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Abusive Supervision Within the Military Ranks: A Qualitative Examination of Positive Emotion-Focused Coping Strategies

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by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my wonderful mother, Dottie Jane McBride, who told me, her only daughter, that there were no limitations. She taught me that I could fly!

It is also dedicated to my husband, Wilbur McDew, my gift from God, who let me!

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To the children God has blessed me to have and to love: MiDee'ah, you have NEVER been forgotten. I love you, Daughter! Nivek, Toi'ya, Ellisha, Isabella, Mea, and all of those yet to come: I hope I have made you as proud as you have made me every day! I love you and I hope you continue to go forth and be great! But if you never remember anything your loving matriarch has ever said to you … think on these things:

Seek God first!

and

"Be fearless in the pursuit of what sets your soul on fire!"—Jennifer Lee

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Abstract

In this study, the researcher examined abusive supervision coping by military members. Based on social exchange theory and the power and influence theory, the researcher investigated whether veterans perceived emotional coping (avoidance, support seeking, and reframing) as strategies that mitigated stress caused by abusive supervision while they were serving in their respective military departments. Past studies have not accounted for junior officers or enlisted members; therefore, the researcher studied this lower ranking tier of personnel and discovered that the hierarchy of the military system affected their reporting of and receiving assistance in dealing with abusive supervision. Therefore, affected service members were more likely to utilize emotion-focused coping strategies to maneuver the situation. The results of this study indicated that the military hierarchy and loyalty to the chain of command were deterrents to lower-ranking members reporting abusive supervision. In lieu of reporting the abuse, the employees were able to find relief by utilizing emotion-focused coping with a heavy reliance on avoidance of the destructive leader.

Keywords: abusive supervision, emotion-focused coping, reframing, support seeking, avoidance

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Leadership, leader behavior, and how leaders impact employees have been the focus of studies for decades (Lasthuizen et al., 2019). Leadership is a process that is mutually beneficial only when the leader and follower in the relationship effectively complete their assigned roles (Lee et al., 2019; Shakeel et al., 2019). In this relationship, both parties have expectations of the other. Leader–member exchange (LMX) theory and social exchange theory (SET) were founded on that transactional and dyadic notion. LMX and SET theories outline how a leader treats their employees individually while also examining the cost and rewards between the two as the relationship matures (Guo et al., 2020; H. Wang et al., 2018).

Past leadership studies have highlighted the most effective leaders and how they influenced employees and enabled organizational success (Wongleedee, 2020). Studies have shown a correlation between creative leaders and effective management (Li & Yue, 2019) as well as positively influencing innovation and performance (Tian & Zhang, 2020; Zhao et al., 2021). In contrast, there have been studies that researched the negative impacts of ineffective leadership. Some of these studies have found that ineffective leadership contributed to counterproductive work or deviant behavior (Haider et al., 2018) and could negatively influence employees' anxiety and depression (Pyc et al., 2017).

Researchers have recognized that ineffective leadership may be just as important to study as effective leadership. The aim of these studies was to equip leaders with tools to lead organizations. One major reason for this circumstance is due to people between the ages of 25 and 40 (millennial generation; Winn & Dykes, 2019). Internationally, millennials are now the largest working generation (Liu et al., 2019) and will compose 75% of the U.S. workforce by 2025 (Winn & Dykes, 2019). In order to lead this new workforce, leaders must understand that

millennials have different experiences (such as Internet usage and computer technology) and motivations than the generation before them (Sadler et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2021). Winn and Dykes (2019) further explained that younger millennials, due to inexperience, may be naïve enough to believe what a toxic leader says or they may not have the skills needed to counteract the toxicity. The negative impacts of toxic leadership on millennials were also acknowledged in a 2017 study where it was determined that Chinese millennials were also susceptible to a leader's destructive behavior (Hou, 2017).

Toxic and ineffective leaders display many negative leadership traits and practices. One of the negative practices is abusive supervision (Haider et al., 2018). In this stressful situation, an employee may feel as if they are fighting a losing battle. Even though the stressful situation may feel hopeless, there are options an employee can take to mitigate the negative experiences, one of which is using positive coping strategies.

Background

Abusive supervision is an ineffective tactic practiced by toxic leaders that negatively impacts employees. Toxic leaders can be anywhere; therefore, they are detrimental in both conventional and military work settings. Lipman-Blumen (2005), a conventional and military workplace leadership expert who helped popularize the term "toxic leader," has described toxic leaders as dysfunctional and destructive people who are harmful to others, organizations, and even nations. In a similar vein, Chua and Murray (2015) described toxic leaders as being charming people who were predisposed to hatred, were negative and narcissistic, and demonstrated a need for power. These are all undesirable leadership attributes within workplaces and have a negative impact both culturally and psychologically on employees (Doğan & Baloğlu, 2019).

At some point in their lives, most people will experience a toxic leader and workplace. The toxicity is an impetus for employees to exhibit counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) such as tardiness, poor work performance, or employee withdrawal (Baka, 2019; Watkins et al., 2019). A 2017 study of 1,000 college-educated employees found that most respondents felt their supervisor was mildly toxic (32%) or highly toxic (24%; Matos, 2017). Another study showed that the toxicity from leadership caused employees to believe the leaders had favorites, displayed abusive or emotionally volatile behaviors, and were narcissistic (Webster et al., 2016).

Unfortunately, if not remedied, a leader's toxic behavior will continue and worsen for the employee because toxicity does not disappear on its own. Studies have shown that toxic leaders impart lasting harm to organizations (Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020) and that reporting toxicity may not help resolve the issue as long as the toxic leader remains in place (Matos et al., 2018). Similar outcomes are seen in the military environment. After studying how pervasive toxic leaders were in the military, researchers postulated that effective leaders could overcome the actions of toxic leaders, but it would require time, work, and dedication (Ene et al., 2020; Winn & Dykes, 2019).

The military is a fertile environment for toxic leadership to thrive and grow. It is a male-dominated workforce (Matos, 2017; Matos et al., 2018; Segal et al., 2016) formed around leader/follower relationships (Reed, 2015). Moreover, it is filled with impressionable young people looking for someone strong they can trust (Winn & Dykes, 2019). Regardless, no one is exempt from the effects of toxic leadership; it affects all ranks (Ene et al., 2020). If toxicity were not troubling enough, the military environment is also fertile ground for abusive supervision, a dangerous offshoot of toxic leadership (Graham et al., 2019).

Abusive supervision is continual dysfunctional workplace behavior, both verbal and nonverbal (all nonphysical), that an employee perceives to be happening (Tepper, 2000). Past researchers have found that destructive work environments contributed to, enhanced, or increased abusive supervision (Mao et al., 2019; Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020). The impact of abusive supervision is negative workplace stress for the employee. Therefore, workers may have to utilize coping strategies or skills to manage the stress they feel in order to remain in the organization.

Coping theory explains the process by which people cope with stress (Joo, 2019; Liang et al., 2019). Folkman and Lazarus (1980) initiated the study of coping by dividing it up into a two-part transactional process: appraisal and coping. The appraisal process describes how a person evaluates a situation and decides if it is harmful (Bae et al., 2015; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Schellenberg & Bailis, 2016). Then, if the situation is deemed harmful the person uses the coping process in order to reduce the negative effects of the situation (Bae et al., 2015; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Schellenberg & Bailis, 2016). This is accomplished by utilizing different coping strategies.

Coping strategies are mechanisms employees may utilize to mitigate internal and external stress (Britt et al., 2017; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987; Salam et al., 2019). While research has been conducted on the negative effects of toxic leadership and abusive supervision, there have not been many studies on how employees effectively cope with these toxic behaviors (Tepper et al., 2017; Webster et al., 2016). Therefore, I examined how military service members managed stress from abusive supervision. The study itself was focused on emotion-focused strategies.

Problem-focused coping strategies are utilized when an employee has some control and wants to find an answer to the problem that is causing them stress (Britt et al., 2017; Lazarus &

Folkman, 1984; Salam et al., 2019; Zaman & Ali, 2019). Past studies have concluded that when faced with a problem within their control, employees mostly used problem-focused (or task-oriented) strategies (Salam et al., 2019; Wireko-Gyebi et al., 2017). In contrast, emotion-focused coping strategies are utilized when an employee has no control in the situation and wants to reduce or minimize the pressure that a stressful situation has caused (Britt et al., 2017; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Salam et al., 2019; Zaman & Ali, 2019).

Statement of Problem

Abusive supervisors are problematic and negatively affect employee job satisfaction, performance and quality of life. Researchers have found that employees with abusive supervisors had a more negative view of their life, job, and the organizations for which they work (Baloyi, 2020; Chen & Wang, 2017; Ronen & Donia, 2020; Zhou et al., 2018). Similarly, researchers also found that abusive leadership produced negative effects for both employees and the organization in its entirety. Those negative effects culminated in poor morale, lower job satisfaction, higher organization turnover, decreased organizational commitment, and financial losses (Caesens et al., 2019; Hou, 2017; A. Khan et al., 2017; Tepper et al., 2017; Tillman et al., 2018; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). Additional research into abusive supervision showed that employees have experienced increased workplace deviance (Haider et al., 2018; Ronen & Donia, 2020) and increased negative affective responses (workplace stress; Haider et al., 2018; Tillman et al., 2018).

Similarly, abusive supervision negatively affects military service members. Researchers have found that toxic military leaders limited employee creativity, decreased employee performance, and hampered organizational effectiveness (Reed, 2015; Stump, 2017; Williams, 2019). Last, a more recent research study demonstrated that toxicity thrived in male-dominated

organizations (such as the military), which led to lower work engagement, conflict, stress, and resignations (Matos et al., 2018).

Although abusive supervision has been aggressively studied over more than 20 years, there is a noticeable lack in studies focused on employee coping strategies (Tepper et al., 2017; Webster et al., 2016). This absence is especially true within the U.S. military. Therefore, this study focused on emotion-focused coping strategies, as perceived by former military personnel, in mitigating abusive supervision stressors.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to identify emotion-focused coping strategies utilized by former military service members to mitigate stress induced by abusive supervision. This study employed questionnaires, interviews from participants, and published literature sources to obtain and document participants' experiences with managing abusive supervision–induced stress. In order to ensure validity of data, participants were asked to review identified themes and information from other participants to determine agreement. All interviews were written and emailed directly to the participants, who then emailed them directly back to me.

Research Questions

In this study, I investigated how effective military service members perceived emotional coping strategies to be when coping with abusive supervision. To ensure suitable participants were included in the study, I asked participants to identify if they experienced abusive supervision while serving in the military. I then utilized Tepper's (2000) Abusive Supervision 15-item scale, which entailed ranking incidents to determine if abusive supervision has occurred. I also utilized Yagil et al.'s (2011) Coping With Abusive Supervision scale items. It is a newer

instrument based in part on Lazarus and Folkman's (1987) Ways of Coping scale and its condensed version, Carver's (1997) Brief COPE—both of which determine methods for managing stress. These scales are used to evaluate the cognitive and behavioral ways employees manage stressful situations and place them in problem-focused or emotion-focused categories (Bae et al., 2015; Lazarus & Folkman, 1980; Yagil et al., 2011). See Appendices A and B for questionnaire information.

This study was guided by the following three research questions:

RQ1: Why do military service members who experience abusive supervision select emotion-focused coping strategies?

RQ2: How do emotion-focused coping strategies mitigate negative workplace stress resulting from abusive supervision in the military?

RQ3: What are the outcomes of emotion-focused coping strategies, as perceived by former military service members, within the military?

In order to facilitate understanding and document valid abusive supervision data, I utilized the qualitative data uncovered by questionnaires, interviews, and published literature sources for this case study. Additionally, in order to ensure validity, I asked participants to review identified themes and information from other participants to determine if they agreed or disagreed. Last, all interviews were written and emailed directly between the participant and me. The written interview sessions were used to explore the abusive supervision experiences and determine if participants felt their situations improved, stayed the same, or became worse after utilizing emotion-focused coping strategies.

The theoretical frameworks used for this study were social exchange theory (SET) and power and influence theory. Utilizing these theories, I examined the dyadic relationship between

supervisors with power (controls resources; Lam & Xu, 2019) and the employees who depend on them for guidance and support. Additionally, this study was modeled after a 2009 study that examined senior military and government civilian leaders' experiences with destructive leadership. This research expanded on the 2009 study by studying the experiences of lower hierarchies of leadership and personnel.

Significance of the Study

The intent of this study was to begin to fill an acknowledged absence in abusive supervision research. Leaders in the field of abusive supervision have highlighted the need for more studies capturing the effectiveness of coping strategies (Tepper et al., 2017). Past researchers have also identified coping as an area for future study (Abbas & Saad, 2020; Heffer & Willoughby, 2017; Peralta & Saldanha, 2017). Additionally, there is a noticeable absence of military-focused studies regarding abusive supervision and coping. Therefore, the insights from this study provided additional theoretical and practical insight into how employees feel about the usefulness of emotion-based coping strategies in order to introduce or update current theories and training techniques within organizations.

Definition of Key Terms

The terms listed below are provided because they are unique to this study and may not be understood by all readers.

Abusive supervision. Abusive supervision is a subordinate's perceptions of sustained verbal and nonverbal hostile interactions to exclude physical contact (Tepper, 2000; D. Wang et al., 2019).

Climate. An organization's climate is determined by the way employees, as a whole, jointly agree that an organization does business as evidenced by policies, practices, behaviors, and morale (Barbera & Schneider, 2014; Reed, 2015).

Constructive leadership. Arasli et al. (2020) determined that constructive leadership was positive subordinate and organization leadership behaviors that aid in achieving common shared goals.

Coping strategies. Coping strategies are the different ways that employees handle internal and external stress, which include emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies (Salam et al., 2019).

Core values. Mehlman and Corley (2014) described core values as individual values unique to the military that exemplifies honor, duty, and country.

Counter-productive work behaviors (CWBs). CWBs are actions employees utilize that cause harm to an organization (Baka, 2019).

Culture/corporate climate. An organizations culture or corporate climate is the frequently changing way employees, as a whole, socially experience an organization based on basic assumptions, values, and beliefs (Barbera & Schneider, 2014).

Destructive leadership/toxic leadership. Destructive, or toxic, leadership is the methodical and recurrent sabotage by a person in a leadership position that negatively affects employees and/or the organization (Fors Brandebo et al., 2019; Schmid et al., 2018)

Emotion-focused coping. Emotion-focused coping is the strategy in which an individual utilizes emotional actions to overcome stress (Amin et al., 2019).

Forceful leadership. Kaiser et al. (2015) explained that forceful leadership is when a leader uses their positional and personal power to force performance.

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). OCBs are positive employee behaviors that are above and beyond basic job requirements (Welsh et al., 2020).

Situational leadership. Situational leadership is a leader's ability to utilize different leadership styles dependent on the situation and needs of subordinates (Hussain & Hassan, 2015; Reed, 2015).

Toxic workplace. A toxic workplace is a negative environment that has a harmful culture and is filled with at least one toxic employee that encourages an unsafe level of workplace stress (Mcray, 2015).

Transformational leadership. Transformational leaders are leaders who motivate and inspire followers by effectively influencing performance and developing followers' talents (O'Reilly & Chatman, 2020; Sosik et al., 2018).

Workplace (occupational) stress. Workplace (occupational) stress is negative emotions induced by the workplace environment (Fasih-Ramandi et al., 2019).

Summary

Chapter 1 discussed the importance of constructive (positive) leaders in organizations. It explained that destructive leaders were at the helm of some of these organizations and were causing these organizations to become toxic. In many of these toxic organizations, employees were experiencing abusive supervision. Leaders who practice abusive supervision are causing these employees to experience workplace stress in both conventional work settings and the military workforce. In both workforces, employees who effectively cope with stress are better prepared to endure the situation until the stressful event passes.

Employees can use problem-based or emotion-focused coping strategies. While there have been numerous abusive supervision studies in conventional work settings, the same cannot

be said about the military workforce. Therefore, this study focused on how military service members utilize emotion-focused coping when facing abusive supervision. Chapter 1 also included the theoretical framework for this study, which was SET and power and influence theory. This chapter also explained that social exchange theory and leader–member exchange theory were also used for the theoretical framework. Last, this chapter also included the following: statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and significance of the study and definitions of key terms.

Chapter 1 is an overview for this study of abusive supervision. The information provided in Chapter 1 will prepare the reader for Chapter 2, the literature review. Chapter 3 contains a discussion of the measures of the study and the research design.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Leaders who practice abusive supervision are inducing negative emotional responses from their employees (Oh & Farh, 2017). Abusive supervision has been heavily studied since the early 2000s. Since that time, researchers discovered that abusive supervision has been a factor in employees experiencing greater levels of negative stress (Baka, 2019; Tepper, 2000; Yu et al., 2016). The emotions (anger, fear or sadness) brought on by stress are detrimental to every aspect of the organization (J. Zhang & Liu, 2018). The U.S. military is no exception.

The negative impacts from abusive supervision have caused military service members to experience workplace stress that some have chosen to cope with by utilizing emotion-focused coping strategies. The literature has delineated coping mechanisms and strategies associated with areas such as military deployments, combat, and posttraumatic stress. However, there have not been many studies to examine coping strategies associated with abusive supervision. Therefore, the major topics that were reviewed within this literature review are: leadership, toxicity, abusive supervision, workplace stress, toxicity and abusive supervision within the military, coping, and emotion-focused coping.

The purpose of this study was to identify and isolate emotion-focused coping strategies, as perceived by former military service members, to overcome stress induced by abusive supervision. The research questions were as follows:

RQ1: Why do military service members who experience abusive supervision select emotion-focused coping strategies?

RQ2: How do emotion-focused coping strategies mitigate negative workplace stress resulting from abusive supervision in the military?

RQ3: What are the outcomes of emotion-focused coping strategies, as perceived by former military service members, within the military?

The literature within this chapter represents a comprehensive search of scholarly online and library databases available through the academic and journal databases of Abilene Christian University's online library. These databases included EBSCO, ProQuest, PsycArticles, Military and Government Collection, and Journal Finder. The following keywords were searched: *leadership*, *toxic leadership*, *abusive supervision*, *abusive leadership*, *constructive leadership*, *destructive leadership*, *ineffective leadership*, *authoritarian leadership*, *transformational leadership*, *situational leadership*, *stress*, *distress*, *workplace stress*, *emotional intelligence*, *spiritual intelligence*, *coping*, *coping strategies*, *emotional coping*, *emotional coping strategies*, *abusive leadership in military*, *toxic military leaders*, and *followership*.

Leadership

"Leadership" describes the social process by which one person influences others to collaborate together towards a common goal (Hussain & Hassan, 2015; Northouse, 2014; Platow et al., 2015). It is based on two-way influence between the leader (majority influence) and the follower (minority influence; Reed, 2014). "Leader" is not a position nor does it signify power (J. McMahon, 2010). This person, the leader, is needed in the organization in order to motivate others to work together to complete tasks that count toward the organization's vision and mission. Organizations need leaders who will be a positive example for employees to emulate and rely upon (Popper, 2016). These types of leaders develop relationships with employees, which helps improve their productivity (S. Rehman et al., 2018).

"Leader" is also not a position just anyone can embody. Leadership is not status, power or official authority that is given to a person due to their position in an organization (J.

McMahon, 2010). Leaders are the people willing to do what it takes to positively motivate others (J. McMahon, 2010). Leaders are able to evaluate themselves (their personality, traits, values, and skills) and the organization (employees) in order to select the appropriate leadership theories/styles required to become the driving force the organization and employees need for success (Get, 2018; Reed, 2015). Action and effort are necessary in order to become the leader an organization and its employees need. It is so much more than just sitting in the "big chair" during meetings.

