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Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

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October 24, 2022

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How an Abusive Supervision Climate Impacts Business-to-Business (B2B) Sales Performance, and the Roles of Leader–Members Interdependence and Team Psychological Safety

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Matthew J. Daniel

November 2022

Dedication

This is dedicated to my wife, Tatiana, and two children, Matthew and Isabella, who gave me the motivation, support, love, and inspiration to complete this program. I also dedicate this to my late parents, Ron and Barbara Daniel, who passed along to me their love of God and passion for learning.

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My deepest gratitude to my fellow colleagues who reached out, connected, and created such a supportive environment as we all progressed through the good times and tough times these last few years, and a special thank you to Mitzi Willis, who has stuck with me since our very first class, and to my fellow "Positrio" members Alex Widener and Jordan Tate.

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Abstract

Sales supervisors can tremendously influence the sales teams they manage, and their behaviors can influence a team's engagement and sales performance. Because of the supervisor's influential role, their behavior, positive or negative, can ripple throughout the organization. As a result, a supervisor who role models abusive behavior within their organization also promotes a climate of abuse and incivility that can contribute to a toxic workplace. Abusive supervision (AS) is a significant problem in many business-to-business (B2B) sales organizations that negatively impacts the financial welfare and subjective well-being of organizations and their employees. This quantitative correlational study aimed to examine how an abusive supervision climate (ASC) impacts B2B sales performance and understand the roles of psychological safety and leader–members interdependence. The data were collected through social media service LinkedIn and audience panel services MTurk and Centiment. A sample of 319 responses was used to analyze the relationships of a moderated mediation model. The analysis results supported the moderated mediation model, with leader–members interdependence as the moderator and team psychological safety as the mediator. The moderated mediation model explained approximately 40% of the variance between the conditional indirect effect of ASC and outcome sales performance (OSP). The results also showed that ASC had a positive direct relationship with OSP and a significant negative conditional indirect effect on team psychological safety, depending on the level of leader–members interdependence. The results of this study may help companies understand the broader implications of an abusive supervision climate. Organizations may choose to prioritize interventions and implement policies to reduce the frequency within their B2B sales organizations, thereby fostering higher levels of psychological safety and building high-performing teams.

Keywords: abusive supervision climate, business-to-business (B2B), sales performance, leader–members interdependence, psychological safety, organizational justice, sales managers, sales supervisors, salespeople

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The ability of sales supervisors to influence behaviors is so profound that the quality of their actions explains 70% of the variance in employee engagement (Beck & Harter, 2015; Peesker et al., 2019). Moreover, supervisors' behaviors become modeled by others, amplifying their effects on the organization (Gabler et al., 2014; Torkelson et al., 2016). Because of the supervisor's influential role, their behavior, positive or negative, can ripple throughout the organization. As a result, a supervisor who role models abusive behavior within their organization also promotes a climate of abuse and incivility that can contribute to a toxic workplace.

Worldwide, toxic work environments cause employee disengagement, resulting in 37% higher absenteeism, 49% more accidents, 60% more errors and defects, and 18% lower productivity (Naeem & Khurram, 2020; Sorenson, 2013). In the United States, toxic workplaces contribute to approximately 120,000 deaths annually (Goh et al., 2016). Therefore, identifying the impact of a toxic culture and areas to improve organizational culture is essential to creating a more positive work environment, even if it means removing toxic employees from the organization or relocating the physical workspace (Andrus, 2019; Gino et al., 2018). However, the key to changing (or preventing) a toxic culture lies in changing the values and practices of the organization's employees (van Rooij & Fine, 2018).

According to van Rooij and Fine (2018), the process of detoxing an organization involves proper assessment; changing the toxic structures of the organization (i.e., compensation or budget structures); addressing top executives, managers, and employees (including their role and accountability); and setting the proper tone at the senior leadership level. Schein and Schein (2017) suggested shocking the employees into realizing the necessity to change for the sake of

the organization and their survival. Next, Schein and Schein (2017) stated that changing the organization's cultures requires creating psychological safety, which will support organizational learning, essential to fostering organizational change. Finally, it is essential to empower employees to actively participate in the cultural change process and speak up when concerned while protecting them from retribution against superiors (van Rooij & Fine, 2018).

Since Tepper's (2000) seminal research, much has been discovered about the numerous harmful effects of abusive supervision (AS) to employees and the organization. Tepper (2000) defined abusive supervision as "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (p. 178). Abusive supervision harms not only the employee receiving the abuse but also the supervisor delivering the abuse (Gabler & Hill, 2015). Moreover, the widespread occurrence of workplace bullying, including AS, interpersonal conflict, and related counterproductive work behavior (CWB), has caused some state governments to look at laws and employee protection policies (Chu, 2014; Martinko et al., 2013; Valentine & Fleischman, 2018). For example, Nevada's anti–workplace bullying law passed in 2009, and California's mandate regarding abusive conduct training passed in 2015.

Recently, scholars have suggested that the effects of AS extend beyond the leader–follower dyad to third parties that witness displays of AS toward their coworkers (Priesemuth & Schminke, 2019). Team members witnessing AS inflicted on their teammates leads to an abusive supervision climate (ASC) at the team level (Priesemuth et al., 2014). The ASC leads to additional team-level outcomes ranging from abused team members withdrawing from the group to prosocial support and helping behaviors by team members who have observed their coworkers' abuse (Priesemuth & Schminke, 2019).

The Critical Role of a Sales Manager in Driving Sales Performance

Sales supervisors have broad responsibilities critical to the sales process such as building sales territories and setting quotas (Peesker et al., 2019). Having an engaged sales team is also a key component of building a high-performing sales team, essential to an organization's growth (Mullins et al., 2020). Thus, the importance sales supervisors have in managing critical sales activities influences the success or failure of a salesperson. In other words, any deficiencies or suboptimal decisions made by sales supervisors can create less-than-optimal results.

Effective sales supervisors must lead, motivate, and coach salespeople in addition to their daily responsibilities of sales revenue and customer relations (McGowan, 2021; Peesker et al., 2019). Despite the vital role sales supervisors play in an organization's financial health, research is limited regarding the antecedents of effective sales managers as well as strategies to develop more effective sales managers (McGowan, 2021; Plank et al., 2018). However, research does show how abusive sales supervisors cause lower job satisfaction and higher turnover in their salespeople (Gabler et al., 2014). Moreover, AS often begins at higher levels in the organizational hierarchy and trickles down to frontline sales supervisors and salespeople. Thus, harmful leadership practices, such as AS, that negatively impact a salesperson's job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement, can create a cascading effect that has detrimental and potentially severe consequences to sales performance.

The Amplifying Effects of Leader–Members Interdependence

Leader–members interdependence (LMI) refers to the interdependence between a team member and the team leader (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018). The construct of LMI blends the two constructs of leader–member exchange (LMX), a dyadic relationship between leader and subordinate, and task interdependence, which explains how people rely on each other to

complete a task (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018). Sales supervisors who require close oversight and approvals (i.e., discount approvals, customer requests, etc.) for salespeople to effectively perform their tasks, create high levels of LMI (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018). When sales supervisors require high LMI, it prevents the followers from coping through avoidance (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018) and forces the salesperson to interact with their supervisor to complete critical tasks. Abusive supervision combined with high LMI creates a toxic relationship that is even more detrimental to team performance (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018). As a result, abusive supervisors who micromanage their team through high LMI contribute to lower levels of psychological safety and performance than supervisors with lower LMI (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018; Stoten, 2015).

