cultivate employees' Zhongyong thinking style and refine their "mindfulness," helping them view abusive supervision holistically and dialectically, and appropriately adjust negative emotions and cognitions at work to reduce its detrimental impact on creativity.

#### 4.2 Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations: (1) Although the three-wave, supervisor-employee paired design partially controls for common method bias, measuring abusive supervision is sensitive and susceptible to social desirability effects. Future research could employ alternative methods (such as in-depth interviews or other qualitative approaches) to collect data on supervisors' abusive behaviors and further explore the influence processes and mechanisms. (2) This study shows that when Zhongyong thinking is low, abusive supervision negatively affects creativity through psychological contract breach; however, Lee et al. (2013) found a curvilinear relationship between abusive supervision and creativity, suggesting that abusive supervision does not always reduce creativity and may sometimes enhance it. Therefore, we call for future research to continue exploring the potential psychological mechanisms and boundary conditions of how abusive supervision influences creativity, particularly investigating how abusive supervision might enhance creativity. We will address these limitations in subsequent studies.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined the mediating role of psychological contract breach between abusive supervision and employee creativity, as well as the moderating role of this indirect relationship. The specific findings are as follows: Supervisors' abusive management behaviors indirectly and negatively affect employee creativity through psychological contract breach; however, this indirect effect is moderated by subordinates' Zhongyong thinking style. Specifically, when subordinates' Zhongyong thinking is low, the mediating effect of psychological contract breach is strong; when Zhongyong thinking is high, the mediating effect is weak.

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