The meaning of "leader" and leadership has evolved over time. The definition has progressed from describing control and power to focusing on personality traits, groups, and teams (Northouse, 2014). Despite the evolution of changes in the definition, anyone would be hard-pressed to obtain total agreement on one complete definition. Leaders influence the organization's culture and how the people (who are a part of it) perform. Workplace (organizational) leaders play an important role in that they set the example. Brownlee et al. (2019) described leadership as the heart of the organization.

But what does an effective leader actually do? Effective leaders have a responsibility to the people within their organization. Effective leaders must have the courage to do the job right (Ames, 2018; Brownlee et al., 2019), be an example for the employees to emulate (Kwak & Shim, 2017; Popper, 2016), assist the employees when warranted (Gigliotti, 2016), and develop more leaders (Hamilton, 2019; Northouse, 2014). These are immense responsibilities that allow everyone (leader and employees) to flourish.

Effective and ethical leadership are needed within organizations. Effective leadership responsibilities ensure the work environment (culture) is conducive to productivity (Shafique et al., 2018), creativity (Li & Yue, 2019), and organizational accomplishment (Brownlee et al.,

2019). Effective leaders also give employees an example to follow especially during times of crisis (Popper, 2016; Saqib & Arif, 2017; Stanciulescu & Beldiman, 2019). Additionally, effective leaders inspire their employees so that all employees want to work together toward the organization's success (Brownlee et al., 2019).

Organizations also need their leaders to be ethical. An organization's success is rooted in a leader's ability to impart wisdom, justice, kindness, morality, and faithfulness when needed (Bai & Morris, 2014; Shafique et al., 2018). When leaders utilize ethical leadership, they demonstrate appropriate personal and interpersonal relationships are credible, trustworthy, and fair; and give employees a meaningful symbol to emulate (Kacmar et al., 2015; Popper, 2016).

Constructive and Destructive Leadership

A leader is the person employees look to for guidance and direction. Leaders can positively influence others to collectively work together toward a shared goal (Northouse, 2014). Therefore, most people have a leader, such as an employer, manager, or supervisor they report to in a work environment. In many of these workplaces that person, the leader, sets the tone for how employees feel about the organization as a whole (Abbas & Saad, 2020; D. Wang et al., 2019). If the tone is positive, perhaps everyone collaborates, works out differences, feels valued, and primarily enjoys going to their place of employment.

Leaders within organizations are comparable to captains on airplanes or ships; they ensure everyone on their team (or crew) collaborates together to achieve one common goal (or destination). The type of leadership that is in place determines if the goal (or destination) is achieved (or reached on time or not; Saqib & Arif, 2017). The way the leader conducts these actions helps determine if an organization has a good or bad leader. Thus, leaders can be

constructive (good—focused on pushing towards the set goal) or destructive (bad—not focused on the goal).

Constructive leaders exhibit traits that are beneficial to the organization and the employee while guiding the employees to accomplish common organizational goals (Arasli et al., 2020; Shaw et al., 2015). Constructive leaders are ethical and effective, build supportive relationships with their employees by openly communicating (allow for feedback), and treat employees with respect in order to establish and maintain trust (Guo et al., 2020). These supervisor actions inspire loyalty (Guo et al., 2020), job satisfaction (S. L. Choi et al., 2016), productivity (Fiaz et al., 2017), and creativity (Bibi et al., 2018; Li & Yue, 2019).

In contrast, destructive leaders are those who repeatedly perform actions that negatively impact the organization and its employees (Abbas & Saad, 2020; Fors Brandebo et al., 2019). Destructive leaders will be hard-pressed to set a positive example (be ethical and effective leaders) if they allow power and selfish reasoning to corrupt them. In turn this negatively impacts the organization's goals. Additionally, destructive leaders may embrace negative traits that allow for the abuse of others through manipulation, dishonesty, and exploitation in order to gain or maintain power (Perry, 2015). Leaders who use these dysfunctional tactics have negative impacts on organizations for the reason that their decisions and actions, usually self-gratifying, are not beneficial to the organization as a whole (Mesdaghinia et al., 2019; Vreja et al., 2016). Past studies have contended that leaders who are more concerned with power than for their employees are more probable to become abusive (Kiewitz et al., 2016; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016).

An examination of two past presidents may further the explanation and illustrate the differences between constructive and destructive leaders. The President of the United States (POTUS) is a leader that many Americans look to during times of uncertainty or crisis. The

POTUS is a leader for all people and should make decisions based on the greater good of the American people (not personal or political interests; Dean, 2020). Therefore, whether a president utilizes constructive or destructive leadership is very important.

A past POTUS and constructive leader was Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States. He is, arguably, the best president the United States has ever had (Hubbard, 2015; Schneider, 2007). The C-SPAN (2020) Presidential Historians Survey, utilizing 91 noted historians from colleges and universities across the United States, ranked Abraham Lincoln as number one each year the survey was given (2000, 2009, and 2017). Nonetheless, long before this survey began distinguishing the differences in presidents, researchers recognized that Abraham Lincoln possessed the traits and skills of a great leader.

First, Abraham Lincoln had natural leadership skills that were instilled in him as a young boy—such as honesty, integrity, and empathy (Biagini et al., 2009; Phillips, 1992). Additionally, he possessed leadership skills he learned throughout his life, such as his ability to communicate, write, and give speeches (Biagini et al., 2009; Hubbard, 2015; Phillips, 1992). These skills helped him become a leader who greatly influenced others. President Lincoln was a leader who had a goal (preserving the United States), and he pushed his employees toward that goal (Arasli et al., 2020; Phillips, 1992). Past research into Abraham Lincoln showed that he was an empathic leader who sought consensus versus sole decision-making opportunities (Field, 2011).

A POTUS who personifies the destructive leadership description is Andrew Johnson. He was the 17th president of the United States and one of only three that have been impeached (Bowie, 2018). Utilizing the same C-SPAN (2020) Presidential Historians Survey, Andrew Johnson was voted number 42 of 43 presidents. He was in direct contrast to Abraham Lincoln in that he deliberately went against the established goals of the United States by opposing the 14th

Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that declared African Americans citizens of the United States (Bowie, 2018). Andrew Johnson was ultimately impeached on account of he fired his Secretary of War because he opposed favorable treatment of Confederate leaders (Rasmussen, 2017). While it cannot be definitively stated that Andrew Johnson fired the secretary of war due to his personal belief that America was for White people, he did hold that sentiment (Bowie, 2018), and that view went against the current laws (goal/mission) of the United States and was, therefore, destructive.

Faced with these two drastically different forms of leadership one might ask, "Why would a leader choose destructive leadership?" There are many contributing factors, one of which is the leader's temperament. Studies have found that leaders who expressed their anger to employees appeared to the employee as a threat (Song et al., 2017) and that some leaders behaved destructively toward employees to bolster their ego (Ene et al., 2020). Another study showed that leaders experiencing self-doubt or employee disrespect rebounded by displaying abusive leadership practices (Camps et al., 2020). Finally, Pundt and Schwarzbeck (2018) discovered a positive relationship between irritation, hostility, and leaders who practice abusive supervision.

With the realization that temperament and difficult, demanding work conditions have an impact on the use of constructive and destructive leadership behavior, it should also be noted that leaders may go back and forth on the leadership continuum from time to time. Collins and Jackson (2015) found that negative factors such as stressful work environments could cause a leader to choose either constructive or destructive leadership tactics depending on how they self-regulated. A leader who loses their temper should not be automatically listed as a destructive leader (Fors Brandebo et al., 2019; Reed, 2015). However, a leader who routinely and

systematically demeans their employees and has a negative impact on morale and an organization's productivity can be labeled destructive (Webster et al., 2016; Winn & Dykes, 2019).

Toxicity

Destructive leadership can lead to toxicity. Unfortunately, many organizations have placed toxic (harmful or negative) individuals into leadership positions. Toxic (also referred to as destructive) leaders negatively impact subordinates and the organization for which they work (Haider et al., 2018). Toxic leaders are impulsive, selfish, and demanding leaders who tend to care more about themselves than the employees who work for them (Abbas & Saad, 2020). Thus, toxic leaders are left in charge of a harmful workplace that negatively impacts the physiological, psychosocial, and spiritual well-being of its employees (Williams, 2017). Employees never know what to expect from this type of erratic leadership.

Toxic leaders in organizations (around the world) are on the rise, and they are proving to be a problem (Baloyi, 2020; Doğan & Baloğlu, 2019). Toxic leaders are leading ineffectively or not leading at all (Ene et al., 2020). Regrettably, some organizations and employees are knowingly placing them in these leadership positions. Organizations and employees are willing to enable toxic leaders due to the confidence and charm they portray; these attributes also help them draw others, such as employees and other leaders, into their toxic web (Matos, 2017).

Most toxic leaders are not interested in helping an organization or its members. Toxic leaders mainly care about themselves, how they are perceived, and what they can get out of a situation. Toxic leaders can negatively affect an organization's overall operation by instigating distrust between the leaders and employees (Winn & Dykes, 2019). Toxic leaders also disrupt

teams and teamwork (Williams, 2017). This makes coworkers probably less likely to help each other or remain with the organization (Xiao et al., 2018).

It should also be noted that some toxic leaders do care about the organization and its mission. In this case, leaders become toxic because they would do anything to make sure the mission succeeds, even if it means sacrificing the well-being of their subordinates (Reed, 2015). Additionally, some leaders want to fulfill their duties and look effective and efficient to their superiors; therefore, they will do anything to make sure productivity is met or exceeded (Reed, 2015). Studies have found that one of the ways leaders achieved these goals was through dominance (a trait associated with controlling and intimidating; Graham et al., 2019; Matos et al., 2018).

Dark Triad

Recent studies have found that toxic leaders share common traits. These traits are Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism (also known as the Dark Triad; Deutchman & Sullivan, 2018; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). The three Dark Triad traits are unique, but they also overlap each other because they all lead to selfish advantages (Schyns et al., 2019).

Leaders who exhibit Machiavellian traits pursue leadership from a self-interest perspective; they are immoral and manipulative and mainly care about their personal goals and not those of the people they lead (Deutchman & Sullivan, 2018; Kwak & Shim, 2017; Schyns et al., 2019; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). Leaders who exhibit the psychopathy trait are unstable leaders who are impulsive and have limited empathy for others (Deutchman & Sullivan, 2018; Palmen et al., 2018; Schyns et al., 2019; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). The last trait, narcissism, is exhibited in leaders who have an inflated sense of themselves and want to be the center of attention (Deutchman & Sullivan, 2018; Schyns et al., 2019; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016).

Leaders who exhibit one or more of these negative traits can be problematic in any organization (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). These leaders are a problem because these traits individually and together have been associated with leaders who exhibit dishonest and manipulative behaviors (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). In many of these situations, these forceful leaders wrongly used their positions (through yelling, throwing fits, and/or direct anger) to persuade their employees to perform (Kaiser et al., 2015). As a result, research has shown that employees began feeling demeaned, belittled, and undermined (Haider et al., 2018; Song et al., 2017; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016; Wongleedee, 2020).

Abusive Supervision

One of the ways toxicity is displayed in the workplace is through abusive supervision of subordinates. There have been many reiterations of its definition since the study of abusive supervision began almost 20 years ago. Abusive supervision is defined as "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (D. Wang et al., 2019, p. 153). Abusive supervision is subjective to the person experiencing the abuse; therefore, one person may view a situation as abusive while another may not (Gatti et al., 2020; Kacmar et al., 2015).

The holistic focus on abusive supervision in organizations initially began when Tepper (2000) determined that it negatively influenced employee attitudes towards work and home life. As a result of this research, the Abusive Supervision 15-item scale was developed. This Likert scale–measured tool documents the frequency with which supervisors utilize abusive supervision tactics (Tepper, 2000; Watkins et al., 2019). The Abusive Supervision 15-item scale is still in use today (Tepper et. al, 2017).

Since 2000, studies have confirmed and expanded on Tepper's findings and added to the literature. For example, a later study determined abusive supervision negatively affected individuals as well as teams (Tepper et al., 2017). Past research also found that abusive supervision, correlated with fear, was damaging to the workplace culture and ultimately eroded productivity (Kiewitz et al., 2016; Rowan, 2016). D. Wang et al. (2019) went on to conclude that abusive supervision had a negative impact on innovative behavior and job security. Researchers found that job insecurity increased "perceived" abusive supervision and abusive supervision that resulted in CWBs by employees (Baka, 2019; Chen & Wang, 2017; Kluemper et al., 2019). Additional studies came to similar conclusions and showed that abusive leaders also negatively affected employees' workplace engagement, self-esteem, and work performance (Arfat et al., 2018; Chen & Wang, 2017). Thus, abusive supervision negatively impacts (damages) employees as well as the organization.

Organizations that experience abusive supervision are employing people who may not be focused on their jobs and can exhibit stress reactions (Webster et al., 2016), fear reactions, depression, and anxiety (Neves, 2014). In turn, these stress reactions may cause employees to display negative workplace attitudes, job dissatisfaction, and job neglect (Arfat et al., 2018; Chen & Wang, 2017). The impact of abusive supervision does not stop at physical labor. Researchers also discovered abusive supervision had a negative impact on the relationship between the leader and employee (Chen & Wang, 2017) and that employees who experienced toxic leadership/abusive supervision were also frustrated by the lack of support from their organization (Webster et al., 2016). Therefore, the organization is also blamed for the toxicity. In these instances, abusive supervision may also lead to negative repercussions for the organization such

as reduced morale, reduced productivity, increased errors, legal fees, and decreased public image and trust (Arfat et al., 2018; Chen & Wang, 2017).

Additional researchers concluded that abusive supervision has been the reason subordinates became dissatisfied in their jobs (Jiang et al., 2016). This job dissatisfaction has led to employee silence (Rowan, 2016), inaction (such as missed deadlines; Chen & Wang, 2017), or, even more extreme, forcing the employee to leave the organization (Abbas & Saad, 2020; Haider et al., 2018; Tepper et al., 2017). Unfortunately, leaving is not always an option for some employees. Therefore, these employees must find a way to handle the stress induced by abusive supervision.

Followership

Leaders have followers—and organizational goals cannot be achieved without responsive followers (Reed, 2014; Rothstein, 2019). Followership is both a position and a social process that involves leadership (Mackey et al., 2020; Schyns et al., 2019; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). While the examination of followers is outside the scope of this study, it should be noted that more people will find themselves taking the followership role than that of a leader as most people have a superior who has greater access to resources within the organization (Blair & Bligh, 2018; Rothstein, 2019). Therefore, the exchanges between the follower and leader are both important when studying abusive supervision.

Even though abusive supervision is a phenomenon that an employer/supervisor imposes on a subordinate, the employee/follower does have a role in this negative relationship. Due to the dyadic relationship, Graham et al. (2019) found that examining both the leader and follower characteristics was advantageous to the study of abusive supervision. For example, an employee's silence about the toxicity/abusive supervision enables it to continue (Rowan, 2016;

Saqib & Arif, 2017). Saqib and Arif (2017) also found that employee silence increased as the toxic or abusive behavior increased. Rowan (2016) expanded on the reason for the silence; noting that abusive supervision caused employees to fear retaliation (or worse) if they spoke out, so they deliberately hid the information (Saqib & Arif, 2017).

The power distance (high or low) orientation between the leader and follower contributes to the employee/follower's silence. High power distances are more formal; therefore, the leader and follower do not have a close relationship, and hierarchy status and privilege are important (Ji et al., 2015; Lam & Xu, 2019). In contrast, low power distances are more informal, and the leader and follower are more comparable to equals (Ji et al., 2015; Lam & Xu, 2019). Studies have found that the followers in low power distance relationships with their leaders have exhibited higher levels of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; Anand et al., 2018; Cropanzano et al., 2017). In contrast, followers in high power distance relations were sensitive to abusive supervision and were more prone to engage in defensive silence due to fear; they also exhibited weaker levels of OCB (Anand et al., 2018; Lam & Xu, 2019; Song et al., 2017).

Past researchers have emphasized that although the employee is in the minority influence position (leaders are in the majority influence position), followers/employees demonstrated leadership by voicing their ideas, different opinions, and dissenting (Blair & Bligh, 2018; Reed, 2014). Further reasoning can be found in the social and leader–member exchange theories. These theories explain that the leader and employee are the two parts in this relationship (dyadic; Anand et al., 2018; Cropanzano et al., 2017). The leader and follower enter this relationship with expectations of the other person (W. Choi et al., 2019). Both parties have expectations that include trust, respect (Cropanzano et al., 2017), and rewards for completing assigned tasks (Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, 2014). Therefore, if employees remain silent, the leaders in the

organization assume that everything in their organization is working as it should (Saqib & Arif, 2017).

Is the employee's voice that important? Yes, it is. Employee silence can lead to an organization failing to innovate or, worse, a failure to rectify a serious problem (Lam & Xu, 2019). One of the failings that can result from employee silence is ongoing abusive supervision. Therefore, when a leader's social exchange with a follower is abusive supervision, it can influence how the follower responds to the abuse. The result may lead to workplace (or occupational) stress in followers (Mackey et al., 2020).

Susceptible Followers

A toxic leader's charm and bravado can be intoxicating despite the use of abusive supervisory tactics. Therefore, some employees will follow them despite the toxicity (Matos, 2017; Winn & Dykes, 2019). Susceptible followers believe toxic leaders are strong and will succeed in whatever mission the leader undertakes (Lipman-Blumen, 2005). Susceptible followers are either conformers or colluders. Conformers are motivated by self-interest and trust, and want to please the leader (Bell, 2020; Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020). Colluders, also motivated by self-interest, are trying to achieve personal gain as a result of following the toxic leader (Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020).

Lipman-Blumen (2005) also wrote that employees will follow toxic leaders because they are looking for authority figures to take care of them and make them feel safe and/or they feel powerless against them. Susceptible followers may also feel these leaders are outstanding individuals who will do great things and they want to be a part of it (Lipman-Blumen, 2005). O'Reilly and Chapman (2020) confirmed in their research that the self-confidence and boldness that toxic (narcissistic) leaders exhibited were reassuring nectar to nervous and unsure

employees. Nevertheless, after a time, the real results of toxic leadership/abusive supervision manifest itself by leaving a trail of broken promises and a toxic environment filled with beaten-down employees (Glick et al., 2018).

Dark Triad Followers

It should be noted that there are instances where followers do not display the typical followership responses as described in the "Susceptible Followers" section. During these times, the follower utilizes Dark Triad traits, strategic follower behavior, and negative OCBs in order to achieve their own goals (Schyns et al., 2019) or possess a psychopathic advantage where they are not negatively affected by leadership abuse (Hurst et al., 2019). Additionally, Schyns et al. (2019) stated that Dark Triad followers can align with and be supervised by Dark Triad leaders or manipulate unsure leaders who are vulnerable to the follower's strategic behavior.