Psychological Safety as a Contributing Factor to High-Performing Teams

Psychological safety describes how safe people feel expressing their ideas and opinions within a group (Kim et al., 2020). Key outcomes for psychologically safe teams include improved creativity, learning, innovation, efficacy, and performance (Edmondson, 1999; Kim et al., 2020; Rousseau & Aubé, 2018). The aforementioned outcomes of psychological safety in teams can benefit B2B sales organizations that need to quickly adapt to their customers' evolving needs, solve complex problems, and continually adapt to rapid changes in market including customer preferences (Böhm et al., 2020; Shanker et al., 2017). A psychologically safe environment also supports many of the critical elements, such as learning and problem solving, necessary to create high-performing B2B sales teams. Conversely, research has also shown that abusive and uncivil supervisors who decrease psychological safety also decrease prosocial behaviors and increase employee silence, thereby inhibiting learning, efficacy, and innovation (Ge, 2020; Liu et al., 2020).

Problem Statement

Abusive supervision is a significant problem in many B2B sales organizations and can negatively impact the financial welfare and subjective well-being of organizations and their employees (Mackey et al., 2017; Vogel & Bolino, 2020). Despite the relatively low range (10%–16%) of employees reporting that their supervisors regularly behave abusively, the consequences can be severe (Tepper et al., 2004, 2017; Vogel & Bolino, 2020). For example, AS can foster feelings of job insecurity and counterproductive work behaviors (Lawrence & Kacmar, 2017). Abusive supervision also compounds salespeople's stress and encourages unethical behavior, as exemplified in the 2012 Wells Fargo scandal involving unethical leadership and sales practices resulting in $3 billion paid in legal settlements (Badrinarayanan et al., 2019; Flitter, 2020; Lyngdoh et al., 2021). Left unchecked, employees subjected to sustained AS can experience lower organizational commitment, increased workplace deviance, decreased job satisfaction, increased turnover intent, and even posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Eissa et al., 2020; Gabler & Hill, 2015; Schwepker, 2017; Vogel & Bolino, 2020; Zhu & Zhang, 2019).

Abusive Supervision's Influence on Psychological Safety and B2B Sales Performance

Abusive supervision can decrease employees' psychological safety, thereby reducing solution-oriented thinking, which is an essential capability for B2B salespeople in meeting today's complex market demands (Böhm et al., 2020; Zhu & Zhang, 2019). In the presence of AS, employees are less inclined to speak up for fear of retribution, which inhibits the organization's ability to respond to risks or take advantage of new opportunities (Edmondson, 1999). Furthermore, an ASC erodes psychological safety at the sales team level, preventing the team from sharing ideas, providing feedback, engaging in dialogue, and learning from each other to become more effective in their work (Priesemuth et al., 2014). Ultimately, AS's impact on

psychological safety is detrimental to a sales organization's learning and innovation, which is key to adapting solutions based on customer needs (Kim et al., 2020; Rousseau & Aubé, 2018).

B2B salespeople are responsible for top-line revenue and play a unique and critical role within the organizations they serve (Chaker et al., 2016). Sales managers engaging in abusive behaviors can cause their salespeople psychological distress, create distrust, lower organizational commitment, increase workplace deviance, decrease job satisfaction, and increase turnover intent (Eissa et al., 2020; Gabler & Hill, 2015; Schwepker, 2017). For that reason, organizations should discourage AS and foster a healthy culture, including an environment of psychological safety in order to improve sales performance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine how an ASC impacts B2B sales performance and if psychological safety plays a mediating role. Furthermore, in this study I analyzed the moderating role of LMI. The population consisted of all actively employed nonmanagerial B2B sales professionals. The minimum acceptable sample size for a *p* value less than or equal to 0.05, as calculated by G*Power analysis, was 85 for linear multiple regression with three predictors. Participants of the study included a sample of full-time employed B2B salespeople. The survey scales for this study included three independent variables consisting of the five-item Abusive Supervision Climate scale (Priesemuth et al., 2014); four-item Leader–Members Interdependence scale (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018), which measures the interdependence between a team member and the team leader; and seven-item Psychological Safety scale (Edmondson, 1999) to measure the psychological safety among the sales team. The dependent variable was the seven-item Outcome Sales Performance scale (Schwepker & Good, 2012), which measures the individual salesperson's performance outcome.

Research Question

RQ1: How does an abusive supervision climate predict B2B sales performance, and does psychological safety among sales team members have a mediating effect?

Definition of Key Terms

Abusive supervision. Abusive supervision is "the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors by supervisors, but excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178).

Abusive supervision climate. Abusive supervision climate is "the collective perceptions employees hold regarding abusive supervision in their work unit" (Priesemuth et al., 2014, p. 1513).

Business-to-business (B2B) sales. B2B sales are operations and services aimed mainly at business customers, in contrast to consumers (Langley, 2009).

Counterproductive work behavior (CWB). CWB is employee behavior that goes against organizational norms and can harm the organization (Hochstein et al., 2017).

Innovative work behavior (IWB). IWB is "the development, adoption, and implementation of new ideas for products, technologies, and work methods by employees" (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017, p. 382).

Leader–members interdependence (LMI). LMI is the interdependence between a team member and the team leader (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018).

Negative reciprocity. Negative reciprocity is a coercive attempt to get something from someone that is more than they are otherwise willing to give (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). The term refers to a win–lose exchange of unequal value rather than a win–win exchange of equal value.

Organizational culture. Organizational culture describes the shared beliefs, values, and behaviors that become embedded into organizational consciousness (Schein & Schein, 2017).

Organizational justice. Organizational justice includes fairness, justice, and equal treatment within the workplace.

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is one of several psychiatric disorders that can develop in people exposed to severe trauma (Polson, 2018).

Psychological safety. Psychological safety is a person's belief that they will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes (Edmondson, 1999).

Subjective well-being. Subjective well-being is the level of well-being or happiness from an individual's own perspective (Armenta et al., 2015).

Toxic culture. Toxic culture describes the negative workplace behaviors resulting in unhappy and disengaged workers (Sherman, 2019).

Toxic leadership. Toxic leadership is a negative form of leadership that can harm the follower, leader, and the whole organization resulting in negative outcomes (e.g., financial losses and employee turnover) for all parties (Webster et al., 2016).

Summary

Abusive supervision can result in serious harm to employees and organizations. Through their behaviors and decisions, sales supervisors can significantly impact a salesperson's performance (Gabler et al., 2014). However, sales managers often believe that being harsh and abusive is the way to drive higher sales performance. Because AS is overlooked and sometimes encouraged in areas such as sales, many organizations are missing an opportunity to improve the performance of their B2B sales teams.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Abusive supervision (AS) has garnered increasing attention since Tepper's (2000) seminal research. Much has been learned about the serious consequences AS has on organizations. Undesirable outcomes of AS include lower job satisfaction, lower employee engagement, increased stress, increased employee illness and absentee rates, and increased employee turnover, as well as decreased sales performance, resulting in lower financial performance for the organization (Gabler & Hill, 2015; Gabler et al., 2014; Lyngdoh et al., 2021; Schilling, 2009). Less obvious are the negative consequences AS has on knowledge sharing, proactivity, and solution-oriented thinking, which are essential for success in complex B2B sales (Böhm et al., 2020; Rui et al., 2021; Zhu & Zhang, 2019).

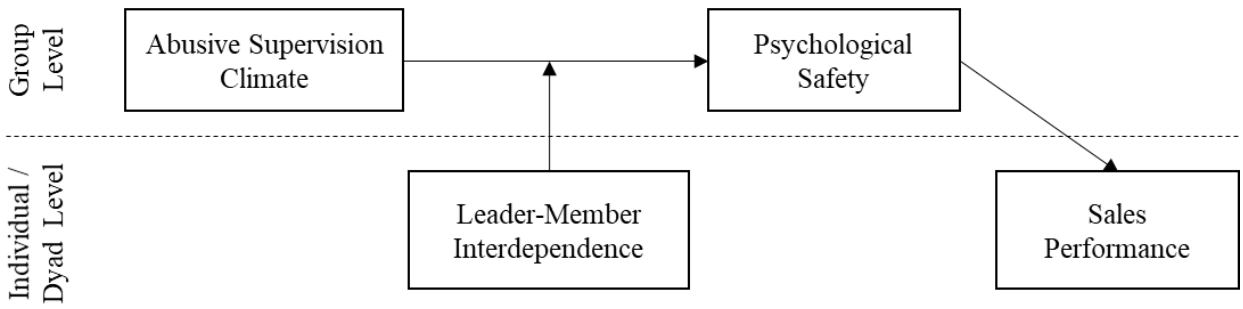
Organizations that can reduce or eliminate destructive leadership practices, such as AS, provide an opening for knowledge sharing, solution thinking, and proactive behaviors that allow salespeople to perform at their potential. Psychological safety is a key construct that explains collaboration and idea sharing behaviors when employees feel safe to express their opinions without fear of repercussions or retribution (Edmondson, 1999). In the present study, I sought to understand the importance of eliminating an abusive supervision climate and promoting a psychologically safe environment as a pathway to more innovation and creative problem solving that allows salespeople and their organizations to perform at higher levels and achieve competitive advantage.

This study is also designed to understand the impact abusive supervision climate (ASC) has on B2B sales performance and what role (e.g., moderating or mediating) psychological safety and LMI play, if any, in this relationship. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model including the individual, dyad, and group-level interactions. ASC may limit the desire to share

ideas with colleagues and customers that aid in identifying and adding value during the sales process, add value to the customer, and result in better overall sales performance.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model of the Study



Literature Search Methods

The literature search utilized three primary search engines to locate the supporting research: (a) Abilene Christian University's Margarett and Herman Brown Library, (b) Google Scholar, and (c) Researchgate.net. The investigation included the following search terms:

- abusive sales management
- abusive supervision
- abusive supervision climate
- adaptive selling
- B2B sales
- customer orientation
- team innovation
- employee engagement
- employee performance
- sales performance

- leader–members interdependence
- organizational justice
- justice climate
- psychological safety
- sales manager
- sales leadership
- sales failure
- toxic leadership

The following section of this chapter reviews the literature on abusive supervision (including climate), sales performance, LMI, employee engagement, and psychological safety. The subsequent section reviews the theoretical framework and discusses its direct connection to the study.

Theoretical Framework

The theories that support this study examining the effects of ASC include social learning theory and organizational justice. The construct of abusive supervision (AS) is based primarily on Tepper's (2000) seminal work on the consequences of abusive supervisory behavior in the workplace. Tepper (2000) examined the consequences of AS as it relates to justice theory (e.g., interactional, procedural, distributive, and organizational) and the likelihood of employees quitting their job. Subsequent research has also examined abusive supervision and how this behavior infiltrates an organization through social learning theory and the top–down leader-to-leader hierarchical influence vis-à-vis the trickle-down component of social learning theory (Mawritz et al., 2012).

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory explains human behaviors as learned through observation or interaction with others (Badrinarayanan et al., 2019; Bandura, 1977). This theory explains how a domino effect of abusive behaviors can ripple throughout the organization or trickle down from the top of the organization, polluting the culture and creating a toxic workplace (Badrinarayanan et al., 2019). In sales leadership, the amplifying effects of either abusive or unethical practices have been shown to be harmful to sales performance (Badrinarayanan et al., 2019).

Therefore, another vital consideration for future research is to understand the antecedents of a sales manager's abusive practices to know if they are experiencing abusive supervision from their current or previous managers and to the extent it has influenced them to be abusive (Brown et al., 2005).

Empirical research on how abusive behaviors disseminate throughout the organization can be explained by social learning theory. For example, abusive supervisors and their relative position of authority are likely to be considered role models by subordinates (Wo et al., 2018). Unfortunately, fellow supervisors and employees may also emulate the observed abusive behaviors and practices if they believe it is the way to get things done and be more successful.

Trickle-Down Effect. The trickle-down effect of social learning theory explains how behaviors are learned starting at a higher level in the organizational hierarchy and are perpetuated down the organization by their reports (Mawritz et al., 2012). Moreover, the trickle-down theory explains the increased likelihood of employees role modeling aggressive behavior of those in higher positions and influencing others they interact with (Wo et al., 2018). This is important in order to understand the full impact on an organization from abusive supervision as it trickles down and extends throughout the organization rather than view it in terms of an isolated

supervisor–employee dyad resulting in deviant interpersonal behavior (Mawritz et al., 2012; Wo et al., 2018).

Organizational Justice

Organizational justice is critical in explaining employee attitudes and behavior that impact performance within organizations and is fundamental to explaining sales performance (Manzoor et al., 2012). In many ways, the opposite form, organizational injustice, may manifest as abusive behavior such as mistreatment, verbal abuse, or sabotage. Within the sales function, so many external factors can influence performance that salespeople are hypersensitive to fairness in an effort to maximize their perceived value to the organization as well as their personal compensation (Chang & Dubinsky, 2005).

Some crucial variables that sales managers can decide or influence that significantly impact how sales performance is measured include their quota, compensation, the relative quality or quantity of opportunity within a sales territory, and account assignments. Moreover, salespeople's perceptions of a supervisor's decision process are often scrutinized for fairness.

Any perceived injustice a salesperson feels when compared to their peers in any of these elements can result in lowered motivation and sales performance (Chang & Dubinsky, 2005). Therefore, abusive supervisors can make employees feel mistreated or that their supervisor has pitted them against their colleagues. As a result, when salespeople perceive unfair treatment, their attitudes and behavior may suffer (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). Furthermore, abusive supervisory decisions (i.e., setting quotas higher for salespeople they do not like) that negatively impact a salesperson can be seen as unfair and negatively influence extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 2017; Manzoor et al., 2012). Conversely, when salespeople perceive others being treated more favorably (i.e., giving extra incentives to their favorite salesperson),

this can also negatively affect the organization, resulting in decreased organizational commitment and performance (Böhm et al., 2020). For example, when organizational justice is low, rewards for top sales performance are perceived as favoritism and result in harmful consequences in sales productivity and performance (Miao et al., 2017). In summary, organizational justice is a concept that salespeople are acutely sensitive to since it significantly impacts how they are compensated and measured and how they establish their reputation within their organization.

Researchers often group organizational justice into three categories: interactional, procedural, and distributive (Greenberg, 1990). Moreover, much has been researched regarding the overall justice climate within organizations and how it impacts employee behaviors, team outcomes, and organizational culture (Ambrose et al., 2021; Erdogan et al., 2006). Organizational justice, or the lack thereof, helps explain the reactions of employees who received perceived injustice and the deterioration of ethical climate and behaviors. Organizational justice theory has been a fundamental construct used to explain outcomes resulting in abusive supervision, considered unethical and unjust behavior (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018).

Procedural, Interactional, and Distributive Justice. Procedural justice is the "fairness of procedures used to make allocation decisions" (Tepper, 2000, p. 179). For example, the sales supervisor may allow Salesperson A to discount pricing by 15% and another salesperson with an equal offer to discount by only 10%. The unjust action of approving a smaller discount could lessen the probability of closing the sale for Salesperson B if the offer is not competitive enough. If Salesperson B discovers the supervisor allowed Salesperson A to discount an additional 5% and complete the sale, Salesperson B could perceive a procedural injustice from the sales supervisor (Magnotta & Johnson, 2020).