Workplace Stress

During the early to middle 1900s, the study of stress was greatly influenced by two researchers: Cannon and Selye. In their research, they discovered that stress was an emergency response that could damage the human body (Szabo et al., 2012). As a result, the link between stress and health was established (Cooper & Quick, 2017). Stress can be positive or negative and is, therefore, grouped into two categories: positive stress (eustress) and negative stress (distress). Eustress does not negatively affect the employee's ability to do the job (Birhanu et al., 2018). The second type of stress, distress, negatively impacts employee job performance and could cause employees to feel varying levels of incompetence (Agbonluae et al., 2017; Birhanu et al., 2018; Mazzella Ebstein et al., 2019). Workplace distress will be the focus of this study. There are numerous reasons employees begin to feel workplace distress. Some of them are job demands

(Heckenberg et al., 2018), unsatisfactory working conditions (Maulik, 2017), or even conflict due to home life (Napora et al., 2018).

Workplace or occupational distress (stress) is an issue in every career and is estimated to impact one in three employees (Birhanu et al., 2018; Siddiqui & Soomro, 2019). Workplace stress is a phenomenon (Maulik, 2017; Rook et al., 2019) that occurs when an individual's well-being is threatened due to an incident (caused by something outside of themself) that they do not have the resources within themselves to manage or cope with (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Kong & Jolly, 2019; Langille, 2017). Workplace stress is a serious issue. It can lead to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, as well as physical health issues if not managed effectively (Mazzella Ebstein et al., 2019). Therefore, workplace stress caused by abusive supervision should not be left unchecked.

Following its 13th Annual Stress in America Survey, the American Psychological Association (APA, 2019) found that 64% of American respondents ($n = 3,617$) identified work stress as a significant source of distress. Additionally, the *Canadian Journal of Medical Laboratory Science* conducted an anonymous online focus group in 2016, and 59% of the respondents ($n = 17$ of 29) reported that they experienced high levels of stress at least once a day, while 76% ($n = 22$ of 29) felt burned out due to workplace stressors at least once every week (Langille, 2017). It is important that employees learn how to properly manage workplace stress since stress can lead to death (Agbonluae et al., 2017), depression, anxiety, and illnesses such as hypertension and diabetes (Maulik, 2017).

Employees who have experienced abusive supervision are apt to have different reactions depending on their personalities, relationship with the supervisor, and/or position in the organization (Mawritz et al., 2014; Napora et al., 2018). One study showed that authoritarian

leadership and abusive supervision (along with unpredictability) were all predictors of workplace stress (Hadadian & Zarei, 2016). Additionally, toxic leaders who practiced abusive supervision had a negative impact on the emotional well-being of their employees. To that effect, another study determined that employees with unresolved stress had their mental health as well as physical and emotional performance negatively affected (Mazzella Ebstein et al., 2019). Lazarus and Folkman (1987) labeled this transactional theory because workplace stress is due to the transaction between the employee and their environment (supervisor, coworkers, etc.). More recent research noted that the stress increased until the individual makes the decision to cope with it (du Plessis & Martins, 2019). Finally, du Plessis (2020), in an effort to add to Lazarus and Folkman's research on occupational stress and coping, confirmed that within academia, employees experienced both organization- and job-specific stressors. Additional findings concluded that employees within the study felt that their supervisor's leadership style could be extremely stressful (du Plessis, 2020).

Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence

It is important for employees to be able to produce despite the stressful situations they find themselves in. The organization needs to continue performing, and no doubt, the employee needs their paycheck. There are some forms of intelligence ingrained within people that will aid them in mitigating that stress. This intelligence is a person's ability to learn, reason, and understand (Punia & Yadav, 2015) and is called emotional and spiritual intelligence. Recent studies showed that the levels of emotional and spiritual intelligence have a direct impact on job performance (Kulshrestha et al., 2018; Ling et al., 2020). Both types of intelligences complement each other and are critical for organizational success (Ling et al., 2020).

Emotional intelligence is an ability that a person has that allows them to manage emotions during a stressful (or emotional) interaction (Ling et al., 2020) in order to maintain positive interpersonal relationships (Ahmad & Nawaz, 2019). Spiritual intelligence can also help people cope with stressful situations; it helps them find meaning in the situation (Ilyas & Arshad, 2017; Safavi et al., 2019). Therefore, employees with high emotional and spiritual intelligence are able to utilize coping strategies to help them navigate stressful situations (Ling et al., 2020; Safavi et al., 2019; Siddiqui & Soomro, 2019). However, employees with low emotional and spiritual intelligence may not be able to utilize the coping strategies during a stressful event, or they may use a negative coping strategy that makes the event worse (Heffer & Willoughby, 2017; Siddiqui & Soomro, 2019). Irrespective of their level of emotional or spiritual intelligence, the employee should utilize coping strategies to manage workplace stress.

Coping

During the late 1970s, the study of coping with stress expanded from measuring stress during special circumstances (illnesses or unusual events) to how people cope with it in their everyday lives (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). As a result, Folkman and Lazarus developed the Ways of Coping scale to measure the degree people used the different coping strategies when managing stress (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). The scale was updated to a Likert scale in 1984 and is still in use today even though other measuring tools (such as the COPE inventory and the Brief COPE) have since been developed to expand on areas the Ways of Coping scale did not include (Carver, 1997; Carver et al., 1989).

When coping with stress, an employee will find their emotions vary while they struggle to manage the stress (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). Employees can be angry one moment and loving the next in their efforts to control, reduce, or tolerate the stress they are facing (Folkman

& Lazarus, 1985). The reasoning behind the many different coping behaviors is due to the changing and fluid nature of the coping process (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). In addition, du Plessis (2020) stated that adaptive coping strategies (such as emotion-focused or problem-focused strategies) helped to control emotions until awareness about the stressor is changed. Past research into abusive supervision showed that employees utilized many coping behaviors such as challenging the leader, remaining silent, affective commitment (hope for change), and seeking support or leaving the organization (Song et al., 2017; Tillman et al., 2018; H. Wang et al., 2018; Webster et al., 2016).

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are tactics an employee can implement to help them manage interpersonal issues that cause workplace stress (Agbonluae et al., 2017; Mazzella Ebstein et al., 2019; Siddiqui & Soomro, 2019). There are numerous positive and negative ways to cope with stress. Employees have two choices when faced with stressful situations. They can (a) try to eliminate the stress by using problem-focused coping (PFC) strategies or (b) mitigate the stress by using emotion-focused coping (EFC) strategies.

PFC strategies work best when the employee has control over the reason for the stress (Carver et al., 1989; Salam et al., 2019) and wants to devise a solution (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987; Siddiqui & Soomro, 2019). A study showed that the use of PFC strategies was high when autonomy (self-governance) was also high (Zaman & Ali, 2019). Some coping behaviors associated with PFC strategies are direct communication with the source (Webster et al., 2016; Yagil et al., 2011), problem solving to find a solution (Van den Brande et al., 2017), positive reappraisal (Amin et al., 2019), and leaving the organization (Webster et al., 2016).

In contrast, emotion-focused coping (EFC) strategies are used when an employee feels emotional distress when faced with a situation they cannot solve (Rezapour-Mirsaleh & Aghabegheri, 2020; Salam et al., 2019). EFC does not strive to solve the problem; it helps to manage the feelings (stress) associated with the problem (Liang et al., 2019). Past researchers have found that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization as well as negative personal commitment (Mefoh et al., 2019) and age (Pow & Cashwell, 2017) contributed to the use of emotion-focused coping strategies. Positive EFC strategies include seeking God, thinking reassuring thoughts, seeking social support from friends, exercise, humor (Liang et al., 2019; Parenteau et al., 2019), social networks and/or experts outside the organization (Heffer & Willoughby, 2017; Webster et al., 2016; Yagil et al., 2011), venting (Liang et al., 2019; Yagil et al., 2011), silence/withdrawal (Kong & Jolly, 2019), suppressing emotions (Anderson & Kosloff, 2020) and exercise (Agbonluae et al., 2017). These strategies lead to emotional balance and decreased stress, anxiety and depression (Parenteau et al., 2019).

While not always the first choice, emotion-focused strategies have proven to be useful. For instance, one study confirmed that positive emotion-focused coping increased soldiers' ability to cope with the stresses from combat exposure (Britt et al., 2017). A subsequent study on coping determined that the more important the stress causing issue was to the employee, the more likely they were to use emotion-focused strategies, both positive and negative (Carver et al., 1989). Additionally, researchers found that people who believed that God cared about their needs were less stressed (Fariddanesh & Rezaei, 2019) and more likely to utilize emotion-focused strategies such as positive reframing and religion (Parenteau et al., 2019). However, a study of military operations veterans failed to find any benefits for utilizing religion as a coping strategy (Britt et al., 2017).

Although outside the scope of this study, researchers discovered that in some cases negative EFC strategies (attachment-avoidance and attachment-anxiety) mediated associations between attachment and posttraumatic stress (Anderson & Kosloff, 2020). Conversely, some negative methods include strategies such as turning to self-blame, alcohol/drugs, and avoidance (Heffer & Willoughby, 2017; Siddiqui & Soomro, 2019; Tepper, 2000; Yagil et al., 2011). Past research has also found that some employees retaliated in some way against the leader and/or the organization (Xiao et al., 2018).

Even though employees are capable of utilizing both positive and negative EFC strategies, for the purposes of this study I focused on the positive emotion-focused strategies. Despite the level of stress (low, moderate, or high), researchers have found that positive coping strategies are the most beneficial to employees (Heffer & Willoughby, 2017). In contrast, research has also determined that negative emotional coping strategies such as getting angry or self-blame sometimes caused the stress to increase (Salam et al., 2019).

The Military Work Force: Leadership, Toxicity, and Abusive Supervision

Thus far, the topics discussed have been related to leadership, employees, and how employees mitigate abusive supervision in the workplace. While much of this information was derived from conventional work settings, they have also applied to the military workforce. The remainder of this literature review will focus on the military workforce.

For the purposes of this study, when referring to the workforce, it is important to establish that it refers to all the employees who make up the military workforce. It is a workforce made up of employees who wear the uniform and employees who do not. The United States military is able to operate as it does on account of the military (employees in uniform) and civilians integrate to fulfill the mission. In a 2015 demographics report that profiled the entire

military community, researchers found that out of the almost 3.5 million people within the military, the military service members provided the largest amount of personnel at 38.2%; Ready Reserve members were second with 29.2%; and civilian personnel came in a close third, providing 25.7% (U.S. Department of Defense, 2020).

The U.S. military knows it has a toxicity problem. Williams (2017) wrote that despite the emphasis on high standards such as core values, respect, and selflessness, the entire Department of Defense still experiences toxicity and counterproductive behaviors. Toxicity is an all-inclusive term that includes harmful leadership, abusive supervision, bullying, and workplace incivility (Williams, 2017). When this type of behavior comes from a leader, it is difficult to remove them, especially when that leader has toxic protectors. A toxic protector is someone who knows that the toxicity or abusive supervision is happening but does not do anything about it because the toxic leader is producing for the organization (Williams, 2017).

The U.S. military has a reputation for many great accomplishments, one of which is producing great leaders. It is filled with many accredited schools and academies that are responsible for producing and educating these leaders (Reed, 2015). In turn, these leaders utilize that knowledge, personal leadership characteristics, and their military service's core values to lead their subordinates (Williams, 2017).

In an effort to further the removal of toxic leaders, the military has conducted surveys and evaluations to eliminate toxic/abusive leaders. In their early efforts to investigate posttraumatic stress disorder and suicides, the Army discovered that some of its organizations were being led by toxic leaders (Winn & Dykes, 2019). A seminal quantitative study into toxic military leaders was conducted in 2003; at that time the U.S. Army War College used focus groups to examine how the Army identified destructive leaders (Reed, 2004, 2015). This study was an effort to

determine how to detect and treat toxic leaders (Reed, 2004). The study participants made many observations: One of significant importance was that workplace climate assessment surveys helped identify toxic leaders (Reed, 2004).

Williams (2019) found that even though there have not been as many studies conducted in the military, some research has been conducted that indicates toxic leadership is prevalent within the ranks. Two relevant studies were conducted on two separate tiers of military leadership. One study showed that top-tier senior military leaders across all the U.S. military services considered leaving the military due to negative supervisory leadership behaviors, such as lost temper, criticism, condescension, and unfairness (Reed & Bullis, 2009). A replica of this study was conducted utilizing mid-range high-performing Air Force officers, and it showed that 61% of the respondents considered leaving the military because of the way they were treated by their supervisor (Reed & Olsen, 2010). These studies showed that rank and position did not exempt a person from experiencing toxic or abusive leaders. Unfortunately, great leaders leaving military service is not the only problem.

Past studies suggested a significant relationship between toxic leadership and negative attitudes about an organization as a whole (Dobbs & Do, 2019) and at home (Matos et al., 2018). Additionally, the negative effects of abusive supervision were causing workplace stress that affected military service member's home and work life (Winn & Dykes, 2019) and impacted military readiness (Williams, 2019). Last, a hypothetical analysis of the loss of money and man-hours (it is difficult to calculate the cost of toxic leadership within the military) determined that a 1,000-member unit, where 218 people were affected by toxic leadership, equated to a loss of about 140,690 man-hours at a cost of $4,048,357.00 (Williams, 2019).

Before delving further into toxicity and abusive supervision within the military, a distinction should be drawn. Within the military working environment, people expect to hear yelling; that is the culture. Military culture influences standards of appropriate behaviors of its members (Ruffa, 2017). Leaders are not toxic or abusive because they are loud and aggressive (Williams, 2017). Depending on the situation and the environment, a loud and aggressive leader may be appropriate—for example, on a military battlefield (Reed, 2015).

Furthermore, many military service members believe that some experiences of emotional abuse and negative mentoring are normal (Valle & Levy, 2011). The motivational intent (subordinate's belief that the leader is trying to encourage better behavior) and leadership behavior over time must also be examined (Eschleman et al., 2014; Reed, 2015). However, if being loud and aggressive (along with other destructive tactics) is a leader's normal everyday leadership style, it can be toxic. It should not be the organizational norm. Constructive military leaders who utilize different leadership styles will be able to discern when those types (negative mentoring) of interventions are needed (Reed, 2015). Supervisors (leaders) who use it too often may be toxic and practice abusive supervision.

Constructive and Destructive Leadership Within the Military

Constructive and destructive leaders can be found within the military. Constructive leaders are able to utilize their character strengths and the core values of their military service to garner trust from their subordinates and achieve their mission (Sosik et al., 2018). A past study showed that constructive leadership was the best predictor of job satisfaction (Fors Brandebo et al., 2019). While destructive leaders' actions promoted hostile (toxic) working environments by fostering distrust and bullying their subordinates (Winn & Dykes, 2019). A study that highlighted the trust factor was conducted at the Air Force Academy. This research showed that

cadets were distrustful of leaders who used high levels of toxic leadership, to include abusive supervision (Dobbs, 2014, as cited in Reed, 2015).

Developing trust (along with fairness and consistency) is one reason many leaders within the military practice ethical leadership styles such as transactional, transformational, and situational leadership. Trust is the basis for productive relationships between leaders and followers (Arenas et al., 2017; Center for Army Leadership, 2017; Fisher, 2019; Reed, 2015). Transformative leadership allows the leader and the follower to transact (engage) in a way that promotes change and improvement (Sosik et al., 2018). Tepper et al. (2018) also discovered that employees need a transformational leader when they are experiencing uncertainty or stress in the workplace. Therefore, it is also important for a leader to be able to motivate and inspire followers (transformational leadership) to accomplish objectives the follower did not believe they could (Fors Brandebo et al., 2019; Get, 2018).

In contrast, transactional leadership is achieved by the leader setting goals with promised rewards for accomplishing them (Kark et al., 2018). The leader–member exchange (transaction) between the military leader and their follower should be a give-and-take situation. The leader sets standards (or duties) according to the organization's mission and the follower carries them out with the expectation of a reward (e.g., paycheck, approved vacation time, etc.; Reed, 2015; Stanciulescu & Beldiman, 2019). Finally, situational leadership lets the leader adapt their leadership style to the situation and/or development level of the followers (Hussain & Hassan, 2015; Reed, 2015; Walls, 2019). Reed (2015) went on to explain, regarding situational leadership, it is the leader's responsibility to change their approach based on changing situations and environments. Unfortunately, the military has toxic leaders who do not know how to, or choose not to, utilize positive leadership styles. Toxic leaders are a detriment to those they lead.

In past U.S. military and Department of Defense studies, researchers estimated that 10% of the workforce will experience a toxic workplace (Williams, 2019), and most military service members, if asked, will state they have witnessed a toxic leadership environment (Rybacki & Cook, 2016). Stump (2017) explained that although there are fewer toxic leaders in the military than there were years ago, toxic leadership is still a problem. Toxicity damages workplace cultures, climates, creativity, and the excellence of their subordinates (Erickson et al., 2015; Williams, 2017; Winn & Dykes, 2019).

The military is an occupation where, due to the nature of the job, there can be extreme stress and burnout—a breeding ground for abusive supervision (Harms et al., 2017). Additionally, the toxicity has caused organizations to lose valuable personnel and, in turn, money (due to retraining costs and wasted man-hours). Unfortunately, the exact amount of wasted money and man-hours is not known. Williams (2019) found that calculating the cost of toxic leadership in military organizations was harder to do than in a conventional work setting due to the military construct. The difficulty is due to employees having different pay scales, some working more than 8 hours a day, and some members taking more vacation days than others (Williams, 2019).

The Military Work Force—Followership

This literature review regarding abusive supervision would be remiss if it did not delve into military followership. The inclusion of followership does not put the primary onus of correcting or removing a toxic leader practicing abusive supervision on followers (that is the job of that leader's superiors), but followers can play a role in doing so (Reed, 2015). This section is an effort to explain followership within a military construct since there are some differences when compared to conventional work settings.

Military service members (leaders and followers) lead lives different from those in conventional work settings. One of the main distinctions is that military service members make obedience to authority oaths to obey the lawful orders of their leaders (Johnson & Piehler, 2013; Reed, 2014). Therefore, from day one in the military, members have the chain of command (hierarchy) ingrained into their psyche (Reed, 2015). Similar to conventional work settings, this hierarchy establishes levels of responsibility (Fors Brandebo et al., 2019; Stanciulescu & Beldiman, 2019). This entails informing an immediate supervisor about issues that need some form of remedy.

Informing an immediate supervisor can prove difficult, sometimes impossible, especially when the immediate supervisor is causing the strife. This can be a very problematic situation for military service members to be in because their perspective and responsibility to leadership is two-sided. On one side, the U.S. military encourages obedience to leaders; reciprocally it also demands that subordinates disobey and/or report unlawful directives (Reed, 2014). In this situation, subordinates may feel trapped. Therefore, these followers may choose to do nothing. In these cases, many subordinates remain silent because the supervisor can affect so much of that employee's future. The supervisor can deny vacations, assign extra duty, or give a poor performance report that can affect promotions, assignments, and other career opportunities (Fisher, 2019). Based on this defensive silence, most military service members are in high-power distance relationships with their leadership. This dyadic relationship is one reason military service members may suffer from abusive supervision–related workplace stress.

The Military Work Force—Workplace Stress

Understanding and combating stress are of high concern within the military. During a hearing before the Military Personnel Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, U.S.

leaders acknowledged that the suicide rates have increased and recognized that stress (no matter the source) was a factor that military men and women were dealing with before they decide to take their own lives (*Psychological Stress in the Military*, 2010). In a U.S. military study, researchers examined data from 2012 through 2014 and found that active, reserve, and National Guard components of the U.S. military's suicide rates were the same as or higher than that of the entire U.S. population for 2 of the 3 years (exception 2012; Pruitt et al., 2019). The researchers concluded that the suicide numbers from all of the services were approximately twice what they were before the year 2000 (Pruitt et al., 2019). While suicide is the worst-case scenario, the rise in military suicides since 2001 (Stanley & Larsen, 2019) should be examined from every possible angle.