Interactional justice is defined as the "fairness of interpersonal treatment received at the hands of decision makers" (Aryee et al., 2007, p. 192). A lack of interactional justice (interactional injustice) could be considered abusive. For example, the organization may decide to change the size of the sales territories to reallocate the number of customers or distribute the total value of the business that exists more evenly. A sales supervisor behaving interactionally just would respectfully explain to the salesperson (and ideally the entire team) why and how the changes were made, the reasoning, and how they would handle changed account assignments. In contrast, a sales supervisor could react defensively to the questions and respond, "that is just the way it is, so get over it," or "you should just feel lucky to have a job," which would likely create resentment by the salesperson toward the sales supervisor.

Distributive justice focuses on the result of the decision and the perceived fairness of compensation (the effort-to-outcome ratio) compared to others in a similar role (Magnotta & Johnson, 2020). Because salespeople are often compensated, to some degree, on commissions, any intervention a supervisor takes that may impact a salesperson's compensation may be viewed as an injustice. Even in the best circumstances, sales supervisors often make decisions that impact a salesperson's compensation. Common examples include deciding which salesperson gets credit for a sale that falls outside standard guidelines, biased sales contest prizes that favor other sales territories, withholding approval on certain sales, or directly changing compensation (i.e., salary or percentage of commission payout). Any decision that negatively impacts a salesperson's compensation risks being viewed as an injustice that a sales supervisor may need to explain. When an abusive supervisor makes a harmful decision perceived by the salesperson as a distributive injustice, this drains the salesperson's psychological capital, impacting their ability to regulate their emotions and increasing the likelihood of inappropriate

behavior (Thau & Mitchell, 2010). Conversely, to maximize sales performance, the best strategy is to prevent abusive supervisor behaviors and make fair decisions (Thau & Mitchell, 2010).

Sales supervisors typically have some decision-making ability regarding territories, account assignments, quotas, and other factors that have a significant financial and performance impact on everyone on their team. In summary, procedural, interactional, and distributive justice (or injustice) delivered by the sales supervisor plays an important role in their sales team's justice perceptions (Magnotta & Johnson, 2020).

Justice Climate. Most research on organizational justice focuses on the individual (Li & Cropanzano, 2009). However, climate research on justice focuses on the overall sense of justice within a workgroup. Justice climate is defined as "a shared group-level cognition regarding the degree of fairness perceived by a unit as a whole" (Ambrose et al., 2021, p. 80) and is a valuable construct for assessing individual perceptions and group outcomes. The level or degree of justice climate within a group is primarily influenced by social learning vis-à-vis role modeling behaviors of influential individuals (Ambrose et al., 2021; Schneider et al., 2017). Therefore, promoting a healthy justice climate promotes fair coworker behavior that promotes positive outcomes such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and group engagement (Ambrose et al., 2021). Consequently, in cases of a tight, controlling workgroup structure, the perceived level of justice climate decreases (Ambrose et al., 2021).

Justice climate supports the study's framework by helping explain scenarios where an abusive supervisor requires tight mechanistic control (vs. organic control) alongside high interdependence with their employee (Ambrose et al., 2021). When an employee faces an abusive supervisor that requires much interaction, different coping strategies may be employed,

including attempts to avoid contact with their supervisor or seek social support from their teammates (Yagil et al., 2011).

Abusive Supervision

Tepper's (2000) seminal research highlighted some of the detrimental effects (e.g., depression and emotional exhaustion) of abusive supervision. Research has evolved substantially in understanding abusive supervision and other destructive leadership practices. Moreover, some studies suggest that the rate of abusive supervision may be higher in specific fields, such as athletics, where rates of abusive supervision may be up to three times higher than the industry average of approximately 10% (Tepper et al., 2017; Yukhymenko-Lescroart et al., 2015). The possibility is that sales is yet another field where abusive supervision is higher than the industry average. The example Tepper (2000) quoted from the movie *Glengarry Glen Ross* (Mamet & Foley, 1992) depicts a highly abusive meeting between a real estate sales consultant and an underperforming sales team that needed to "Always Be Closing."

Since 2011, the body of research on abusive supervision has tripled (Tepper et al., 2017), yet very little research has looked at abusive supervision, including workplace bullying, in the sales setting (Gabler & Hill, 2015; Valentine & Fleischman, 2018). Due to the vital role the sales function plays in an organization's ability to compete, gain customers, and generate revenue, the importance of understanding the role of abusive supervision as a critical factor in underperforming B2B sales teams cannot be underestimated. Considering that B2B salespeople are tasked with understanding their client's complex needs and connecting those to their services or solutions, innovative thinking, and critical reasoning is crucial to successfully winning and keeping customers (Böhm et al., 2020). Innovative behaviors, including problem solving and solution orientation, are significantly impacted by abusive behavior and could be considered an

essential leader behavior that impacts creative contributions to the organization (Zhu & Zhang, 2019).

Research explaining the causes of abusive supervision is still limited. However, recent research has found some of the conditions that can foster conditions allowing abusive supervision to emerge include organizational injustice, toxic cultures, poor follower performance, frustration role overload, and counterproductive work behaviors (Eissa & Lester, 2017; Tepper et al., 2017; Zhang & Bednall, 2016). Research has also shown that the level of integrity of the supervisor can be negatively related to their level of moral disengagement and resulting psychological entitlement, which has been shown as an indicator of abusive tendencies (Eissa & Lester, 2021).

Abusive Supervision in a Team Setting

Despite the focus in B2B sales on individual achievement, most organizations that employ a B2B sales force do so in groups or teams. Teams are often structured by certain market attributes such as customer segment, geographical coverage, or customer size (enterprise vs. local). Sales supervisors, especially prevention-focused ones, often deliberately mistreat their salespeople to increase performance, especially if there is a pattern of abusive supervision coming down from the senior leadership levels (Fan et al., 2020; Farmanara, 2021). Moreover, low team performance has been shown as an antecedent to abusive supervision due to stress and emotional exhaustion (EE), creating a downward spiral between the supervisor and the team (Fan et al., 2020).

Within sales teams, it is common to share best practices and ideas in an effort to continue to outpace competitors or internal competition among different groups. Unfortunately, there is a negative relationship between abusive supervisors and team and individual creativity, potentially

undermining a team's ability to develop new or creative approaches to selling (He et al., 2021). In today's complex selling environment, where organizations must adapt to changing demands quickly, anything that undermines a team's ability to create new and innovative solutions puts the organization at a competitive disadvantage.

Despite a team being subjected to abusive or other toxic leadership behaviors, research has shown that teams can band together in order to provide support and promote successful collective outcomes (Milosevic et al., 2020; Priesemuth et al., 2014; Priesemuth & Schminke, 2019; Wright, 2015). In one example, a senior leader's toxic leadership galvanized the teams reporting under the senior leader (Wright, 2015). The teams banded together, supporting each other when one team became overwhelmed by the assigned workload. As a result, the teams became more cohesive and more effective (Wright, 2015). Even though the teams came together and resulted in a positive outcome for the moment, this in no way condones the poor behavior of the leader. Abusive leadership ultimately leads to exhausted employees, turnover, disengagement, and lower performance provided adequate time (Yu & Duffy, 2021). In addition, the context of the situation is key to understanding the coping mechanism adopted. In the example, the team leaders under the senior leader were experienced and had been in the same position for some time, providing a level of stability. Moreover, the team leads and their followers shared collective values of work ethic, collaboration, and cooperation (Wright, 2015).

Abusive supervision research focuses on the perceptions of the supervisor at the individual level (Priesemuth et al., 2014). Tepper et al. (2017) stated that a hostile organizational climate is an antecedent for abusive supervision and called for more climate-based research. To more fully understand the negative impact of abusive supervision at the team level, the construct

of ASC can more accurately reflect group-level outcomes (Priesemuth et al., 2014). The present study aims to contribute to the nascent research in ASC.

Coping With Abusive Supervision

Persistent supervisory abuse can result in the salesperson feeling threatened, challenged, or a fear of loss. For example, a salesperson could feel that their job is threatened, fear a loss of employment, or have their reputation challenged by being degraded or humiliated, creating a stress response and the need to cope with the mounting stress (Harvey et al., 2007; Yagil et al., 2011). Employees that have an abusive supervisor have been found to cope in four distinct manners:

- avoiding contact with the abusive supervisor;
- seeking support from others;
- ingratiating themselves with the abusive supervisor; and
- reframing by mentally decreasing the threat associated with the abusive supervisor (Yagil et al., 2011).

Avoiding contact with the abusive supervisor may be highly rewarding in the short term but may have longer-term consequences, such as being seen as a target for further victimization (Yagil et al., 2011). In addition, avoiding contact may not be an option for employees with an abusive supervisor that requires a high level of task interdependence between them and their employees. Employees who ingratiate themselves with their abusive supervisor have shown mixed results as a coping strategy and may hide the psychological resources employees use to cope with the abusive behavior (Harvey et al., 2007). Reframing, a technique for regulating emotions, can be effective when the employee can channel their anger into strategic boundary-spanning activities, improve their skills, and seek out information (Oh & Farh, 2017). This

research aims to understand the coping strategy of seeking social support through the lens of psychological safety among the sales team, excluding the supervisor. For example, a salesperson may ask their supervisor for advice on approaching a new prospect. The abusive supervisor may respond unhelpfully (e.g., “you’ve been through training, you should know that already”). If the salesperson feels psychologically safe interacting with one or more of their sales peers, seeking social support from their sales team could be an avenue for problem-focused coping that will help them be effective salespeople despite the abusive supervisor (Carver et al., 1989; Yagil et al., 2011).

Identifying a Toxic Culture

Research has shown many detrimental effects of toxic workplaces (Pfeffer, 2018). For organizations that want to grow and remain competitive, having a healthy culture is essential in attracting and retaining talented employees, as supported by Valencia (2019). Therefore, identifying the extent of toxic culture and areas to improve culture is essential to creating a more positive work environment, even if it means removing toxic employees from the organization or relocating the physical space, as supported by Andrus (2019) and Gino et al. (2018). Clayton (2019) recommended that, ideally, organizations be proactive in promoting a healthy culture. In addition, Clayton (2019) identified six areas: an inadequate investment in employees, lack of accountability, lack of diversity and inclusion, poor leader behaviors (e.g., abusive supervision), high-pressure environments, and an unclear ethical code of conduct that organizations must remain vigilant in avoiding.

Leader–Members Interdependence

LMI refers to the interdependence between a team member and the team leader (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018). The construct of LMI blends the construct of LMX, a dyadic

relationship between leader and subordinate, and the construct of task interdependence, which explains how people rely on each other to complete a task (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018). An abusive supervisor who also requires high levels of LMI has been shown to amplify the negative effects of the abusive behavior due to the number of interactions with the supervisor the team member is required to have in order to complete their tasks. For example, an abusive sales supervisor may require that all customer proposals or discounts need their approval before being allowed to present them to the client or before processing an order. Moreover, high leader–member interdependence prevents employees from utilizing the coping strategy of avoidance because the leader requires a high level of interaction to complete their tasks (Yagil et al., 2011).

In situations where a leader uses a more positive leadership behavior, such as coaching, LMI creates positive outcomes through a close and healthy interaction between the supervisor and employee (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018). In contrast, an abusive supervisor requiring high LMI could also be perceived as controlling, micromanaging, and disempowering because they are using task interdependence to exert control and force interaction rather than be collaborative (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018). Moreover, within the context of abusive supervision, higher levels of LMI result in lower levels of proactive behavior, which has been shown to negatively impact innovation and performance (Rangarajan et al., 2021; Rousseau & Aubé, 2018).

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety consists of three primary components: speaking up, collaboration, and experimentation (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2011). Speaking freely and sharing opinions and ideas are necessary for organizational learning and innovation (Edmondson, 2019; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2011; Rogers, 2003). However, an environment conducive to psychological safety is most influenced by interpersonal relationships, group and intergroup dynamics, management

style and process, and organizational norms (Kahn, 1990). Regarding both interpersonal relationships and management style and process, Kahn (1990) stated that feeling supported was essential to employees establishing a sense of psychological safety at work. Edmondson (1999) also asserted that leaders who respond in a supportive fashion instead of an authoritarian or punitive approach encourage their employees to discuss and learn from mistakes.

Innovation is essential in today's rapidly changing and competitive environment (Rogers, 2003). Successful companies such as Google have embraced the concept of psychological safety, while many companies still manage with a top–down and authoritarian approach. Moreover, Google identified that psychological safety was the number one factor that set apart the highest-performing teams (Edmondson, 2019). To tap into the potential of their employees, organizations must have an environment free of fear and be open to new ideas (Edmondson, 2019).

Leader behaviors are critical to creating or destroying psychologically safe conditions (Detert & Burris, 2007; Tynan, 2005). Abusive supervision is shown to fracture psychological safety, allowing a team to learn, innovate, and perform to its potential (Priesemuth et al., 2014). For example, behaviors such as approachability, accessibility, inclusiveness, and openness encourage employees to speak up and share ideas, even if it might upset the status quo (Javed et al., 2019). On the other hand, abusive behaviors such as ridiculing and public shaming create an environment of fear and insecurity, making the employee feel it is too risky to themselves and their career to share creative and innovative ideas or make suggestions against the current norm (Carmeli et al., 2010; Tynan, 2005). Therefore, organizations that build a culture around psychological safety can learn better and faster through abundant communication and ideas among their employees (Javed et al., 2019). Furthermore, a psychologically safe work environment fosters collaboration and innovation through experimentation in today's world of

volatility, complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity (VUCA; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2011). Collaboration and experimentation can emerge in an environment where people are encouraged to communicate opinions and ideas. The ideas exchanged, especially those of employees closest to the customers (e.g., salespeople), can help organizations prevent pitfalls and identify new opportunities for learning, growth, and improvement that leadership would not otherwise have seen on their own (Edmondson, 2019).

Sales Performance

Sales performance has evolved into an incredibly complex construct consisting of many antecedents at the individual, team, and supervisory levels (Evans et al., 2012; Mullins et al., 2020). This complexity has made sales performance challenging to define, thereby making it difficult for sales managers to measure accurately (Zallocco et al., 2009). Similarly, the multitude of variables that influence sales performance (i.e., customer satisfaction, negotiation skills, teamwork, activity, product features, economy, and competition) in a dynamic and ever-changing market also makes it difficult to determine the optimal combination that maximizes performance (Zallocco et al., 2009).

Learning and Performance Goal Orientation

Learning orientation (LO) and performance orientation (PO) are two widely regarded psychological concepts in achievement-related work activities such as sales (Sujan et al., 1994). LO describes salespeople who enjoy mastering their craft by learning everything they can about sales. PO describes salespeople who are extrinsically motivated through the approval and positive appraisals of their manager and coworkers. Their supervisor or organizational sales culture can influence the salesperson's propensity toward LO or PO. For example, a critical review by the sales supervisor indicating deficiencies and areas to improve could refocus the

salesperson toward a learning orientation to acquire the necessary skills and improve their performance (Sujan et al., 1994).

A performance-oriented salesperson often has the advantage in a stable sales environment since a consistent sales approach combined with a high level of effort can optimize performance and produce favorable results (Che-Ha et al., 2014). Salespeople with a PO will naturally prefer to pursue familiar sales situations and avoid atypical sales situations that appear risky and may have a higher chance of failure (Sujan et al., 1994).