Even though the ultimate reasons behind the increase of suicides of military service members are outside the scope of this study, it is important to highlight what is at risk if workplace stress is not addressed. Stanley and Larsen (2019) conducted an exhaustive literature review on suicides and found that 40% of the active military suicides were not associated with deployments or serving within a warzone. The researchers also found that chronic exposure to organizational stressors such as sleep deprivation led to decreased stress tolerance (Stanley & Larsen, 2019). An Air Force study showed that areas such as workplace stress led to 111 suicides between 2018 and January 2019 (McKnight, 2019). Although I am unable to make conclusions about military suicides, previous studies have shown that workplace stress was a problem that can affect military service members. Irrespective of the reason for suicides, researchers concluded that leaders were key advocates in preventing them (Hoyt & Holtz, 2020; Hoyt et al., 2020).

Military service members experience numerous types of workplace stress. A past study reaffirmed that stress was exacerbated by personnel shortages, long work hours, excessive workloads and leadership strategies (Chappelle et al., 2019). One U.S. study showed that soldiers who attended foreign-language school experienced both classroom and military (occupational) stressors (meeting academic expectations, lack of sleep military work hours, and time management; Sipos et al., 2019). The study showed that social connection (emotion-focused coping) and the climate within the classroom contributed to better mental health in the students (Sipos et al., 2019). Finally, a Chinese military study showed that demographic characteristics were a determining factor in the amount of occupational stress new recruits faced when presented with high-intensity military training and environmental changes (Tao et al., 2020). The researchers found that urban military recruits experienced higher levels of stress than rural military recruits, previous college students were able to cope better than nonstudents, and smokers were able to cope better than nonsmokers (Tao et al., 2020). Another study showed that professional demands (such as longer work hours or treating injuries) in a deployed environment also contributed to workplace stress (Adler et al., 2017). While these are important stressors to evaluate and rectify, this study focused on workplace stress induced by abusive supervision.

Military downsizing has been a contributing factor to abusive supervision and workplace stress in military service members. Researchers have determined that organizational downsizing was directly correlated to abusive supervision because leaders resorted to using tactics such as bullying, coercion, and threats to ensure mission goals were maintained (Baillien et al., 2019 Williams, 2017). Downsizing entails performing the same processes and procedures with fewer people and/or less money. The downsizing mentality was superseded in 2018 when the National

Defense Authorization Act was signed, increasing the total military force by 56,600 by 2023 (C. McMahon & Bernard, 2019).

When it comes to stress induced by abusive supervision (or even toxic leadership), there are limited studies with the military as the sample population. Past research has acknowledged the absence of military studies but has affirmed that there is a direct link between toxic behaviors and stress through published private-sector studies (Williams, 2017). While there are notable exceptions such as deployment stress, the military is a microcosm of the United States; therefore, issues that occur in larger American society are also expected to happen (although on a smaller scale) in the military (Campbell & Nobel, 2009; Reed, 2015).

Moreover, it should be noted that although there is a lack of studies on the correlation between abusive supervision and stress, there are studies that have concluded that organizational leadership was a source of stress. Past studies showed that military job stress was associated with a military service member's current organization to include difficulties with their supervisor (Adler et al., 2017; Brooks & Greenberg, 2018). Additionally, Chappelle et al. (2019) studied distributed common ground system operators and concluded that 14.35% (of 1,091) reported leadership practices (such as poor communication) as contributing factors to their workplace stress. Last, in a previous study of personnel from all services, researchers concluded that leadership contributed to workplace stress (Adler et al., 2017).

A study within the confines of the military stated that destructive leadership–induced stress was one of the most severe social stressors that employees will face while at work (Fosse et al., 2019). Examining workplace stress is increasingly important because abusive supervision–related stress also impacts military service members outside the workplace. This manifests as stress-related illnesses (Williams, 2017) and problems in the subordinate's home life (Cooper &

Quick, 2017). Recognizing that stress is occurring is a very important first step in mitigating it (Ilisoi & Furtuna, 2015; Reed, 2015).

As a matter of policy, within the military, if a leader has been determined to be destructive, they are removed from duty (Stump, 2017). Unfortunately, that is a long process, and in the meantime the subordinates who report to the toxic/abusive leader are suffering from the stress the leader causes. Therefore, workplace stress can be mitigated by using coping skills to ensure military service members are spiritually and emotionally prepared to live their lives inside and outside the organization.

The Military Work Force—Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence

Military service members have a highly stressful career that may entail them taking the life of another person or losing their own life (Osa-Afiana, 2015). Therefore, they should have more than intelligence (physical) about their day-to-day jobs (Viţalariu & Moşoiu, 2016); military service members should have an intelligence that can help them overcome difficult times. In order to overcome stress, military service members have to utilize varying degrees of emotional and/or spiritual intelligence. Emotional intelligence aids in coping and adapting to stress (Nel, 2019), while spiritual intelligence can be used alone or with emotional intelligence to allow a person to find deeper meaning (Punia & Yadav, 2015) when coping with abusive supervision.

There are not many studies that have focused on spiritual intelligence and military service. A past study sampling Air Force personnel found that members with some form of spirituality (such as forgiveness, asking God for help, or accepting human frailties) had lower levels of stress (Wood et al., 2018). Another veteran study revealed that veterans with no

substance abuse history had higher spiritual intelligence and regard for life (Abed & Bagheri, 2016).

Conversely, researchers noted that emotional intelligence contributed to self-awareness, increased OCB, and enhanced interprofessional collaboration within the military (Bowe & Jones, 2017; Kulshrestha et al., 2018). Additionally, an emotional intelligence study into 152 active-duty personnel determined that emotional intelligence was positively associated with performance, discipline, and organizational discipline (Krishnakumar et al., 2019). Last, this same study expressed that emotional intelligence was an added benefit for anyone experiencing stress (Krishnakumar et al., 2019).

The Military Work Force—Coping

Regardless of the profession, many employees may have to face an abusive leader at some time in their careers. This also applies when the employee is in the military. Abusive leaders create a hostile work environment that causes stress for their employees (Winn & Dykes, 2019). According to Webster et al. (2016), the most common ways to cope with toxic leadership/abusive supervision stress are to seek social support, leave the organization (and/or take vacation time), think deeply about the situation, or to challenge the abusive leader.

There have been studies focused on military service members' usage of coping skills; however, most of the studies examined deployment-related stresses (Britt et al., 2017; Brooks & Greenberg, 2018). However, one study suggested that positive emotion-focused coping utilized by people in combat may be useful in low-autonomy workplaces (Britt et al., 2017). Another study showed that the coping strategies a military person used were one of the keys to predicting posttraumatic stress (Mattson et al., 2018). Last, studies that focused on combat exposure,

posttraumatic stress, and family separations determined that training and support were essential in avoiding negatively coping with deployments (Blow et al., 2017; Britt et al., 2017).

The U.S. military is a high–power balance organization, which contributes to the lack of trust and fear subordinates may have toward their leaders. Past research discovered that high power distance negatively impacted employees seeking help and having trust in their leaders (Ji et al., 2015). Therefore, as a result of this high power distance, subordinates are more likely to remain quiet about negative situations (Saqib & Arif, 2017). This silence could be the result of fear (defensive silence) due to the belief that nothing will change or due to acceptance of the situation because "that is how it is in the military" (acquiescent silence; Lam & Xu, 2019).

Unfortunately, military service members who are combating stress from abusive supervision may have fewer positive coping strategies at their disposal. Therefore, some military service members faced with this scenario may choose to play a waiting game. In many instances "waiting out" an abusive supervision situation within the U.S. military terminates the abuse. Service members are able to "wait out" bad supervision because leaders or subordinates change duty stations often (Reed, 2015). In this situation, a subordinate (employee) who feels they have no control may utilize emotion-focused coping strategies to manage the stress until the situation changes (e.g., one of them leaves the duty station; Reed, 2015).

Nevertheless, the lack of studies focused on coping with abusive supervision does not indicate the absence of a problem. This study concentrated on emotion-focused strategies utilized by the military because, more often than not, military service members are unable to approach an abusive supervision problem by addressing the supervisor directly (or the direct contact does not lead to positive change). This is partly due to the guidelines (examples include adherence to military regulations and rules for reporting issues up the chain of command) within the military.

While these guidelines are essential informational tools that ensure all military service members know who they report to, the guidelines can also disrupt communication and prevent employees from seeking assistance, especially when a direct supervisor is the issue (Reed, 2015). Although comprehensive research was conducted, research on the perceptions of emotion-focused coping strategies on abusive supervision is sparse and limited. Few studies were found that specifically addressed this subject within the databases utilized.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks used for this study were social exchange theory (SET) and power and influence theory. Employees and their leaders transact with each other within the organization and give something of value to the other party. This transaction or relationship is the basis for SET. Furthermore, SET attempts to explain reciprocity within the workplace and the leader/employee relationship (Valle et al., 2019). SET delves into the dyadic (two-way) relationship between a leader and employee by evaluating the cost and rewards (or give and take) of the relationship as time passes, assuming that both sides offer something of value to the other. Therefore, the supervisor and the employee measure the costs and benefits of the relationship in order to determine if it is advantageous to remain in it (West & Turner, 2016).

SET is an appropriate theory for the theoretical framework of this study because it can be used to examine the dyadic relationship between an abusive leader and a subordinate (Valle et al., 2019). One study into Machiavellians found that these unethical leaders did not believe in the fair rules of leader–member relationships in organizations (U. Rehman & Shahnawaz, 2018). Separate studies determined that leaders who practice abusive supervision have broken the agreement with their employees. As a result, it led to employees becoming morally disengaged and willing to practice counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs; Ronen & Donia, 2020;

Shkoler et al., 2019; Valle et al., 2019). These negative behaviors were easier for the employee to do furtively rather than confront their employers directly (D. Wang et al., 2019).

In another study, researchers delved further into SET by examining one of its subsets, LMX, and found that the broken contract caused by abusive supervision also negatively mediated organizational knowledge sharing (W. Choi et al., 2019). Interestingly, a study on transformational leaders (TLs), who are the opposite of toxic leaders/abusive supervisors, showed that TL promoted organizational knowledge sharing because they associated a vision with their employees' extrinsic motivators (e.g., bonuses or paid time off; X. Zhang et al., 2018), though it should be noted that this may not always be feasible within the military due to criticality or security.

LMX focuses on how the leader (supervisor) treats each employee individually. Leaders have either a high or low LMX with their employees. High-LMX employees are held in higher regard because they perform better or share trust, respect, and/or obligations with the leader (Bowler et al., 2019; Pan & Lin, 2018). Due to these differing relationships, Pan and Lin (2018) discovered that abusive supervisors directed their most abusive behavior at low-LMX employees. Low-LMX (or less valuable) employees may be those who do not perform or excel academically or physically. The negative actions by the supervisor led to negative job satisfaction and initiative in low-LMX employees (Pan & Lin, 2018). In a 2017 study, researchers also determined that LMX and employee intrinsic motivators (e.g., self-satisfaction) and creativity degraded under abusive supervision (Meng et al., 2017). Therefore, a leader's actions have an impact, positive or negative, on an employee's actions and behaviors.

The power and influence theory scrutinizes the dyadic employee-leader relationship from a parallel angle by examining the power within the relationship more closely. Power (and

influence) is an inherent part of leadership because it goes with the hierarchical position (Lam &

Xu, 2019). During the seminal study on power, French (1956) stated that leadership contained

within it the ability of a person to influence others based on their position. Consequently, a 2019

study ascertained that leaders needed more than power; they also needed status (respect) in order

to influence an organization (Agut et al., 2019). Therefore, the power and influence theories

describe the different ways leaders use their power (control over resources) and status (respect)

to persuade employees to do what is wanted by the leader (Agut et al., 2019; Strom, 2020). The

use of power allows leaders to impose rewards or punishment on whomever they lead or

supervise (Strom, 2020). Power and influence, if used effectively, increase organizational

commitment and help ensure the organization's goals are achieved (Qadir & Yesiltas, 2020;

Strom, 2020). This leadership power could also prevent employees from confronting abusive

leaders (D. Wang et al., 2019).

Two power and influence theories are the transactional leadership theory and French and

Raven's Five Forms of Power. Transactional leadership is a contract between the supervisor and

employee where the employee completes the work (or does not) and the supervisor rewards or

corrects as appropriate (Bass, 1985). Transactional leadership applies to leader–employee

relationships in both conventional and military workplaces. Within the transactional leadership

theory, leaders have three options: They can lead by correcting or preventing problems actively,

lead by correcting or preventing problems passively, or utilize contingent rewards (Saeed &

Mughal, 2019; Q. Zhang et al., 2020). Leaders who utilize transactional theory routinely use

rewards as a way to motivate employees to complete tasks (Bass, 1985). Past researchers found

that transactional leadership provided a way for leaders to increase employee work performance

(Saeed & Mughal, 2019) and organizational commitment (Qadir & Yesiltas, 2020). However,

other studies showed that transactional theory (or any reward motivators) may not be effective for long-term organizational goals (Gearin, 2017; N. Khan, 2017) and negatively affected employee creativity (Kark et al., 2018).

Conversely, in 1959 French and Raven introduced the knowledge that leaders chose from five power bases to influence employees to complete tasks (Strom, 2020). French and Raven's Five Forms of Power are either positional, based on the position the leader holds (legitimate, reward, coercive), or personal, based on the leader's job knowledge and maintaining good working relations (referent and expert; Gearin, 2017; Strom, 2020; Yoon & Farmer, 2018). Power can also be labeled soft or hard. Soft power is power that is persuasive (referent and expert), whereas hard power is forceful (coercive and legitimate; Strom, 2020). The five power bases are legitimate, reward, expert, referent, and coercive (French, 1956). Although not addressed, it should be noted that Raven added informational power (power to control the flow of information) to the five in 1965 (Orta, 2015). French and Raven described these powers as legitimate (power that a leader has based on the position they are in), reward (power to give rewards for a job/task well done), expert (power based on knowledge of a subject or position), referent (power due to influence), and coercive (power based on a leader's ability to punish or harm; French, 1956). Based on these explanations, coercive power, from French and Raven's Five Forms of Power, is the most appropriate form of power to utilize for this study.

Leaders who utilize coercive power use threats and fear to get their subordinates to comply. This is a hard power that infers that the employee's thoughts or feelings are of no consequence (Hartner-Tiefenthaler, 2020; Strom, 2020). A past study showed that subordinates accepted whatever was happening as an inevitable event when a leader used coercive power (Hartner-Tiefenthaler, 2020). Additional coercive power research showed that angry leaders used

coercive rather than legitimate power and were less appealing than sad leaders (Schwarzmüller et al., 2017). Also, a study showed that positional power (one of which is coercion) was positively associated with incivility in the workplace (Yoon & Farmer, 2018).

Last, this study was modeled after a 2009 study that examined senior military and government civilian leaders' experiences with destructive leadership. Reed and Bullis (2009) explained that destructive leadership (also known as toxic leadership or petty tyranny) was experienced in the form of verbal and nonverbal actions such as belittling subordinates and lack of consideration. This study showed that these senior military and government civilian leaders all experienced some form of destructive leadership, although it decreased as they progressed in rank (Reed & Bullis, 2009). Nevertheless, the destructive leadership they experienced was severe enough for these senior leaders, with 19–21 years of service, to consider leaving their organizations due to this treatment (Reed, 2015; Reed & Bullis, 2009). The impact that toxic leadership (abusive supervision) has on military service members with power and influence is astounding. I was curious to uncover the impact on employees who have a poor relationship with their leader, no power, and a lack of support. Therefore, in this study, I examined enlisted and lower-ranking officer participants.

Summary

Chapter 2 presented an exhaustive literature review for military service members coping with abusive supervision. In this literature review, I examined areas that had a direct correlation with abusive supervision such as leadership, toxic leadership, and followership in both conventional and military workplaces. I also highlighted the lack of military studies but explained that issues that happened in the United States could be expected to happen within the military but on a smaller scale. The literature review highlighted leading researchers in the field

of abusive supervision (Tepper), stress (Cannon and Selye), and coping (Lazarus and Folkman). Additionally, in this literature review, I discussed different leadership styles (destructive, constructive, situational, transactional, and transformative) and identified which ones led to abusive supervision.

This chapter also detailed that many areas within the arena of toxicity and abusive leadership have been studied. Chapter 2 included the theoretical frameworks for this study, which were SET, power and influence theory, and a 2009 study with higher-ranking military personnel as the participants. This chapter explained the relevance of social exchange theory, leader–member exchange theory, French and Raven's Five Forms of Power, coercive power, and the 2009 military study as the theoretical framework. Now that a literature review has been provided, Chapter 3 will expound on the research methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This study encompassed a qualitative review of emotion-focused coping strategies utilized by military service members. The purpose of this study was to identify the most effective emotion-focused coping strategies, as perceived by former military service members who experienced abusive supervision. To date, academic researchers have not heavily studied the ways in which military service members cope with abusive supervision. Therefore, the aim of this study was to uncover emotion-focused coping strategies that veterans have found to be useful in combating the stress induced by abusive supervision.

The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: Why do military service members who experience abusive supervision select emotion-focused coping strategies?

RQ2: How do emotion-focused coping strategies mitigate negative workplace stress resulting from abusive supervision in the military?

RQ3: What are the outcomes of emotion-focused coping strategies, as perceived by former military service members, within the military?

Research Design and Methodology

The qualitative research approach for this study was a holistic single descriptive case study. The purpose of this case study was to identify and understand emotion-focused coping strategies that former military service members have utilized to overcome stress induced by abusive supervision. This was an appropriate research method as it provided a fuller depiction of how service members emotionally coped with abusive supervision (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

In case studies, researchers collect data over a certain period by utilizing several data collection sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2014). Researchers can use case studies to

explain and explore incidents that are occurring (Alpi & Evans, 2019). Additionally, this was a qualitative descriptive case study because it focused on the issue (phenomenon) and the impact emotion-focused coping strategies have on a person experiencing abusive supervision, which will hopefully provide a starting point for future research—all while presenting information in a reader-friendly format (Wiebe et al., 2010).

Furthermore, a descriptive case study was appropriate for this research in that it focused on and described one particular situation. Wiebe et al. (2010) explained that descriptive case studies are focused on a specific already-known phenomenon, which is thoroughly examined and detailed within the case study. This approach aids in uncovering patterns, links, and connections (Wiebe et al., 2010). Therefore, this study utilized qualitative data uncovered using questionnaires, interviews (participants), and published literature sources. Finally, a third source of data involved asking participants to review identified themes and information from other participants to determine if they agreed or disagreed.

Qualitative data were used to examine and learn how the workplace functions, as well as a way to document leader and/or employee experiences (Patton, 2015). The information is subjective, but it could provide important information that a researcher may not get otherwise. This is on account of the researcher being intertwined with and vital to this process.

Qualitative research information is based on someone's opinions and motivations (Patton, 2015). Therefore, researchers should first do everything they can to ensure their research minimizes biases (Patton, 2015). This can be completed by looking for data that can be used to support different outcomes or results (Patton, 2015). In doing so the researcher is solidifying the need for their research because data may support results but outliers will be considered (Patton,

2015). These methods (questionnaires and semistructured interviews) helped me gain insight into emotion-focused coping strategies for dealing with abusive supervision while in the military.