Conversely, salespeople with an LO can fair better in a VUCA environment because of their propensity to adapt to the environment and learn new ways to sell through experimentation and investigation (Che-Ha et al., 2014; Rangarajan et al., 2021). LO is also related to adaptive selling, a key driver of salesmanship skills that strongly influences sales performance (Chawla et al., 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, B2B customers rapidly shifted toward utilizing digital resources (i.e., virtual meetings and e-commerce) to reduce the amount of physical contact to interact with their suppliers (Rangarajan et al., 2021). As a result, agile salespeople who adapted to virtual selling methods have been more resilient during the rapidly evolving B2B landscape (Rangarajan et al., 2021).

Sales Enablement

Sales enablement is “the process of providing the sales organization with the information, content, and tools that help salespeople sell more effectively” (Albro, 2019). It is a customer-centric practice that plays a critical role in sales performance. As companies transform digitally, so does the way they prefer to interact with suppliers and salespeople (Rangarajan et al., 2021).

Little academic research exists regarding sales enablement, yet in the practical setting it has become a critical component of B2B sales strategy (Rangarajan et al., 2020). Sales

enablement is organized under the three pillars of people, process, and performance. The strategic pillar of people emphasizes the importance of mental flexibility, learning orientation, sharing best practices, training, and coaching. In addition, the model requires effective sales leadership and management as the essential conduit that enables the people and process that drives performance (Rangarajan et al., 2020). Therefore, identifying leader behaviors that inhibit the conditions for sales enablement, such as abusive supervision, are essential to creating optimal sales performance conditions.

Innovative Work Behaviors in Modern B2B Salespeople

The B2B landscape has become much more complex. No longer is it sufficient to present a product or service using a feature-benefit (saves time, saves money) sales approach. Instead, organizations now demand that their suppliers offer more complex solutions that aggregate multiple products or services and connect to their business's workflows and processes (Böhm et al., 2020). To be successful in this highly complex environment, modern B2B salespeople need the ability to identify gaps in their clients' value streams and propose innovative solutions that combine multiple elements into a solution (Böhm et al., 2020).

Innovative work behaviors (IWBs) such as creativity, knowledge sharing, and idea generation can significantly improve employee, organization, operational, and market performance (Shanker et al., 2017). Moreover, research showed that employee IWBs enhanced market performance and customer satisfaction, critical requirements in most sales organizations (Shanker et al., 2017).

The Influence of Sales Leadership on Sales Performance

The influence of sales leaders on sales performance has also been studied from multiple leadership styles and behaviors, such as ethical leadership, servant leadership, and abusive

supervision (Badrinarayanan et al., 2019; Bande et al., 2016; Peesker et al., 2019). Given the emphasis on sales performance in B2B sales organizations, leadership plays a critical role in creating a positive and ethical environment where salespeople can perform to their full potential in a more sustainable fashion with decreased risk of burnout and turnover (Badrinarayanan et al., 2019; Gabler et al., 2014). Further, because of the boundary-spanning nature of the sales role, salespeople often defer to their sales supervisor as their primary contact with the organization (Micevski et al., 2017).

Unethical leadership behavior has been shown to be especially harmful to sales performance (Badrinarayanan et al., 2019; Gabler et al., 2014). Abusive supervision, considered a form of unethical leadership, decreases job satisfaction and organizational commitment for both the salesperson and sales supervisor, further amplifying the harmful effects (Gabler et al., 2014). Nevertheless, the archetype of the hard-charging, take-no-prisoners, verbally abusive sales supervisor as a results-oriented approach (i.e., a good manager) persists (Gabler & Hill, 2015; Seppälä, 2014). The persistent nature of abusive sales supervisors also implies that organizations may still have a cultural tendency to seek out these aggressive or abusive supervisors because of their motivation techniques, thereby failing to recognize the longer-term consequences of abusive leader behavior (Gabler et al., 2014).

Aggressive sales supervisors result in several adverse outcomes that affect sales performance, such as promoting emotional exhaustion (EE), burnout, and unethical behaviors by the salesperson (Ahmad et al., 2021). Salespeople’s emotional exhaustion is concerning because it negatively affects performance and increases employee turnover (Ahmad et al., 2021). Further, EE seems to be more frequent among boundary-spanning roles such as sales (Micevski et al., 2017). When a salesperson becomes emotionally exhausted, conservation of resources becomes a

priority, resulting in lowered energy (low effort or motivation), lowered confidence in their ability to perform tasks, and poor performance (Ahmad et al., 2021).

Summary

The organizational climate is influenced by leader behaviors, positive or negative (Taylor et al., 2019; Wo et al., 2018). Leader behaviors shape the organizational environment and impact the performance of employees and the organization's ability to compete. B2B salespeople have complex, multidimensional, boundary-spanning roles critical to an organization's bottom line. The complex and vital nature of B2B sales often creates a high-stress environment both from the top–down and bottom–up within the organizational hierarchy (Wo et al., 2018). The stress and burnout experienced by sales supervisors create optimal conditions for abusive supervision to emerge. Sales managers often role model the same abusive behavior received by their superiors, further perpetuating the organization's cycle of abuse and cultural degradation (Rice et al., 2021).

Fortunately, research has shown that preventing the cycle of abusive supervision is possible, creating an opportunity for a more positive, ethical, and psychologically safe environment to emerge (Edmondson, 1999; Taylor et al., 2019). When an organization's level of abusive supervision decreases, psychological safety improves, resulting in increases in collaboration and innovative thinking, which is critical in the complex B2B selling environment (Edmondson, 1999; Liu et al., 2016; Mawritz et al., 2012; Restubog et al., 2011).

With the complexity of work demanding more team collaboration, innovation, and creativity, further research should be conducted to understand how abusive supervisors impact their team's individual and group performance (Fan et al., 2020; He et al., 2021). Limited research also exists regarding how teams can band together to work around an abusive supervisor

in an effort to hit their goals and objectives (Milosevic et al., 2020; Wright, 2015). LMI is also a new hybrid construct blending leader-member exchange (LMX) and task interdependence that has not been widely studied in different team settings, including B2B sales (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018).

Further research should examine constructs such as psychological safety, ethical climate, proactivity, and team helping as strategies to ameliorate abusive supervisor behaviors in B2B sales and other settings (Agnihotri & Krush, 2015; Milosevic et al., 2020; Smallfield et al., 2020). Understanding the mitigating variables of abusive supervision will allow organizations that are negatively impacted by this behavior to create more effective interventions and monitoring. Further, gaps exist in understanding how abusive supervision influences relational energy, job engagement, and job performance. An area ripe for investigation includes examining EE as an origin of abusive supervision and its relationship to the emergence of abusive supervision as well as the related effects of EE on the supervisor's salespeople and sales performance (Lam et al., 2017). Lastly, research is limited on ASC, its team impact, and group-level outcomes (Priesemuth et al., 2014). Chapter 3 details the research methodology, design, survey instruments, data collection, and analysis procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The literature review covered in Chapter 2 provided the theoretical framework and context around abusive sales supervisors, sales performance, and psychological safety. The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the effect psychological safety has on sales performance when there is an abusive sales supervisor. In this study, I also examined the moderating effect of LMI between the abusive supervisor and the psychological safety of the sales team itself. In other words, the objective is to understand how ASC affects B2B sales performance and if psychological safety acts as a mediator between the ASC and outcome sales performance.

This chapter provides details about the research design and methods used to support the research purpose and potential of minimizing the negative consequences of ASC on sales performance through psychological safety. The following sections include details about the proposed data collection method, sampling, survey instruments, data analysis, and assumptions.