Population

The research participants for this study were military veterans who had separated (with no pension) or retired (with pension) from the U.S. military. Study participants were individuals who identified as follows:

- retired or separated (prior military) from the U.S. military;

- retired or separated within the past 10 years;

- experiencing self-reported abusive supervision per Abusive Supervision scale (Tepper, 2000); and

- experiencing self-reported emotion-focused strategies per Coping With Abusive Supervision scale items (Yagil et al., 2011).

Sample

The total number of participants in this case study was 14. An effort was made to contact prior military from different branches of military. However, participants in this study were primarily from the Air Force. All participants served in the ranks of O-2–E-1. These are the ranks of personnel not addressed in Reed and Bullis's 2009 study, in which they examined senior military and government civilian leaders' experiences with destructive leadership. Additionally, the participants were honorably discharged within the last 10 years.

This study and its purpose were also advertised in several locations online where prior military service members frequent. Additionally, snowball sampling was utilized. Participants were questioned on whether they knew of any other prior military service members who might

be willing to participate in the study. Those individuals were then given my contact information on the chance they wanted to be a part of the study.

Data Collection Procedures

The goal of qualitative research is to understand a certain situation (Patton, 2015). In order to achieve this goal, a researcher needs firsthand experience, truthful reporting, and quotes from actual conversations (Patton, 2015). Therefore, the data for this case study were collected by utilizing questionnaires (listed in the Materials/Instruments section), semistructured written interviews using fill-in-the-blank statements, published literature sources, and inquiring with participants on whether they agreed or disagreed with other participants' collected data. Qualitative research methods also give insight that other types of research that focus on numbers may not be able to provide (Parry et al., 2014). These methods tell or help the reader understand a story. Patton (2015) explained that qualitative research is best suited for details, context, and thick descriptions. All these methods provide participants with a way to say whatever they want to say; this is why open-ended questions are an important part of the research process.

Patton (2015) went on to explain that open-ended questions allow participants to utilize any word they want to describe a situation or event. Therefore, as the interviewer, the researcher has to focus and be ready with follow-up questions if the need arises. These questions cannot be prewritten. The researcher must listen carefully and be ready to ask questions that will allow the participant to expound on something they have said. The interviews were conducted in written form through direct emails between the participant and the researcher. Purposeful sampling, where the criteria for participation are prespecified (Wiebe et al., 2010), was utilized to ensure the appropriate participants were a part of the case study.

Prospective participants were recruited utilizing two methods. The first method, was via a referral source. The referral source was a point of contact who provided only my contact information; they did not know who actually decided to participate in the study. The second method of recruitment was on Facebook through military Facebook groups. The prospective participants utilized questions and information provided on a flyer and letter or email to self-report in order to determine whether they met the requirements for participation. These actions were accomplished in an effort to collect responses that would answer the research questions (Wiebe et al., 2010).

Materials/Instruments

In order to be deemed eligible to participate in the study, established Likert-styled questionnaires were used to uncover information about the proposed participants. The questionnaires helped me determine the following:

1. If the participant experienced abusive supervision while serving in the military (Abusive Supervision scale; Tepper, 2000);

2. If the participant experienced abusive supervision while serving in the military and used emotion-focused coping mechanisms (Coping With Abusive Supervision scale items; Yagil et al., 2011).

These questionnaires also helped determine what questions needed to be asked of the participant during the semistructured interview.

Additionally, an interview protocol that was designed to align with the study research questions was provided. It ensured the correct interview procedures were followed. The interview protocol provided questions for the participants to answer (see Appendix C).

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

After being selected to participate, triangulation was utilized to collect data from and about these participants. This was accomplished using multiple methods as data sources (Wiebe et al., 2010). The interview's purpose was to uncover more detailed information on a participant's experience with abusive supervision to include the following: (a) the nature of the abusive supervision while in the military, (b) the perception of emotion-focused coping strategies, and (c) miscellaneous or additional information (if needed).

The participants were interviewed utilizing two written interviews that were sent to them via email. Participants were asked questions about their abusive supervision experience while serving in the military. This first written interview was 13 questions. I asked questions pertaining to the veterans' time in the military, the abusive supervision they experienced, and how they dealt with the stress that occurred as a result of the abusive supervision.

Finally, the participants were sent a second written interviewed (to ensure triangulation). This written interview had six questions. In this written interview, participants were asked about the responses from other participants. Within this email, without unveiling any personal information, the participant was told the themes that were uncovered and asked their opinion about them. The participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the other participants' statements. Both interviews aligned with this study's research questions and were used to determine if the participant felt their situations improved, stayed the same, or became worse after utilizing emotion-focused coping strategies.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected throughout this study. Thematic analysis is used to identify, analyze, and report patterns in minimally organized detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are six phases within thematic analysis. The first phase is getting familiar

with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is conducted during the literature review and as the

data are collected from the participants. Phase 2 is generating initial codes. These codes are

based off the initial data and are items that the researcher finds interesting (Braun & Clarke,

2006). These codes can be developed after the initial review and as data are collected from

participants (from questionnaires and/or semistructured interviews. Phase 3 begins after all data

are collected. At this point, I began looking for themes to collate and analyze (Braun & Clarke,

2006). During Phase 4, all themes are reviewed and refined (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes are

defined and named in Phase 5. Finally, writing begins in Phase 6 (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Methods for Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, from a qualitative perspective, entails documenting (as close as

reasonably possible) the information relayed by participants in surveys, questionnaires, and

interviews. Triangulation was used to validate data found during this study. Triangulation was

conducted using questionnaires, participant interviews, and participant review of other

participants' remarks. These actions helped reassure the reader that the information is credible

and not affected by researcher bias (Roberts, 2010).

Researcher Role

As the researcher, I utilized standardized protocol to facilitate the questionnaires and

interview sessions. The protection of the participants in this study was my primary concern and

goal at all times. Protection of the participants also extended to their emotional well-being. Each

participant was given the information for the Veterans Crisis Line. The Veterans Crisis Line, is a

free, anonymous, confidential 24/7 resource for veterans. The Veterans Crisis Line is staffed

with trained people ready to assist veterans during any crisis-causing circumstance including

anxiety, depression, anger, homelessness, and sleeplessness (United States Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.).

To prepare for the study, the Institutional Review Board's (IRB's) ethical resources were utilized in order to understand and complete certification to conduct ethical research. Additionally, as the researcher, I ensured informed consent was provided by each participant and that they were aware of what their rights were concerning the study. I also ensured confidentially was maintained at all times and that strict data analysis was conducted.

Last, it was important for me to remain objective. I did have an interest in this study on account of my past and current associations. I served in the U.S. Air Force for 24 years and still work for them as a government civilian.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical protection of participants was my primary concern at all times. All necessary preparatory work and approvals requests were submitted to and approved by the ACU IRB. To prepare for the study, the IRB's ethical resources were utilized in order to understand and complete certification to conduct ethical research. Additionally, all participants signed informed consent forms agreeing to the study provisions before providing any data (Creswell, 2014). Next, the confidentially of all participants (and the data they provided) was maintained at all times. Last, strict data analysis was conducted.

Assumptions

This study was built on a few assumptions. First, I assumed that participants would be interested in this study by reason of the perceived limited avenues to freely express leadership woes. Next, I assumed participants would answer truthfully and with candor. As a result, I assumed the stories participants provided would be vivid explanations of the abusive supervision

they experienced and the emotion-focused coping strategies they perceived to be useful or not useful.

Limitations

This study did have limitations that may have negatively affected this study (Roberts, 2010). This study was not completely representative of the entire military. Although the branches of the military all work for the benefit of the United States, there are some interservice military rivalries that may deter military veterans outside the Air Force from participating. Therefore, the case study results may not be generalizable to larger populations.

Delimitations

There are researcher-set boundaries to what I examined in this study (Roberts, 2010). I examined how military veterans (who suffered abusive supervision) utilized emotion-focused coping mechanisms while they were still serving. This study involved 14 participants who retired or separated within the last 10 years. Last, this study did not include any other coping skills (such as problem-focused or dysfunctional coping). However, problem-focused coping was discussed briefly as a backdrop for understanding emotion-focused coping.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify effective emotion-focused coping strategies, as perceived by former military service members, used to overcome stress induced by abusive supervision. Therefore, this chapter explained the description of the methodology that was used to research how veterans viewed the effectiveness of emotion-focused coping strategies. Chapter 3 explained that the research would be a case study that utilizes thematic analysis to gather and analyze information from the participants. The participants were people with prior military service who left the military within 10 years. Additionally, this chapter explained that prior to

research being conducted, I had completed all ethical certifications and defined trustworthiness, the researcher's role, ethical considerations, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations. This chapter discussed that two limitations could be the lack of transparency from military services outside of the Air Force and prospective participants being treated for any mental health issues. Chapter 4 includes information detailing the results from the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to identify and examine emotion-focused coping strategies utilized by previous military members to mitigate stress caused by abusive supervision while serving. Participants were ex-military personnel recognized by the U.S. government as veterans after serving in any of the U.S. military services. The intent of this study was to expand the literature around coping with abusive supervision in order to improve the lives of the people who make up the military workforce. As a means to complete this study, thematic analysis was utilized to classify themes from the experiences of previous military members in order to answer the research questions in this study. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: Why do military service members who experience abusive supervision select emotion-focused coping strategies?

RQ2: How do emotion-focused coping strategies mitigate negative workplace stress resulting from abusive supervision in the military?

RQ3: What are the outcomes of emotion-focused coping strategies, as perceived by former military service members, within the military?

The study was administered in four parts: Abusive Supervision questionnaire, *coping with abusive supervision* questionnaire, Interview 1, and Interview 2. This chapter presents findings that resulted from analysis and coding of the data collected from the two questionnaires and two interviews. It will include an overview of the study, answers to the research questions, the findings from the study (to include participant statements), and a situation analysis.

Questionnaires

Two of the requirements for the study were that each of the participants had to have experienced abusive supervision and had to have used emotion-focused coping skills to mitigate the stress it caused. To determine suitability for the study, all prospective participants completed Tepper's (2000) Abusive Supervision questionnaire and Yagil et al.'s (2011) Coping With Abusive Supervision questionnaire. The first questionnaire helped determine that all participants experienced abusive supervision while serving in the military. Then, the second questionnaire helped determine the type of coping mechanisms that were used to help manage the stress caused by the abuse. The questionnaires are located in Appendices A and B.

Interviews

Interview 1 was a confidential 13-question semistructured written interview. It was designed to gather some demographic data as well as provide the participants an opportunity to express their experiences unfettered. Interview 2 was a confidential six-question semistructured written interview. It was designed to triangulate data provided by all participants. The interview protocols for Interview 1 and Interview 2 are in Appendix C.

Participants

Before this study began, qualified participants had to be found. A liaison was used to find prospective participants. Unfortunately, that method did not garner enough participants; thus military-affiliated social media groups on Facebook were utilized. Between the two sources, 22 veterans expressed interest in the study. Eight of the veterans were not utilized as participants because they did not meet the parameters for the study or did not complete all requirements for the study.

Of the 14 participants, six were male and eight were female. Six were Black, five were White, and the remainder identified as Afro-Asian (1), Native American and White (1), and Native American, Black, and White (1). One of the participants was a junior officer, and the remaining 13 were enlisted (senior and junior) at the time of the abuse. There was 1 participant from the Army, and there were nine from the Air Force, two from the Navy, and two from the Marines. The Coast Guard and Space Force were not represented in the study. All participants were given a coded pseudonym (such as AFRET 1, ARSEP 2, or MCRET 3) to maintain each participant's anonymity. The code represents the military service (AF = Air Force, AR = Army, MC = Marine Corps, and NV = Navy) they served in, whether they retired (RET) or separated (SEP), and finally their number in the study. The demographic breakdown of the participants is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Study Participants

Code	Service	Rank	Race/gender	Status
AFSEP 1	Air Force	O-2 (Officer)	White/Female	Separated
AFSEP 2	Air Force	E-4 (Enlisted)	Black/Female	Separated
AFRET 3	Air Force	E-7 (Senior Enlisted)	White/Female	Retired
AFRET 4	Air Force	E-3 & 4 (Enlisted)	White/Male	Retired
AFRET 5	Air Force	E-4 (Enlisted)	White/Female	Retired
AFRET 6	Air Force	E-4 & 5 (Enlisted)	Black/Male	Retired
AFRET 7	Air Force	E-5 (Enlisted)	Afro-Asian/Male	Retired
AFRET 8	Air Force	E-7 (Senior Enlisted)	Native American & White/Female	Retired
AFRET 9	Air Force	E-6 (Enlisted)	Black, White & Native American/Female	Retired
NVRET 10	Navy	E-5 (Enlisted)	White/Male	Retired
NVSEP 11	Navy	E-2, 3 & 4 (Enlisted)	Black/Female	Separated
ARSEP 12	Army	E-1 & 2 (Enlisted)	Black/Female	Separated
MCRET 13	Marine Corps	E-5 (Enlisted)	Black/Male	Retired
MCRET 14	Marine Corps	E-8 (Senior Enlisted)	Black/Male	Retired

Note. Rank listed is at the time of the abusive supervision.

Initially, the intent was to conduct each interview through Zoom, record their voices, transcribe them, and review each transcription to ensure their information was transcribed correctly. However, in the beginning stages of the study, prospective participants were hesitant or refused to be recorded in any manner. Thus, all participants were emailed Interview 1 and Interview 2 questions, and the written words they provided were utilized verbatim for the study. Every participant was able to provide the required data for each interview without issues. The participants' interview statements contained military jargon (see Appendix D).

Transcription for the interviews was not required because the exact wording that the participants typed into each interview was utilized. Additionally, pseudonyms were inserted where any names were used. Participants were informed that their exact words were being used, excluding names. Therefore, they were given an opportunity after both interviews to revise or clarify any of the information they provided. Triangulation was achieved by using the participants' replies to answers from Interview 1, Interview 2, and the abusive supervision and coping questionnaires; the literature sources; and thematic analysis to highlight themes.

Findings

The remainder of this chapter presents findings that resulted from analysis and coding of the data from the questionnaires and semistructured written interviews. I conducted thematic analysis to find themes from all the collection sources to triangulate the data and validate findings. These findings provided insight into the research questions that guided this study.

Thematic analysis enabled the identification and analysis of the themes in this study through a six-step process. After gathering all the data, the first step called for familiarization with the data collected (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). As part of the research, the information was intently reviewed many times in order to begin Step 2, which was deciphering the themes within

the data. Consequently, familiarity with the data made searching for and reviewing themes, Steps 3 and 4, easier to identify and document. Step 5 of thematic analysis, defining and naming themes, proved to be somewhat difficult because themes about emotional-focused coping needed to be identified from the participants' perspective (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). However, after that was accomplished, the final step of documenting the findings was completed.

Questionnaires

A total of 22 prospective participants from four of the six military services initially completed both questionnaires. However, 14 are represented in this study. It was discovered that everyone who completed the questionnaires experienced some form of abusive supervision at varying degrees as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Abusive Supervision
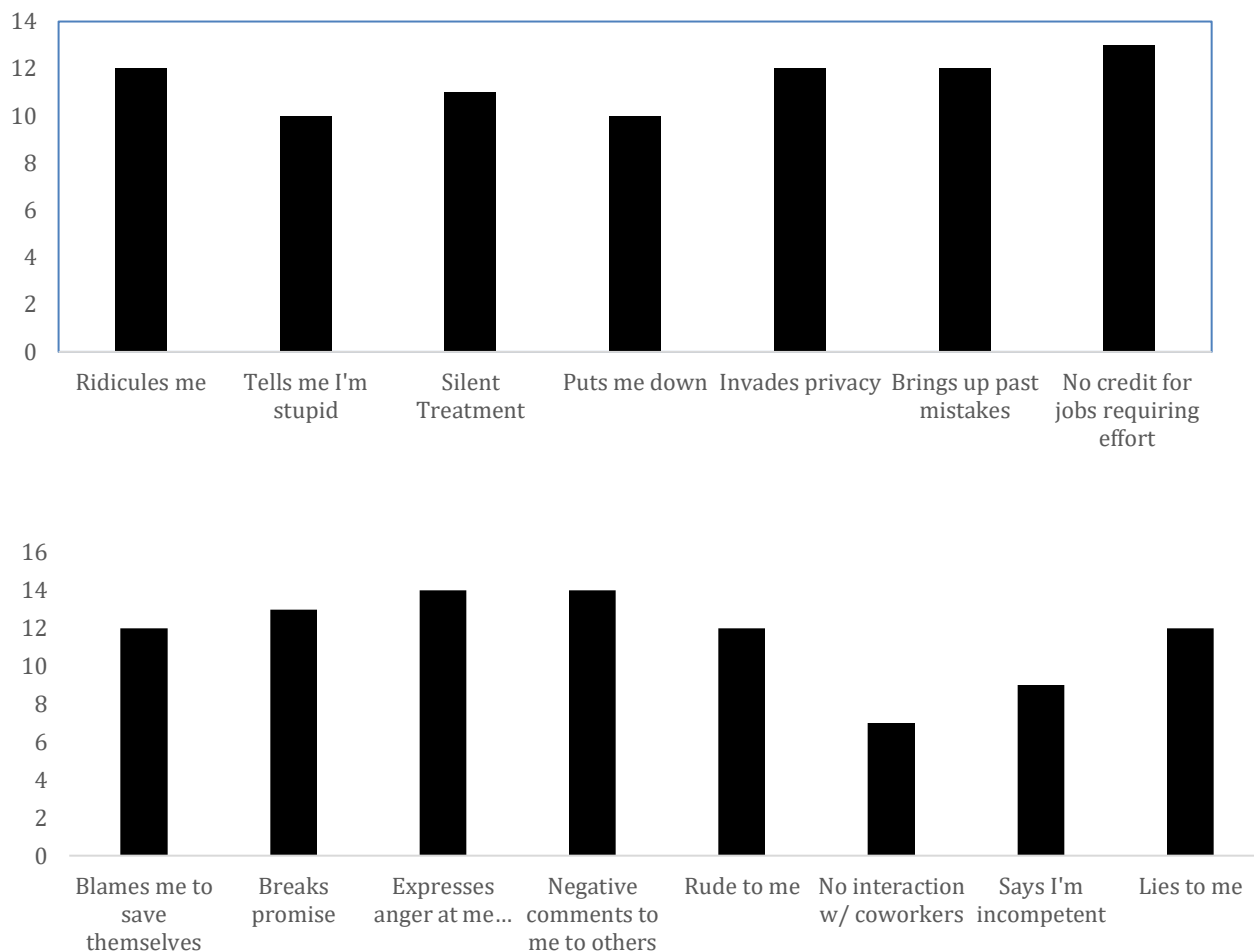
Note. Based on the Abusive Supervision scale by Tepper (2000).

      The participants utilized both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies in

efforts to change the situation and/or mitigate the stress caused by the abusive supervision.