Research Design and Method

The cross-sectional study used a quantitative correlational nonexperimental approach. The nonexperimental nature of the study was necessary as the independent variables—ASC, LMI, and psychological safety—were not manipulated (Price et al., 2016). The reason for this is that within the scope of the research, it would be impractical through an anonymous electronic survey (as well as potentially unethical if it were even possible) to manipulate the levels of ASC the supervisor could impose on the participants. As the goal of the study was to describe and potentially predict sales performance based on the supervisor and team dynamics, a nonexperimental approach was preferred (Price et al., 2016).

The independent variables in the study included ASC, LMI, and team psychological safety (TPS). The dependent variable was outcome sales performance (OSP). LMI was analyzed to understand its moderating effects, if any, between abusive supervision and psychological safety. Psychological safety was analyzed to understand if it had a mediating effect between ASC and outcome sales performance.

Compared to a qualitative approach, the quantitative study could provide more generalizable insights into the larger population of B2B sales across industries (Dobrovolny & Fuentes, 2008). Since this research aims to predict outcomes of specific variables in a B2B setting, the quantitative approach is a better fit than qualitative methods (Price et al., 2016). Moreover, the results of the statistical analysis have the potential to provide directional guidance on the benefits of identifying or measuring levels of abusive supervision climate and the adverse impacts to the organization's performance by predicting potential outcomes.

Based on the proposed quantitative approach, the research question to investigate was, How does an abusive supervision climate predict B2B sales performance, and does psychological safety among sales team members have a mediating effect? By analyzing each of the variables, I identified if a statistically significant relationship existed that could predict outcomes that an organization could experience by increasing or decreasing the levels of each variable through interventions.

Population

The population for this research included any employee actively engaged in B2B sales. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021) does not break out B2B sales representatives in its data. However, recent independent research analyzing a database of 30 million profiles estimates there are 892,093 B2B sales representatives in the United States (Zippia, 2021). In addition, the

research estimates the average age of a B2B salesperson is 46.2 years old and that 67% have a bachelor's degree. Collecting a data sample directly from the population of B2B sales representatives should provide the relevant data necessary to analyze the proposed questions in this research.

Study Sample

Using an anonymous electronic survey, I attempted to collect at least 100 complete and valid samples for the analysis (Daniel, 2012). The target of 100 completed surveys is a guideline established for nonprobability sampling for a major subgroup (e.g., B2B salespeople as a subgroup of all salespeople). The G*Power analysis indicated a minimum sample size of 85 is required to achieve a *p* value less than or equal to .05 for multiple linear regression with three predictors.

Due to its practical advantages, the nonprobability convenience sampling method was utilized for data collection. Requesting completion of the survey via social media channels (e.g., LinkedIn) should be adequate to collect the required sample size. Convenience sampling is not representative in the same way a probability sample is due to its nonrandom nature (Waterfield, 2018). To partially mitigate a potential lack of representativeness, demographic data were gathered and compared to available industry demographics for B2B salespeople. Further, qualifying questions were asked that verified they were in fact B2B salespeople with no managerial responsibility for others to assure the sample was as relevant as possible and not solely reliant on convenience (Waterfield, 2018).

Survey Instruments

The survey scales for this study (see Appendix E) included three independent variables consisting of the five-item Abusive Supervision Climate scale (Priesemuth et al., 2014); four-

item Leader–Members Interdependence scale (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018), which measures the interdependence between a team member and the team leader; and seven-item Psychological Safety scale (Edmondson, 1999) to measure the psychological safety among the sales team. The dependent variable was the seven-item Outcome Sales Performance scale (Schwepker & Good, 2012), which measures the individual salesperson's performance outcome. All of the survey instruments in the study used Likert scales. Any required permissions (see Appendix F) to use the identified instruments were obtained from the author(s) in advance. Moreover, each survey instrument demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of at least .70 as a measure of reliability (Allen, 2017). Cronbach's alpha rates the internal consistency of a scale ranging from 0 to 1. The closer the value is to 1, the more consistent the scale is, with less than or equal to .70 generally accepted as sufficiently reliable (Allen, 2017). However, Pallant (2001) stated a Cronbach's alpha of .60 can also be considered reliable and acceptable. Personal demographic questions were included in the survey (see Appendix D) and included years of experience in B2B sales, age, gender, and time (in years) in their current role.

Abusive Supervision Climate Scale

Tepper's (2000) seminal work on abusive supervision survey is well established in the literature and is the most widely accepted and validated instrument to measure abusive supervision. According to Google Scholar, as of October 2021, Tepper's (2000) study on abusive supervision has been cited over 4,000 times in academic literature. Based on Tepper's (2000) prior research and Mitchell and Ambrose's (2007) shorter form five-item abusive supervision survey, the Abusive Supervision Climate scale by Priesemuth et al. (2014; $\alpha = .94$) was selected for this experiment. Priesemuth et al. (2014) found that ASC was not only a distinct construct from dyad-based abusive supervision but also explained individual-level outcomes. In addition,

an 11-factor confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) supported discriminant validity, providing additional predictive ability than abusive supervision alone. The Abusive Supervision Climate scale exceeded the 0.70 threshold for within group agreement (rwg = .87), exceeded intraclass correlation cutoff of .10 (moderate agreement) to .25 (moderate agreement) with ICC(1) and ICC(2) scores of .52 and .81, respectively, and a Cronbach's alpha of .94. The results of the construct reliability and validity tests performed by Priesemuth et al. (2014) indicated that the abusive supervision scale meets or exceeds minimum thresholds for construct reliability and validity.

ASC measured the impact of abusive supervision at the team level, rather than at the leader–member dyad level, in order to more fully represent the impact of the abusive supervisor at the team level through their collective perceptions during the sensemaking process (Priesemuth et al., 2014). Measuring abusive supervision only at the dyad level may understate the full impact abusive supervision has on the team because of how it may affect targeted individuals differently (Priesemuth et al., 2014). Identifying the consequences of an ASC in a B2B setting has the potential to contribute to the growing body of abusive supervision research and to address a needed gap in the area of B2B sales.

Leader–Members Interdependence

The Leader–Members Interdependence scale (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018) is adapted from Pearce and Gregersen's (1991) task interdependence scale. LMI measures the level of interdependence required between the team leader and team members in order to accomplish their tasks. In other words, a high LMI requires team members to frequently interact with their team leader to complete their work versus a low LMI that requires very little interaction between team members and the team leader to complete their work. The Leader–Members

Interdependence scale consists of four questions utilizing a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*, α = .92). Prior to Rousseau and Aubé's (2018) study, a pilot was conducted to test the reliability of LMI and resulted in a coefficient alpha of 0.96. CFA confirmed consistency among the three variables of LMI, abusive supervision, and team proactive behavior. Understanding how salespeople react to an ASC that also exhibits high LMI was an interesting component of this study.

Outcome Sales Performance Scale

Following prior research (Schwepker & Good, 2012; Sujan et al., 1994), outcome sales performance was measured by seven items using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*, α = .82) based on the framing question, How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statements below regarding your own sales performance? The outcome performance scale is well established and frequently used in scholarly research (Behrman & Perreault, 1982; Jaramillo et al., 2009; Sujan et al., 1994). In the Schwepker and Good (2012) study, the outcome sales performance scale reliability of .86 exceeds the minimum Cronbach's alpha score of .70 (Schwepker & Good, 2012). Discriminant validity of .503 exceeded the minimum acceptable critical value of .50 (Schwepker & Good, 2012). Common method variance was also tested using the Harmon one-factor method and factor analysis, and indicated common method variance should not be a problem (Schwepker & Good, 2012).