Problem-focused coping is typically used when a person has some level of control in a situation

and can implement change, whereas emotion-focused is typically used to help people who have

no control manage the stress of the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). Problem-focused

coping (Direct Communication and Ingratiation) was noticeably used less often than emotion-

focused coping (Reframing Support Seeking and Avoidance), as depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Coping With Abusive Supervision Questionnaire
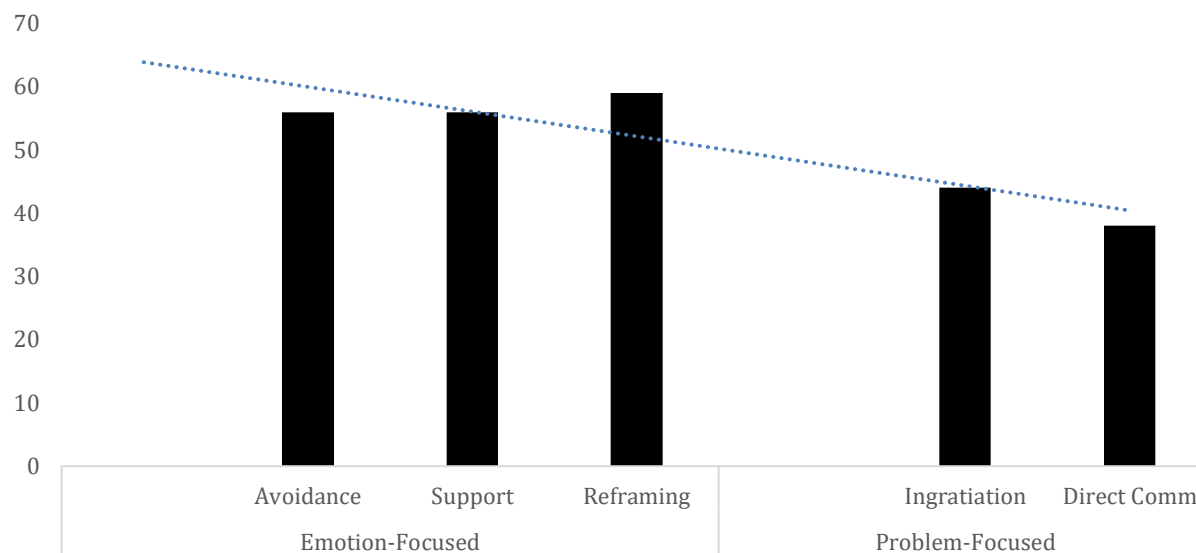
Note. Based on the Coping With Abusive Supervision scale by Yagil et al. (2011).

Interviews

Each of the 14 participants was asked to respond to two written interviews. Interview 1 garnered information about various interactions with abusive supervisors in the Air Force, Navy, Army, and Marines. While participants were not as verbose as I anticipated, possibly due to the change in how the data were collected, enough data were provided to utilize thematic analysis and identify recurring themes and subthemes.

The same 14 participants took part in Interview 2. As discovered with Interview 1, during Interview 2 most participants were not overly communicative about their experiences. Nevertheless, they did provide enough data with which I was able to triangulate information and glean additional information to expound on data from Interview 1.

Research Questions

All the participants described their experiences with abusive supervision and how they mitigated the stress it caused. The data they provided during the questionnaire and interview process were analyzed using thematic analysis to determine common themes and subthemes. The themes and subthemes, along with literature sources, were used to answer the research questions in this study.

Themes and Subthemes

It should be noted that when reviewing the themes and subthemes that resulted from this study, a military frame of reference is needed and should be used. During the data collection phase of this study, the participants described the abusive supervision they faced during their time in the military. They expressed that the experiences they had with abusive supervisors caused them workplace stress. Although the perceived effectiveness from utilizing emotion-focused coping to mitigate the stress was viewed through the same employee lens as their civilian counterparts, their viewpoints were different.

The oath that military members take when enlisting or commissioning in their military service is the chief viewpoint that makes military members' experiences with coping with the stress caused by abusive supervision different from those of their civilian counterparts. According to Air Force Instruction 1-1 (2014), these oaths, freely taken, are the enlisted and officer members' pronouncement that they will "obey" the orders of those appointed over them or that they will "faithfully" discharge their duties. (All active-duty military branches utilize the same oaths and have similar guidance.) Failure to abide by this contract could result in punishment that may include being charged with a federal crime (Air Force Instruction, 2014).

There are not many civilian jobs that share this type of distinction (see Appendices E and F for the officer and enlisted oaths).

Research Question 1

Why do military service members who experience abusive supervision select emotion-focused coping strategies? The themes and subthemes identified for Research Question 1 were as follows: Acolyte (Fair Game and Unfairly/Unjustly Punished), Discrimination (Racial and Ethnic Identity and Gender), and Feelings of Inadequacy. The participants' responses showed that their lack of power in the supervisor–employee dyadic relationship contributed to them selecting emotion-focused coping strategies to manage stress caused by abusive supervision.

The participants in this study selected emotion-focused coping strategies because they felt they did not have any other options due to their low rank and lack of power or allies in high places of leadership. None of the abused were in a place of power, including the higher-ranking participants, to make any type of meaningful change. They felt inadequate and that the leader or someone else higher ranking would make matters worse if the abuse was reported. Therefore, while the themes and subthemes listed as a response to Research Question 1 do describe the abuse the participants suffered, they also simultaneously provide the reason military service members select emotion-focused coping.

Acolyte

During the interviews, most of the participants (11 of 14) expressed that the abusive supervision happened when they were lower-ranking service members. As the lower-ranking member in the dyadic relationship, they said their supervisors were wrongfully using their legitimate and coercive powers, granted to them by virtue of their positions, to abuse their subordinates (Strom, 2020). The exceptions were Participant AFRET 8, Participant AFRET 9,

and Participant MCRET 14. These participants disclosed that the abuse happened (or was observed) when they were senior enlisted members of their respective services.

Fair Game. During these interviews, participants highlighted instances where their supervisors used power to the detriment of their subordinates. Participants were asked to describe their abusive supervision ordeal, and 6 participants had much to say about the leader's use (or abuse) of power, as well as their personal lack of any power as a subordinate to the leader. Participant AFRET 7, an Afro-Asian male retired from the Air Force, stated emphatically, "It wasn't so much abuse towards myself (maybe a little bit, but not so much), it was more so the supervisor's abuse of power!" Participant NAVRET 10, a White male retired from the Navy, disclosed that their supervisor, "was what we called a screamer he was always yelling at you and didn't bother to listen, his way (was) the right way regardless of what anyone had to say."

Participant ARMYSEP 12, a Black female who separated from the Army, also experienced this abuse of power. They wanted them to remain in a junior ranked member's place, so they flexed their power through the work schedule. Participant ARMYSEP 12 stated, "He switched my daily duties so I'd have to work with him and was often very demanding and hostile." They also stated, "It made me feel that my command would not protect me and that my lower rank left me vulnerable. I also felt that these men in power could do whatever they wanted to do."

Participant AFSEP 2, a Black female who separated from the Air Force, also felt powerless in regard to their supervisor: "I felt like some people aren't about the mission but it's about power and who will see them achieve certain things." Participant AFRET 4, a White male retired from the Air Force, explained, "My supervisor … seemed to be able to control my life and upper management didn't get involved in it."

Participant AFRET 3, a White female retired from the Air Force, stated, "He made me feel powerless," and "he made me feel like he had power and control over me and could influence my career." Participant AFRET 3 also disclosed that they felt like their recently promoted rank to a senior noncommissioned officer was "worthless" and that they were "helpless" in the desire to support their own subordinates.

Power, or the lack of power, set the tone for all the participant responses. Although it may not have been mentioned in the initial interview, every participant noted their low rank and lack of allies in high places (power) as the main reasons for not reporting their abusive leader. All of them feared the abuse getting worse.

Unfairly/Unjustly Punished. The study participants also expressed receiving unfair or unjust punishments (discipline). These punishments come in many forms within the military. Supervisors can punish their subordinates by correcting them on the spot (imagine a drill sergeant in someone's face yelling at them about what they did wrong), giving the individual correcting paperwork such as a letter of reprimand (LOR), giving the person a negative written evaluation, and withholding a promotion. These are just a few examples. The participants experienced a number of punishments that were unwarranted or to the extreme. Participant AFSEP 1 stated that their supervisor looked for opportunities to "publicly deride me." Participant AFSEP 2 described an incident where their leader did not like one of their responses: "They had me in front of the First Sergeant, who began yelling at me until I threw up from being so upset." Participant AFRET 3 expounded, "He gave me an LOR for sighing audibly and not looking at him when he spoke to me." Participant AFRET 3 was also threatened about not receiving the next rank: "He told me I would never make SMSgt."

Participant AFRET 5, a White female who retired from the Air Force, mentioned how at the time they thought of how the supervisor's actions could affect future career. They explained this was because their supervisor was always "threatening to write me a poor EPR so that I would not get promoted." Participant AFRET 9, a female who identifies as Black, White, and Native American and also retired from the Air Force, said their abusive supervisor "forced me to clean a disgusting male restroom." Participant MCRET 13, a Black male retired from the Marines, detailed that their supervisor would "call me everything under the sun except my name" and "assign me to different tasks … to make my life miserable." Participant MCRET 14, a Black male retired from the Marines, added about their supervisor "was just unprofessional" and that the supervisors "verbal[ly] … mess[ed] with some of the Marines."

Discrimination

In some of these power and influence situations, the participants also felt that some form of discrimination occurred before and/or during the abusive supervision. The discrimination was based on race (or where the person was raised) and gender. None of the discrimination claims were officially reported.

Racial/Ethnic Identification. Participant AFRET 6, a Black male retired from the Air Force, expounded:

> The abuse made me feel as though as a black man, it would be very difficult to get to the SNCO ranks because the military that I was seeing was run by white males and it was only mentoring white males.

Participant AFRET 6 also detailed that:

There was a subtle verbal and also discrimination in a way because they had their favorite

and you saw them make excuses for the things they did wrong and called it learning but I

did not have that option … with me it was a lack of asking or training.

Participant NAVRET 10 declared, "Come to find out later, he singled me out more because he

was a good old boy from Georgia and didn't like the idea of interracial marriages." Finally,

Participant MCRET 13 said their supervisor "was very prejudice towards me. It seemed like he

came to work just to annoy me on a daily basis. I could never do anything right."

Gender. Some of the female participants also noted discrimination against them.

Participant AFRET 3 explained, "It made me feel like my years of experience and service meant

nothing. It made me feel like he had an issue with women in positions of power." Participant

AFRET 8, a female who identifies as White and Native American and also was retired from the

Air Force, stated that their supervisor "talked as if women were beneath him." Participant

AFSEP 1, a White female officer who separated from the Air Force, divulged that they

experienced "discrimination" and that their supervisor "continuously had an air of condescension

toward the handful of females in the unit … all of us were filling administrative/secretary roles

rather than placing us in leadership positions."

Feelings of Inadequacy

Most of the participants expressed a feeling of inadequacy as a result of the abusive

supervision. While Participant AFSEP 1 did not express feeling inadequate, it was not because

their supervisor did not try. They explained, "I was in disbelief that the comments and abuse and

actions were real," and that their supervisor "never learned to pronounce my name correctly."

Additionally, the supervisor expressed that anything that Participant AFSEP 1 did well was

because they were "batting my eyelashes … used my feminine wiles." They also detailed that

they were "an outsider in my own community." Participant AFSEP 2 revealed that they felt

"belittled, inadequate." Participant AFRET 3 said, "He belittled me" and "made me feel I wasn't

good enough." Participant AFRET 4 stated that their supervisor "promoted feelings of

inadequacy (couldn't do even the simplest task correctly)." Participant AFRET 6 elucidated,

"My supervisor was always trying to belittle me at every turn." They also stated, "I felt that I was

not good enough at times." Participant AFRET 8 described their supervisor as "degrading,

condescending." They also explained that the abuse "made me feel like I was not worthy to be in

the position that I was." Participant NVRET 10, when asked how the abuse made them feel,

resolved "not valued." NVSEP 11, a Black female separated from the Navy, described that the

supervisor made them feel "embarrassed or belittled." MCRET 13 also felt the pressure. They

said, "At times it made me question myself and my abilities as a young Marine to be able to stay

in the Marine Corps."

These feelings of inadequacy did not just manifest at work. While a few of the

participants detailed that the abuse did not affect their home life, many of the participants stated

that these feelings as well as other negative reactions also occurred off duty and at home.

Participant AFSEP 2 contributed, "I was extremely stressed." Participant AFRET 3 experienced

similar feelings, "I was stressed out most of the time so sometimes I would have a quick temper

at home." Participant AFRET 6 explained,

> My abusive supervision affected my home life somewhat because my spouse worked in
>
> the same shop and at times, she was possibly seeing what was going on and if I was
>
> getting reprimanded or talked to in a negative manner, it made me feel embarrassed. It
>
> made me not want to talk about work at home for a period of time but sometimes because
>
> she worked there and I would see her at home, it would remind me of the office and made

me feel ashamed as a man because you never want your wife to see you in a negative [light].

Participant AFRET 8 disclosed that the abuse made them doubt themself at home. They said, "It made me question if I was capable with other decisions that I was making within my family." Participant ARSEP 12 said, "I was constantly on edge because the base was in a small community … made it difficult to create and maintain relationships." Finally, MCRET 14 described that he got an epiphany one day: "I realized that I was letting the actions … disrupt my family time."

Research Question 2

How do emotion-focused coping strategies mitigate negative workplace stress resulting from abusive supervision in the military? The themes and subthemes identified for Research Question 2 were Capitulation and Support Systems (From Within, From Without, and From Within and From Without). The participants' responses confirmed that they experienced abusive supervision and utilized emotion-focused coping strategies to mitigate the stress it caused.

Emotion-focused coping strategies helped mitigate negative workplace stress by providing service members tools they could use to minimize the stress caused by abusive supervision. They used a combination of emotion-focused strategies simultaneously with problem-focused actions (for example, requests to transfer jobs or bases, soliciting help from leadership) when they believed they had no powerful allies in the situation in order to manage the stress induced by the abusive supervision. Most participants felt negatively about their current positions and needed a way to manage the stress it caused.

During this study, the participants rated themselves at various stress levels at the time of the abusive supervision. The negative stress levels ranged from 3 to 10, with 10 being the highest

stress level. To mitigate the stress, the participants detailed that they utilized a combination of emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies. It should be noted that 2 of the 14 participants did express attempts to utilize problem-focused strategies (mainly direct communication with the abusive supervisor) in order to end the abuse. Unfortunately, in each of the incidents, the participants were not in a position of power to change the situation, and no permanent change occurred. Nonetheless, overall, the participants' interview responses detailed that they primarily leaned toward utilizing more emotion-focused coping strategies.

Emotion-focused coping strategies mitigated negative workplace stress by providing service members tools they could use to minimize the stress caused by abusive supervision. Most participants felt negatively about their current positions and needed a way to manage the stress it caused. Nine of the participants did not believe emotion-focused coping mitigated their stress. They all stated that their stress levels remained the same. However, after examining their descriptions of the incidents, all nine expressed reaping the benefits that avoidance, support seeking, and reframing provided. They used a combination of emotion-focused strategies simultaneously with other outside actions (for example, requests to transfer jobs or bases, soliciting help from leadership) when they believed they had no powerful allies in the situation in order to manage the stress induced by the abusive supervision.

Capitulation

Even though many of the participants were the recipients of supervisory behavior that was unlawful, based on military guidance, most participants (10 of 14) expressed no attempt to request assistance from military authorities, investigation agencies, enforcement agencies, or their leadership (when applicable). The majority felt that the situation would just get worse if they said anything. Therefore, they sought other remedies to mitigate the stress from the abuse.

Three of the participants attempted to utilize problem-focused strategies and report the abuse to authorities or leadership. Unfortunately, none of them were helped in a satisfactory manner, and their situations further proved they were not in a position to make any actionable change. Participant AFRET 3 mentioned contacting military authorities, but the authorities stated they could not report the supervisor's actions. They explained, "I went to the IG" and were informed that "if it was only one individual reporting the abusive supervisor … tread lightly … supervisor could cause more problems for me."

Participant AFRET 4 stated that their concerns were elevated. They said, "I elevated my concerns to the next two levels. … If they ever talked with my supervisor, I never knew it. … [H]is behavior never changed." Meanwhile, Participant MCRET 14 stated that they initially reported the abuse, but "when I saw nothing happened and I became the target I didn't report any other incidents."

Additionally, Participant ARSEP 12, a Black female who separated from the Army, also reported the initial abuse and noticed action had been taken. However, reporting the abuse appeared to just replace one problem with another because of the later actions of leaders at command level. Participant ARSEP 12 explained to their leadership that the supervisor was making unwanted sexual advances at them; when they declined, the abusive supervision began. They explained, "The initial abuse was forceful touching and speaking to me and about me in a sexual way in front of others. It evolved into threats and derogatory comments, again often in front of others.". They detailed what occurred:

> After I continued to deny his attempts (at a sexual relationship) he complained to my
> command. I told my unit what was going on and they spoke with his command. He
> "somehow" transferred out a few days later and then my command started treating me

differently. … I was told … stay in my place and not make problems for people with families.

Support System

Participants within this study expressed several ways that they sought or tried to establish emotional support. Finding a productive support system was key in managing the stress from abusive supervision. Some achieved this by internal means, while others utilized external means. Finally, some relied on both.

From Within. The first group sought support from within by reframing or seeking a higher power to get past the abusive supervision. Participant AFRET 6 stated that they would "ask myself, are they right? … I would try to think of ways to try and improve my situation … focus on the things that I could control." Participant AFRET 7 explained that they "learned over the years to take a step back and look at a situation for what it really is" by "not allowing for my emotions to get the best of me." But they also added, "It's also a good thing to have others you can turn to and lean on in times of need to help you through a situation." Participant AFRET 9 stated, "Ultimately, my prayer time became my way of dealing with everything." Meanwhile ARSEP 12 detailed that they were "able to self soothe and calm myself … by watching the clock and calendar" because they knew the abuse had to end sometime. Last, Participant MCRET 13 took another approach. They disclosed, "I chose to put my emotions in my pocket and that is where it still sits today. It made me hard as woodpecker lips." Additionally, Participant MCRET 14 stated that they "stayed positive" and promised "once I get to that rank, I will not be like [the abusive supervisor]."

From Without. The next group sought support from others. Participant AFSEP 1 explained, "I vented a lot … emailing and … talking to my friends and family." Participant

AFRET 3 stated, "I confided in friends to listen to me vent. … I went to counseling as another way to cope … [to the] doctor when I found his supervision caused my emotions to become overwhelming and become unreliable." Participant AFRET 4 relied on the community around them. They detailed, "Becoming involved with things outside of work helped to change my perspective." They added that they "became active in the chapel on base … active in the local community." Participant AFRET 5 shared, "I would vent to my roommates because if I didn't talk about it, I think I would have exploded and took it out on others."

From Within and Without. The participants did not just rely on one support system. Some of them utilized both by looking within and without for support. Participant AFSEP 1 stated that they were "journaling" and utilized strategies such as "vent[ing] … [and] talking to friends and family … to get all my steam and settle emotions." Participant AFRET 9 also relied on support from within and without. They explained, "Venting and listening to others vent was what we found initially to help us curb our emotions and better control them when in the presence of the emotionally abusive supervisor. … [We] supported each other in this way." The same was true with Participant MCRET 13. They stated that their faith helped them through the stress, but "I would often discuss the problems … with fellow Marines … [and my] wife. I would get reassured … right track … hang in there."

Research Question 3

What are the outcomes of emotion-focused coping strategies, as perceived by former military service members, within the military? The themes and subthemes identified for Research Question 3 included Escape or Evade. Although the participants had varying stress levels due to their abuse, most measured the outcome of their using these coping strategies as "the same" (9 of 14), with one rating their situation as worse. Some even emphasized that the act

of avoiding abusive supervision was also stressful. After data analysis of both interviews, I discovered that emotion-focused strategies (reframing, avoidance, and seeking support) were utilized and helped them manage their emotions until change could be made. Nevertheless, all the participants believed that the best way out of the abuse (for them, the abused) was to physically leave the situation.

Escape or Evade

Most of the participants believed that the abuse would go away when one of them (the abuser or themselves) left the assignment (place of work). Therefore, they all sought (or hoped for) relief by one of them actually getting new assignment orders. Unfortunately, the assignment process took time, and something needed to be done to manage the stress in the interim. Requesting assistance from someone higher in the chain of command or from military authorities was not used often or at all. Only a few of the participants sought this type of assistance. Instead, most of them chose to avoid the supervisor as much as they possibly could.

Participant AFSEP 1 professed the abuse ended when "he finally PCS'd," but the abuse did not really end until "she eventually moved." They declared, "The only thing that ended this cycle was having the new supervisor PCA me to a support unit." Participant AFSEP 2 imparted that their abuse ended when "I was moved to another office." Participant AFSEP 3 stated that they "retired and left" to end the abuse. Participant AFRET 4 stated that the base had to close, and they had to "cross train and get out of maintenance" to escape the abuse. Participant AFRET 5 conveyed that their supervisor "was eventually removed from our section." Participant AFRET 6 claimed the abuse did not end until "I was assigned to a new base." Interestingly, Participant AFRET 7 declared,

I got promoted. There's an old saying in the Air Force "if you don't like the way things

are, then get promoted and make changes." By getting promoted, I was no longer under

this individual as far as supervision was concerned.

Participant AFRET 8 specified that retiring from the Air Force and leaving the unit ended

their abuse. They simply stated, "I ETS'd." Participant NVRET 10 said they "PCS'd" to end the

abuse. Meanwhile, Participant NVRSEP 11 said it all ended when they "got out of the military."

Participant ARSEP 12 also separated from the service to end the abuse. However, the abusive

supervisor still finds ways to contact them to this day. Finally, Participant MCRET 13's abuse

ended due to a combination of factors. They declared, "I went to God in prayer to help me get

through the situations that I was dealing with. … I focused on getting stronger mentally,

morally."

While they were waiting for any kind of personnel movement, all participants detailed

they actively tried to avoid the abusive supervisor. Participant AFSEP 1 disclosed that they

"worked hard to avoid him at all costs" and "felt the need to escape and evade just to survive in

my career." Participant AFRET 3 stated, "I also used avoidance when I was at work to try to stay

away from him." Participant AFRET 4 said, "I would avoid work social functions." Participant

AFRET 6 explained that they "would try to think of ways to try and improve my situation

(mostly by avoidance)."

Outliers

There were additional themes identified that were important to mention but were not

related to the answering of the research questions. Although not applicable to the research

questions, they represented emergent themes that were important in understanding how the

participants felt about their situation and giving insight into some of the decisions they made. Those themes were identified as Volte-Face and Alcohol Use.

Volte-Face

Although not a direct response to any research question, the theme Volte-Face is an important one because at some point every participant had a change of heart about their military service or their current job based on an abusive leader. Many of the participants within this study were not pleased with their predicaments and began to loathe their current military assignments due to the abusive supervision they suffered. Unlike many conventional workplaces military service members cannot simply leave the place of employment and choose to work somewhere else. Therefore, the participants chose to utilize emotion-focused coping to mitigate the stress that resulted from the abusive supervision.

Participant AFSEP 1 stated, "I couldn't wait to leave or find a way to get out. … I hated going to work. I hated being at work." They went on to say, "I didn't want to give up on the Air Force, but I knew I couldn't serve with him and others like him for 18 more years." Participant AFSEP 2 contributed the same sentiment. They said, "I used to love that job. … I wanted to leave that office as soon as possible." Participant AFRET 4 also added, "I didn't want to go to work. I also wanted to leave the maintenance career field." Participant AFRET 5 declared they "did not look forward to going to work as I did in the past." Participant AFRET 6's comments were along the same lines. They stated, "The abuse did not make me hate my job, but it did make me hate the people I worked with, and I hated to come to work when my supervision was there." Participant NVRET 10 expressed that because they "hated my job, I dreaded coming to work." Meanwhile Participant ARSEP 12 claimed the abuse "made me not even want to do my job."

Alcohol Use

While not considered rampant, there were some instances of participants initially utilizing negative coping strategies to mitigate the stress they were feeling. There were 3 participants who stated that the abusive supervision affected their home life, which resulted in them drinking more or relying on alcohol to feel better. Participant AFSEP 1 disclosed that they "drank even more." Participant AFRET 3 expressed that they "drank more alcohol to 'help.'" Participant AFRET 4 stated, "Initially, I consumed a lot of alcohol."

Situation Analysis

Each participant was asked how they rated their abusive supervision and stress after utilizing emotion-focused coping strategies. Nine of the 14 stated their stress levels remained the same. They all explained that none of their situations improved completely until they were no longer under the direct supervision of the abusive supervisor. Of the 9, AFSEP 1 and NVSEP 11 relayed that they expected some sort of new-person hazing and that some of the behavior was part of the job. AFSEP 1 continued, "I assumed it would fade after a few months. … [I]t didn't. … [It] felt like I had no one to turn to." NVSEP 11 stated that they believed that "it [was] just the culture … [to] tolerate it and do the job." Regardless of those expectations, both participants stated that utilizing emotion-focused coping helped them relieve stress.

Four of the participants believed that the emotion-focused coping helped to improve their situations. Participant AFRET 4 believed the extracurricular activities outside of work helped to reframe their point of view. Participant AFRET 4 specified, "I became more involved in activities outside of work that helped to change my perspective and I focused on my family." Participant AFRET 6's situation can also be characterized as reframing. Participant AFRET 6 said the strategies "allowed me to somewhat escape reality." They continued:

Reframing allowed me to use the energy to help others with the goal of hoping they

would not go through what I did and also hoping that it would also take my mind off of

what I was avoiding as well.

Participant AFRET 7 also believed the situation improved. They felt reframing the

situation helped. They said, "After I took a step back and understood the situation for what it

really was, I started to feel better about things." Conversely, Participant AFRET 9 stated that the

support that they eventually received from leadership is what made the difference. They

clarified:

While avoidance was helpful, it had the added stress of always looking over my shoulder.

… While we did not agree completely with how our higher-ups chose to "help" us deal

with our abusive supervisor, it was good to know they had validated our concerns a[nd]

sought the best way they could come up with in the deployed environment to relieve the

burden of working under the abusive individual.

Additionally, 1 participant believed their situation became worse from using emotion-

focused coping. Participant MCRET 13 stated, "Using the strategy of avoidance seemed to fuel

the fire dealing with my supervisor." The participant then added there would be some form of

retribution for anyone who reported problems to the higher authorities. They stated, "In my

experience, when you go to a higher level of command, there was always some type of

punishment for doing this." Regardless, every participant agreed that avoidance was the best, and

sometimes only, way to make it through the situation and stress from their abusive supervisor.

Reasons included fear of reprisal, being the sole victim coming forward (no proof), and the good

ole boy system, where the supervisor had friends in high places while they did not.

Last, regardless of how they rated their stress levels, every interview participant stated that avoidance was really the only viable coping strategy they could use. They utilized avoidance because they did not have the ability to change their situation without assistance from the military. So they all attempted to bide their time until the desired change occurred.

Summary

This chapter provided a summary of themes and subthemes discovered during this case study. The information discovered in the questionnaires and interviews were used to answer the three research questions that guided the study. Thematic analysis was utilized to determine five themes and determine findings. Additionally, literature from civilians and the military also aided in analyzing findings and documenting the results of this study. Based on the findings (themes and subthemes), most military members used emotion-focused coping to combat stress from abusive supervision. They stated they used this type of coping because it was the only thing they could do. Even though they may have felt like their situation did not change or became worse, emotion-focused coping, with a heavy reliance on avoidance, was what they utilized to minimize their stress. The findings, results, conclusions, and recommendations are documented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to identify emotion-focused coping strategies that military members perceived to help them cope with abusive supervision. The study used military veterans who retired or separated from any U.S. military service within the past 10 years. Although there have been numerous conventional (civilian) workforce studies on abusive supervision, having served in the U.S. Air Force for 24 years, I recognized that there may be some differences in how military members coped with the abuse. This study presented the experience of an often-unheard group, the enlisted and lower-ranking officer members. They all presented interpersonal interactions with abusive supervisors that aided in highlighting experiences that lower-ranking personnel may still be experiencing in today's military ranks.

The participants' memories of these interactions were captured using questionnaires and written interviews. Through these data points, I was able to identify several themes and subthemes relating to emotion-focused coping mechanisms. Most of these themes and subthemes (with the exception of Alcohol Use and Volte-Face) were identified as the reasons why the participants selected emotion-focused coping as a mechanism to mitigate stress. They were as follows: Acolyte (subthemes—Fair Game, Unfairly/Unjustly Punished), Discrimination (subthemes—Racial and Ethnic Identity, Gender), Feelings of Inadequacy, Capitulation, Escape or Evade, and Support System (subthemes—From Within, From Without, and From Within and Without).

This chapter presents closing research interpretations from the coping with abusive supervision study. It will also provide information that answers the three research questions that guided this study. The information will be presented using the following subtopics: study

overview, discussion, conclusion, implications for change, and recommendations for future research.

Study Overview

In this qualitative descriptive case study, I examined the perceptions of military veterans and how they utilized emotion-focused coping to manage stress caused by abusive supervision while serving on active duty. I utilized the interpersonal interactions of military veterans who experienced abusive supervision and retired (or separated) within the past 10 years. After utilizing a liaison (referral source) and Facebook groups, I found 14 participants who fit the parameters of the study and agreed to share their experiences. They were veterans of the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marines. The veterans experienced the abuse while they were in the ranks of O-2 through E-8.

Discussion

Three research questions guided this research. The research questions were answered with identified themes and subthemes from the participant questionnaire and interview data. The themes were identified using thematic analysis.

RQ1: Why Do Military Service Members Who Experience Abusive Supervision Select Emotion-Focused Coping Strategies?

Based on thematic analysis and coding from participant questionnaires and interviews, the following themes and sub-themes developed: Acolyte with the subthemes Fair Game and Unfairly/Unjustly Punished; Discrimination with the subthemes Racial and Ethnic Identity and Gender; and, last, Feelings of Inadequacy. These themes were the reasons that service members believed they had no other options but to utilize emotion-focused coping to mitigate the stress caused by their abusive supervisors.

The military excels at training people to be "in" the military. From the beginning military trainers' purposes are to erase civilian thoughts and replace them with military ones that promote discipline and teamwork (Ford et al., 2020; Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020). This training involves living and working within the confines of the military service because it is a 365-day, 24/7 position. Therefore, military members normally have higher organizational commitment and loyalty than employees in the civilian sector (Todorović et al., 2017). Respect for the hierarchy is ingrained into the psyche of military members. Service members are taught (and embrace) the idea that they are supposed to obey the orders of the military member (officer or enlisted) appointed over them.

Rank in the military is very important. It establishes a service member's place within the military as well as how much power they hold. Service members in the highest ranks have the power (majority influence) to control the lives of those below them. This control governs whether the subordinate (minority influence) remains in the military, receives a promotion or a preferred assignment, gets rewarded or disciplined. That is an abundance of power that can be used negatively by an abusive supervisor. It is also the reason why most of the participants in the study (10 of 14) declined to report their abuse.

In consequence, the abusive supervisor recognizes that there is a perceived safeguard for them that is built into the military system. There is an old military adage: "Rank has its privileges." It means that higher-ranking service members (leaders) have licenses that lower ranking personnel do not. Destructive leaders who abide by this quip can take negative advantage of their rank by using abusive supervision as a tool for mistreating subordinates. As a result, subordinates come to believe that military rules benefit those with higher rank and power,

and they could also be fearful of retribution. For those reasons—powerful rank and fear—the subordinate may not go outside the immediate chain of command to report the abuse.

Additionally, unlike many employees in the civilian workforce, military members have commitments (assignment policies, service obligations, and terms of enlistment) so they cannot just resign and find employment elsewhere when they do not like something (Reed, 2015). So what can a lower-ranking military member with no power do? They have two choices: quietly report the abusive supervisor to military authorities or remain inconspicuous until one of them (supervisor or the member) gets a new assignment and changes duty locations.

The participants in this study relied on the understanding that when a person is in the military, someone is destined to move. According to Gleason and Beck (2017), one-third of the military force changes duty stations annually. Therefore, all the abused member had to do was wait it out. This is consistent with Reed's (2015) book, *Tarnished: Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Military*. He stated that job mobility and being able to separate from the abusive supervisor lessened stress for the subordinates (Reed, 2015). Unfortunately, the military system is a bureaucracy, and it can take time to make changes happen. So, waiting means staying in the abuse longer.

Throughout this waiting period, the participants experienced abusive supervision that included punishment that they believed was not justified. This punishment was as rudimentary as being ridiculed in front of others to being denied a promotion. Many times, there was no rational reason for the punishment. Some participants were just not on their supervisor's "in-crowd list," while others claimed the root of the abuse was due to discrimination. These abusive actions also caused some of the participants to doubt their abilities and worth to the military and others around them. All the actions resulted in increased workplace stress for the subordinate. Hence,

the participants collectively believed that utilizing emotion-focused coping was the only safe strategy they could use to mitigate their stress until the problem was resolved.

RQ2: How Do Emotion-Focused Coping Strategies Mitigate Negative Workplace Stress Resulting From Abusive Supervision in the Military?

Based on thematic analysis and coding from participant questionnaires and interviews, the following themes and subthemes developed: Capitulation and Support Systems with the subthemes From Within, From Without, and From Within and Without. A review of both questionnaires was also conducted and was integrated into the research. Emotion-focused coping strategies mitigate negative workplace stress resulting from abusive supervision by providing military members an avenue to lessen their stress in interpersonal situations where they have little to no power to institute change.

The military is a hierarchy that works because of its rigid structure of rank. That same structure can negatively affect those at its lower end when the service members are experiencing abuse from one of their leaders. Every participant (14 of 14) acknowledged heightened distress levels that were induced by the abusive supervision they experienced. They utilized both emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies. The problem-focused strategies did not provide any relief because their attempts to change their circumstances by confronting the abusive supervisor or reporting them to some authority failed to produce any change to their stress levels. However, emotion-focused strategies (reframing, support seeking, and avoidance), when used alone or in combination with other strategies, helped provide them some relief.

The 14 participants were also asked how they felt after using emotion-focused coping, and only 4 stated outright that they felt better (decreased stress) about their situations. To them, the improvement was due to using a combination of emotion-focused coping strategies

(reframing, support seeking, and avoidance). While they all expressed that they utilized avoidance strategies at work, 4 of the participants discussed the benefits of support seeking and reframing. Three of the 4 detailed that reframing and support seeking were important in helping them relieve stress at home (or during off-work hours). Participant AFRET 3 stated they used reframing to turn their situation into a lesson to help others. While Participants AFRET 2 and AFRET 5 were able to use reframing and support from the local community to change or to look at the situation from a positive perspective.

The remaining participant, Participant AFRET 9, detailed that their leadership witnessed the negative leadership tactics their abusive supervisor was using and became involved. It should be added that Participant AFRET 9's leadership did not reprimand or punish the abusive leader; their actions only removed the leader from the sphere of the service members they were abusing. In fact, this leader was given an even higher position in the unit. Positive leadership involvement, from the abused subordinate perspective, was a rare occurrence for the participants in this study.

Nine of the remaining participants did not believe emotion-focused coping mitigated their stress. However, after reviewing the data, I determined that participants did not fully recognize the purposes of and differences between emotion-focused and problem-focused coping. Most participants affirmed that avoidance was helpful in mitigating stress caused by the abusive supervisor. Last, 1 participant claimed avoidance did not help due to their sharing an office with the abusive supervisor. They further explained that they did utilize support seeking to help eliminate the stress. Being able to talk to someone about their problems, whether it was a friend, coworker, or a professional, was a great stress reliever.

Having analyzed the participants' stress ratings and written comments, I asserted that emotion-focused coping was useful in mitigating stress from abusive supervision even for those

who did not realize it at the time of the incident. This is consistent with past studies that detailed those coping mechanisms, when utilized, can be conscious or unconscious (Knowles et al., 2020; Van der Hallen, 2020).

RQ3: What Are the Outcomes of Emotion-Focused Coping Strategies, as Perceived By Former Military Service Members, Within the Military?

Based on thematic analysis and coding from participant questionnaires and interviews, the following theme developed: Escape or Evade. A review of both questionnaires was also conducted and was integrated into the research.

Participants were asked to rate their stress levels and explain how they were better, worse, or the same after utilizing emotion-focused coping. They all provided interview answers that described the emotion-focused coping strategies as useful but did not change their abusive situations. Since changing a situation (abusive supervisor) was not the goal of emotion-focused coping, it did what it needed to do: it mitigated stress. The theme Escape and Evade detailed that the participants all tried their best to avoid the perpetrator of the abusive supervision. By utilizing avoidance, they removed themselves from their abusive supervisor's line of sight in their attempts to minimize the stress or at the very least prevent the stress from getting worse. This tactic also afforded the U.S. military the ability to retain personnel. Eleven of the 14 participants experienced the abuse early in their careers, and 10 remained with their respective service until retirement (20 or more years).

Past studies have found that avoidance-oriented coping was positively associated with occupational stress, negative moods, and eating disorders (Ay & Mackali, 2021; Shin & Kemps, 2020; Siddiqui & Soomro, 2019). This could be because the employees are trying to minimize stress by ignoring or avoiding the stress inducer. That was not the case for the participants in this

study. The service members from this study who chose to utilize avoidance were not ignoring or feigning the existence of the issue; instead, they were trying to preserve their inner peace by staying away from the abusive supervisor (the stressor). All the participants, except one, stated that this strategy helped; Participant AFRET 4 believed that they did not benefit from avoidance because of their proximity to the supervisor (shared office). They ultimately retired from the Air Force, which is a type of move, to get away from the abusive supervisor.

Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to identify emotion-focused coping strategies that military service members perceived to have helped them cope with abusive supervision. In this study, I sought to interpret the transactional relationships between supervisors and their military subordinates in the ranks of O-2 down through E-1. Questionnaires and interviews provided participants an avenue to express their experiences with abusive supervision. The results of this study exposed active-duty service members' experiences with abusive supervision and the methods they utilized to cope with the stress it caused. The information collected and analyzed provides substantiation that military service members experience abusive supervision similar to their civilian counterparts.

Mostly dyadic (with some group) relationships, there are times when the supervisor utilizes destructive leadership practices to manage and lead military members. As confirmed in this study, destructive leadership practices can manifest as abusive supervision and result in stress for the service member. This study concurred with past studies into abusive supervision that found employees with abusive supervisors experienced damage to their identity and that their low self-esteem contributed to lower OCBs, negative work engagement (WE), and a desire to leave the organization (Arfat et al., 2018; Bani-Melhem et al., 2021; Ronen & Donia, 2020;

Wongleedee, 2020). Thirteen of 14 participants experienced some form of insecurity or self-doubt, and 14 of 14 described lower OCBs, negative work engagement, and a desire to leave their current job (or military base). Tepper (2000) expressed that this abuse decreased job satisfaction and increased turnover rates. While this study did confirm decreased job satisfaction, turnover rates would have to be examined in a separate study because unlike most conventional workplaces, service members cannot simply leave their current employment due to signed contractual obligations.

Another finding from this study was that all the participants described their supervisors utilizing positional power to bully them with toxic tactics in their dyadic relationships. While coercive power, which utilizes threats to force employees to comply, was utilized, it should be noted coercive power could not be utilized without the leader first having legitimate power by virtue of their position and rank (Arman, 2020; Hartner-Tiefenthaler, 2020; Strom, 2020). The abusive leader's destructive use of legitimate and coercive power (both being hard powers) caused their subordinates to remain silent and not inform leadership or agencies that were meant to help them about their abuse. This study also concurred with previous study findings that stated abusive supervision can cause negative impacts to male-dominated and high-power distance organizations such as the military (Arman, 2020). Additionally, it confirmed that in high power distance, where hierarchy was important, employees utilized defensive silence as a form of self-protection (Ji et al., 2015; Lam & Xu, 2019).

Some of the results of this military study did have differences from published literature, which I attributed to the military mindset. Previous studies showed that abusive supervision and high power distance between the supervisor and employee were precursors to the employee performing counterproductive workplace behaviors (CWBs), such as workplace tardiness or

sabotage and having suicidal thoughts (Low et al., 2021; Lui et al., 2020). This study showed no evidence that the military members exhibited any CWBs nor any desire to self-harm or hurt others. They all seemed to believe their work and home lives would improve when they were free from the abusive supervisor. They only had to find a way to cope until that freedom came.

Enlisting or serving as an officer in the military is inherently stressful due to the nature of the profession (Adler et al., 2017; Ilisoi & Furuna, 2015). The stress intensifies when a toxic leader is added to the equation. The emotion-focused coping strategies of reframing, support seeking, and avoidance were all perceived to help military members cope with stress caused by abusive supervision. These strategies were used independently, collectively, and concurrently with other actions outside the participants' control to combat the stress. Participants identified usage of both positive and negative coping strategies to mitigate the stress. Negative coping included turning to alcohol and self-blame. However, the majority of participants utilized positive methods.

For the purpose of this study, reframing, support seeking, and avoidance were considered positive. Reframing allowed them to examine the issue from another perspective that allowed them to learn from the situation. Support seeking helped them mitigate stress by talking to others (friends, therapists, and coworkers), seeking God, and/or journaling. Avoidance, however, has both positive and negative connotations. Past studies have identified avoidance as negative because it was used to mask an issue and led to more distress (Anderson & Kosloff, 2020) and anxiety (Ribadier & Varescon, 2019). Yet, in this current study, the participants were not in denial of the issue they were facing; their goals for avoidance were to remain calm by avoiding direct contact with the abusive supervisor as much as possible (Ay & Mackali, 2021).

As identified in the Reed and Burris 2009 study (one of the frameworks for this current study), all the participants experienced some form of abusive supervision, and it occurred mostly in the lower ranks. The Reed and Burris 2009 study asked an important question that I believe can be answered based on the data from this study. They asked, "Does the hierarchical military environment and unique demands of the profession of arms foster or suborn negative leadership behaviors that are less prevalent in other endeavors?" (p. 17).

Based on this study, I believe that the hierarchical military environment does foster negative leadership behaviors. This conclusion is based on all of the participants not having the option of quitting and identifying as being fearful of retribution as a reason for not reporting the abusive supervision they suffered. Additionally, only 3 of the total 14 participants provided accounts of their abusive supervisor being disciplined, in any way, for the abusive supervision tactics. Unfortunately, the abusive supervisors who were disciplined were not disciplined due to a subordinate reporting them. They were disciplined because a higher-ranking individual witnessed some unprofessional behavior (unrelated to abusive supervision) that required a reprimand.

Even though the relationship with the abusive supervisor tainted how the military member felt about their current job, in general, the participants did not blame the military service they served in for the abusive supervision. Most participants placed the blame directly on the abusive supervisor, and all efforts were made to circumvent them in order to continue serving. Most participants continually stressed that they did not like their current working environment; they did not apply any negative associations to their military service as a whole.

Analysis of interviews determined that the participants' OCB and WE were low because they noted strong negative feelings against their current work locations but not against the

military service itself. However, three participants were convinced they were victims of the

"good ole boy" environment and/or they simply believed the incidents they experienced were

just "how it was" in the military. Conversely, there were participants who felt like they did not

want to do their job, but higher CWBs were not noted. It is possible that these behaviors were not

elevated because of the penalties military service members face for not doing their jobs on a day-

to-day basis. It could also be because military members recognize the greater good of what they

are doing day to day. They may feel that compromising their daily duties could in turn be

detrimental to the security of the United States.

The veterans in this study seemed to find security in knowing that some form of transfer

was eventually going to happen. Therefore, if they were experiencing something undesirable, the

next military move was right around the corner, and it would give them a chance at a fresh start.

Unfortunately, that could only happen if their military records remained free of negative

annotations. Therefore, while waiting for action, emotion-focused coping was utilized to get

through the situation and mitigate the psychological distress caused by the abuse (Graves et al.,

2021).

Although emotion-focused coping strategies were useful to these participants, more has

to be accomplished to combat abusive supervision in the military. Emotion-focused coping

strategies are not designed to fix the problem and may not be useful long term (Graves et al.,

2021; Shin & Kemps, 2020). Therefore, the problem has to be addressed because abusive

supervision will not go away on its own. This is in direct agreement with Tepper's (2000)

description that abusive supervision will continue unless one of the parties in the relationship

terminates it (leaves) or the abusive supervisor changes on their own. It would be terrible if a

victim of this abuse did all they could to escape the abuse in order to continue serving their

country, only to remain a subordinate to a different abusive supervisor at a new location.

Abusive supervision must be identified and eradicated.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study

In this study, I attempted to account for external influences associated with the COVID-19 pandemic by planning to conduct participant interviews by means of Zoom. However, recording via Zoom, with cameras off, proved to be a detriment to the study. Potential participants expressed hesitation to being recorded in any manner; therefore, I decided to email all participants the interviews and have them answer (type) and email it back. I also informed them their exact verbiage would be utilized. (The participants were emailed the study information in the following order: introduction to the study, consent forms, questionnaire links, Interview 1, and Interview 2). The usage of written interviews eliminated the ability to ask immediate follow-up questions of the participant so that more information could be gathered. Additionally, despite the effort to include all military services, this study is heavy with Air Force–provided data and only includes data from four of the six services.

Implications for Change

The findings from this study have serious implications for the military. The military services do have programs and agencies in place that allow victims to report their troubles. However, those programs and outlets can only be effective when they are actually being utilized. The indications from this study are that victims (13 of 14 participants) of abusive supervision are not choosing to utilize those resources or are being dissuaded from using them for one reason or another.

Recommendations

Although the seminal research for this study has implied that senior military leaders believe abusive supervision is diminishing (Reed & Burris, 2009), that may not be true for the junior officer and enlisted ranks. Unfortunately, the lower-ranking members of the services are experiencing the abuse, and much of the time without any acknowledgement of their distress from anyone in leadership. The following recommendations can help resolve the issue.

Recommendations for Practical Application

It is evident that abusive supervision is occurring within the military ranks. This abuse is not being reported due to fear of retribution from the abuser and/or their allies and advocates. This could possibly be due to the hierarchy within the military and the culture of loyalty—even to bad supervisors (Fisher, 2019; Reed & Olsen, 2010). Military leaders should be educated about the abusive supervision issue so that they can recognize that abusive supervision is happening and how it affects their service members. An absence of reporting does not mean the problem does not exist. Additionally, conflict resolution as well as resiliency training about the benefits of different coping mechanisms would also be useful. Last, a nonretribution method of reporting abusive supervision may be needed—similar to how the U.S. Air Force has tackled sexual assaults.

The U.S. Air Force established a sexual assault prevention program that addresses the issue of sexual assaults, to include care for the victim. The guidance on the program stated, "AF personnel (service members and civilian employees) and adult military dependents who file a report of sexual assault will be protected from reprisal, coercion, ostracism, maltreatment or retaliation, or threat of reprisal, coercion, ostracism, maltreatment or retaliation, for filing a report" (Air Force Instruction, 2020). Air Force Instruction 90-6001 (2020) went on to state that

it is the responsibility of the commander to ensure they promote a command climate that is based on trust and values all its members.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future recommended research on abusive supervision within the military ranks includes the following. First, a more widespread study, focusing on active-duty, guard, and reserve personnel in the ranks O-1 down through E-9 from all six services, would give a more accurate assessment of the phenomenon. Second, researchers could study the effective strategies that conventional workplaces utilize to eliminate abusive supervision while simultaneously supporting the victim of the abuse throughout the process. Third, future research could focus on developing actionable tools (such as resiliency and conflict management) for military service leaders to educate the forces on abusive supervision and how to eliminate it.

Summary

Abusive supervision is still an issue within the U.S. military even though leaders have tried to discourage and eradicate it. The lower-ranking personnel are suffering the effects of it. Instead of having someone (or somewhere) to go with their troubles, military service members have had to cope with the abuse until progress was made by leaving the situation. Emotion-focused coping has helped with the situation, but it is by no means a fix or a viable long-term solution. The participants in this study have shown that emotion-focused coping can do only so much. The fear of retribution is the leading reason most people do not report the abuse. Their lack of power in the situation is on display because in some situations the abused service members do not even ask for help. Emotion-focused coping is a good strategy to have when dealing with stresses in life to include abusive supervision, but that strategy does not do much

else. Military leaders should step up to protect the greatest assets that the military has—its

service members.

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Appendix A: Abusive Supervision Items

"Abusive supervision refers to subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact." (Tepper, 2000).

Instructions:

The following statements represent instances of abusive supervision that leaders utilize. Read the statements and indicate how often a supervisor used this behavior with you.
Preface each item with the statement, "My boss…

		Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Moderately	Very Often
1	ridicules me.	1	2	3	4	5
2	tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid.	1	2	3	4	5
3	gives me the silent treatment.	1	2	3	4	5
4	puts me down in front of others.	1	2	3	4	5
5	invades my privacy.	1	2	3	4	5
6	reminds me of my past mistakes and failures.	1	2	3	4	5
7	doesn't give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort.	1	2	3	4	5
8	blames me to save themself embarrassment	1	2	3	4	5
9	breaks promises they make.	1	2	3	4	5
10	expresses anger at me when they are mad for another reason.	1	2	3	4	5
11	makes negative comments about me to others.	1	2	3	4	5
12	is rude to me.	1	2	3	4	5
13	does not allow me to interact with my coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5
14	tells me I am incompetent.	1	2	3	4	5
15	lies to me.	1	2	3	4	5

Note. From "Consequences of Abusive Supervision," by B. J. Tepper, 2000, *Academy of Management Journal, 43*, pp. 189–190. Copyright 2000 by the American Psychological Association. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix B: Coping With Abusive Supervision Scale Items

Instructions:

The following statements represent how you have sought to cope with a hardship in your life. Read the statements and indicate how much you have been using each coping style.

		Not at all	A small amount	A medium amount	To a large extent
1	I explain to others how my feelings are hurt by the supervisor's behavior.	0	1	2	3
2	I talk to other people about how the supervisor's behavior upsets me.	0	1	2	3
3	I convince myself that I do my job well, so that the supervisor can't harm me.	0	1	2	3
4	I avoid having to work together with the supervisor.	0	1	2	3
5	When I talk to the supervisor I ask him/her clearly to change his/her attitude.	0	1	2	3
6	I take every opportunity to be nice to the supervisor so that he/she will think I am a good friend.	0	1	2	3
7	I try to encounter the supervisor as little as possible.	0	1	2	3
8	I pour out my heart to others about the supervisor's behavior towards me.	0	1	2	3
9	I tell myself that I have a reasonable position, so I don't have to take the supervisor seriously.	0	1	2	3
10	I tell the supervisor directly and clearly that he/she must not treat me like that.	0	1	2	3
11	I talk to the supervisor about the problems in our relationship so that he/she will stop acting that way.	0	1	2	3
12	I relieve myself by talking to other people about the supervisor's behavior.	0	1	2	3
13	At meetings I try to sit as far from the supervisor as possible.	0	1	2	3
14	I support the supervisor in matters that are important to him/her, so that he/she will see I am on his/her side.	0	1	2	3
15	I Insist that the supervisor stop behaving like that towards me.	0	1	2	3
16	I offer to help the supervisor with tasks connected to work, so that he/she will behave better.	0	1	2	3
17	I try to have the least possible contact with the supervisor.	0	1	2	3
18	I behave in a friendly manner towards the supervisor so that he/she will stop acting like that.	0	1	2	3

		Not at all	A small amount	A medium amount	To a large extent
19	Every time the supervisor behaves like that towards me I tell somebody.	0	1	2	3
20	I ask the supervisor politely to stop behaving like that.	0	1	2	3
21	I publicly express my belief in the supervisor in his/her presence so that he/she will feel that I'm on his/her side.	0	1	2	3
22	If I see the supervisor from a distance, I try to 'disappear', to prevent meeting him/her.	0	1	2	3
23	I remind myself that there are more important matters in my life.	0	1	2	3
24	I convince myself that this is a small, unimportant matter.	0	1	2	3
25	I tell myself that this is only a job and that there are other things in life to deal with.	0	1	2	3

Note. From "Do Employees Cope Effectively With Abusive Supervision at Work? An

Exploratory Study," by D. Yagil et al., 2011, *International Journal of Stress Management*, *18*,

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Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Part I

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The goal of this study is to gather information and identify key issues that will aid military members when coping with abusive supervision. We will be conducting two interviews. The first interview (this one) should take approximately one hour. The second interview should take approximately 30 minutes. Please be assured that your identity is protected and what nothing you write here will be attributed to you. You have received and signed the informed consent form. Do you have any questions about it?

If so, please let me know.

60 Minute Interview

1. What military service did you serve in?

2. Were you an officer or enlisted?

3. What rank were you at the time of the abusive supervision?

4. Describe your experience with the abusive supervisor.

5. Tell me about the type(s) of abuse they utilized with you.

6. Discuss how the abuse made you feel.

7. Describe how the abuse affected your view of the military and its military culture.

8. Tell me how the abuse made you feel about your job.

9. How did the abusive supervision affect your home life (off duty)?

10. Explain why you utilized emotion-focused strategies during the abusive supervision.

11. Describe your use of emotion-focused strategies and how it affected your situation.

12. Tell me what ended the abuse.

13. What other information are you willing to share with me?

Thank you so much for taking the time out to answer these questions for me. Your insight is very valuable to this process. While I am not a trained mental health provider, I know that for some this can be a difficult subject to talk about. I completely understand that and value you and your feelings. Always remember the Veteran's Crisis Line is an avenue you can rely on day or night…for anything. They can be reached 24/7 at 1-800-273-8255, press 1.

Once again thank you. I will be contacting you in the next 30 days for the final written interview. That will take no longer than 30 minutes and d will ask questions about some of the findings that were brought up by all the participants. All of this will be accomplished without identifying any participant's personal information.

Part II

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This is the second and final interview and should take approximately 30 minutes. Please be assured that your identity is protected and what nothing you say here will be attributed to you. Your remarks will be used verbatim as you write them.

30-Minute Interview

*Explanation: Themes and patterns discovered after utilizing thematic analysis will be introduced. This information will be used to obtain an understanding of what the veteran experienced during the abusive supervision and how emotion focused coping helped them (if it did).

1. What is your race? (Please decline if you do not want to answer.)

2. How high would you rate your stress from the abusive supervision you experienced or witnessed in Interview 1? (1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest)

3. After using emotion focused strategies (such as avoidance, support and reframing) do you think your situation and stress from the abusive supervision:

    (A) Got better. (B) Got Worse. (C) Remained the same. Please explain.

4. After interviewing all the participants, I have found that the veterans in this study utilized some form of avoidance in regards to abusive supervision and making it through the situation.

    Was that your experience when you were a target of abusive supervision? Describe how your situation was similar or different.

5. Why didn't you elevate your concerns higher up the chain of command or to authorities when you were experiencing the abuse?

6. What other information are you willing to share with me?

Thank you so much for taking the time out to talk with me today. Your insight is very valuable to this process. While I am not a trained mental health provider, I know that for some this can be a difficult subject to talk about. I completely understand that and value you and your feelings. Always remember the Veteran's Crisis Line is an avenue you can rely on day or night…for anything. They can be reached 24/7 at 1-800-273-8255, press 1.

It was great meeting and talking with you.

Appendix D: Military Jargon

Command—a higher level of leadership

　　　　could affect how good or bad the EPR is and prevent some military perks)

Enlisted—backbone of any military service; perform specific job functions

EPR—enlisted performance report (an evaluation of performance for a period; remains

ETS'd—expiration of time in service (another term for retired)

First Sergeant—an Air Force senior noncommissioned officer (SNCO) who advises the senior

IG—Inspector General; investigating agency

　　　　in enlisted member's records forever)

LOR—letter of reprimand (administrative discipline; goes in record for preset amount of time;

　　　　military base

Military rank—E-1 through E-6 (junior enlisted), E-7 through E-9 (senior enlisted), O-1 through

　　　　O-4 (junior officer)

　　　　officer on matters regarding personnel

Officer—commissioned; manage enlisted

PCA'(d)—permanent change of assignment (military moving to a different unit but still at same

PCS'd—permanent change in station (military moving to a new military base)

Retired—veterans who are entitled to military pension (for example, served 20 or more years,

　　　　medically retired

Separated—veterans who are not entitled to military pension

Sgt—sergeant (E-5 or junior enlisted in the Marines)

SMSgt—senior master sergeant (E-8 or senior enlisted in the Air Force)

SNCO—senior noncommissioned officer (senior enlisted)

Veteran—anyone who has served in any of the U.S. military services

Appendix E: Oath of Enlistment

I, (STATE YOUR NAME), do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the

Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true

faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United

States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform

Code of Military Justice.

So, help me God.

Note. From 10 U.S.C. § 502 (an act of May 5, 1960, replaced the wording first adopted in 1789,

with amendment effective October 5, 1962).

Appendix F: Oath of Office (Officers)

I, [STATE YOUR NAME], having been appointed a [RANK] in the United States [BRANCH

OF SERVICE], do solemnly swear [OR AFFIRM] that I will support and defend the

Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true

faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation

or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the office upon which I am

about to enter.

So, help me God.

Note. From 5 U.S.C. § 3331 for "an individual, except the President, elected or appointed to an

office of honor or profit in the civil service or uniformed services."

Appendix G: Institutional Review Board Approval

Dear Dee,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled

(IRB# 21-116   )is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Appendix H: Abusive Supervision Items Approval

≡ M Gmail   🔍 xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Dee McDew<xxxxxxxxxxx>
to xxxxxxxx

Dr. Tepper,

Hello, my name is Demetrius McDew and I am a student at Abilene Christian University in Texas. I am c

My study is:

Abusive Supervision within the Military Ranks: A Qualitative Examination of Positive Emotion-Focused C

I am requesting permission to utilize Dr. Tepper's Abusive Supervision Items in the Appendix from:

Tepper, B.J. (2000). Consequences of abusive supervision. *Academy of Management Journal, 43,* 178–190. https://d

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lastly, I've learned so much for your studies and thank you for your work in this field.

V/r,

Demetrius McDew

Tepper, Bennett J.<xxxxxxxxxxxxx>
to me

Demetrius,

Anyone may use the scale for research purposes. Best of luck with your dissertation.

Ben T.

Appendix I: Coping With Abusive Supervision Items Approval

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Apr 20, 2021

This Agreement between Mrs. Demetrius McDew ("You") and American Psychological Association ("American Psychological Association") consists of your license details and the terms and conditions provided by American Psychological Association and Copyright Clearance Center.

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