Psychological Safety Scale

Based on the seminal work by Edmondson (1999), cited in 9,975 articles (Google Scholar, 2021), psychological safety was measured by a seven-item scale 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*, α = .82). Discriminant validity of the scale was determined via a multitrait–multimethod matrix (MTMM; Edmondson, 1999). Factor analysis

between team learning behavior and team psychological safety (TPS) also confirmed TPS as a unique construct. The instructions in the survey asked the salesperson to rate the questions from the perspective of their sales team's peers (other salespeople reporting to the same supervisor). The seven-question scale by Edmondson (1999) focuses on the psychologically safe aspect of a supportive learning environment in a team setting. The scale measures an individual's sense of psychological safety with their team and is important in understanding the relationship between a salesperson's coworkers who all share the same supervisor relative to the salesperson's dyadic LMI interactions with the supervisor.

Operational Definition of Variables

The sections below describe the role of each variable within the study.

Abusive Supervision Climate

ASC was the independent variable operationalized using a five-item measure of abusive supervision (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007), which was adapted from Tepper's (2000) 15-item abusive supervision scale. Participant responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Participants were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with statements beginning with "My supervisor …" and ending with the following statements: "ridicules members of my sales team," "tells members of my sales team their thoughts or feelings are stupid," "puts members of my sales team down in front of others," "makes negative comments about members of my sales team to others," or "tells members of my sales team they are incompetent."

Leader–Members Interdependence

The moderating variable of LMI was operationalized using a four-item scale adapted from Pearce and Gregersen's (1991) task interdependence scale. Participants were asked to

respond using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Each of the questions begins with the phrase "To do our work we need to," followed by "collaborate with our team leader," "coordinate our efforts with our team leader," "exchange information with our team leader," or "consult our team leader." In a pilot study, the Cronbach's alpha was .96, and in the final study, it was .92 (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018). The within-group agreement of 0.85 exceeded the 0.70 minimum, and the ICC(1) and ICC(2) were 0.07 and 0.58, respectively. Rousseau and Aubé (2018) utilized an SPSS macro called Process, designed by Hayes (2022) to test for moderated mediation, with the results indicating that LMI did not demonstrate significance at low levels of LMI but did so at the mean and high levels, which demonstrated increased effect as the levels of LMI increase.

Psychological Safety

The mediating variable of psychological safety was operationalized using a seven-item scale by Edmondson (1999). Participant responses utilized a seven-item Likert scale (1 = *very inaccurate* to 7 = *very accurate*). Each of the questions (e.g., "It is safe to take risks on this team" and "It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help") evaluated different attributes of a psychologically safe environment that is conducive to learning, sharing ideas, asking for help, and taking risks.

Outcome Sales Performance

Outcome sales performance was the dependent variable operationalized using a seven-item scale that measured the extent to which B2B salespeople achieved their sales targets. Schwepker and Good (2012) adapted the outcome sales performance scale from Behrman and Perreault's (1982) achieving objective measure of performance, which has been used widely as a measure of outcome performance. The participant responses were measured using a 5-point

Likert scale (1 = *much worse* to 5 = *much better*) to evaluate performance against each of the seven outcomes based on the framing question, "How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statements below regarding your own your sales performance?" followed by "contribution to your company's market share," "selling high profit margin products," "generating a high level of dollar sales," "quickly generating sales of new company products," "identifying and cultivating major accounts in your territory," "exceeding sales targets," or "assisting your sales supervisor in meeting his or her goals."

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

This nonexperimental quantitative correlational study utilized a cross-sectional survey research design. The survey software, Qualtrics, was utilized to create and distribute the survey via an anonymous link (see Appendix G). The survey scales for this study included three variables and consisted of the five-item Abusive Supervision Climate scale (Priesemuth et al., 2014); four-item Leader–Members Interdependence scale (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018), which measures the interdependence between a team member and the team leader; and seven-item Psychological Safety scale (Edmondson, 1999) to measure the psychological safety among the sales team. The dependent variable was the seven-item Outcome Sales Performance scale (Schwepker & Good, 2012), which measures the individual salesperson's performance outcome.

Posts announcing the purpose of the study and request for participation by B2B sales professionals was submitted on LinkedIn, including an anonymous link and a brief introduction of the survey topic (see Appendix A). The LinkedIn recruitment posts were exposed to over 1,800 connections within my network and 46 groups (i.e., Salesty, with 388,000 members; B2B Sales, with 51,900 members; and B2B Sales Connections, with 33,200 members). Additional responses were collected through audience panel services Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk)

and Centiment. The anonymous response setting in Qualtrics (2022) was also set to active to prevent capturing IP addresses or email addresses.

When a participant clicked on the anonymous survey link, they were brought to the inclusionary criteria questions (see Appendix B). If the participant was determined to be eligible to take the survey, they were directed to the informed consent page (see Appendix C); otherwise, they received a message thanking them for their willingness to participate but that, unfortunately, they did not meet the criteria in order to proceed to the survey. Once an eligible participant had reviewed the informed consent and wished to participate, they were able to click "Yes, I consent" and advance to the beginning of the survey. If the participant selected "No, I do not consent," the participant was directed to a thank-you message and not allowed to continue the survey.

Participants who clicked "Yes, I consent" were directed to the survey beginning with four demographic questions, followed by the five ASC questions, four LMI questions, seven Psychological Safety questions, and five Outcome Performance questions. None of the survey questions required a response. Participants were free to review and edit their responses until they were ready to submit the survey. Participants could skip questions, quit or resume at any time by closing the browser window with the survey, and return by clicking on the original URL.

Data Storage and Management

The survey data collected by Qualtrics were exported into an Excel spreadsheet onto a password-protected desktop computer. No IP addresses, emails, or personally identifiable information (PII) was collected to protect participant anonymity. Next, the data were imported into the statistical analysis software SPSS Student Edition Version 24. The raw data were also

uploaded to ACU Canvas and will be preserved for at least 7 years after the completion of my dissertation for record-keeping purposes.

Data Analysis

The raw survey data were reviewed for incomplete surveys. Next, the data were scrubbed, cleansed, and uploaded to SPSS for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were run to determine normality, linearity, and outliers. Following the analysis of the descriptive statistics, the relationship between the independent variable (ASC), moderating variable (LMI), mediating variable (TPS), and dependent variable (Outcome Performance) was established utilizing Hayes PROCESS Model 7. Statistically significant relationships among the variables were established. Multiple linear regression analysis based on a moderated mediation model was performed and validated through two submodel tests and bootstrap tests. Further, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to determine internal consistency and reliability for each of the four instruments.

Ethical Considerations

This study was reviewed by the Abilene Christian University Institutional Review Board (ACU IRB) before initiating data collection. Participants were protected following ethical standards and requirements set forth by the Institutional Review Board, the Belmont Report, and state and federal guidelines (CITI Program, 2021). Informed consent (see Appendix A) was provided prior to the survey, located on the introductory page in Qualtrics. Participants were encouraged to read and understand the consent form thoroughly. In addition, participants were informed that due to the nature of the questions, they might feel emotional discomfort or ask about unpleasant experiences that could be distressing. If the participant agreed to continue by clicking "I agree," the survey software took the participant to the beginning of the survey. If the participant clicked on "I disagree," the survey software took them to an exit screen, excluding

them from taking the survey. During the survey, the participant could skip questions or stop at any time to comply with their right of voluntary participation without penalty.

The proposed study received Exemption 2 approval from the IRB (see Appendix I), stating that the data collected would not allow participants to be identified directly from the information gathered. Moreover, the population of B2B salespeople is not considered a vulnerable population. Data collection did not include any PII. Furthermore, anonymity was ensured by providing an open access invitation via an anonymous link with anonymized responses that did not collect identifying information such as name, email address, or IP address. Demographic data were broad enough to limit the ability to snowball or deduce a participant's identity by process of elimination (CITI Program, 2021).

Assumptions

The primary assumption was that there existed an increasing interest in understanding toxic leadership practices such as abusive supervision, how toxic leadership practices impact an organization, and how organizations can reduce or eliminate harmful behaviors. The study was also based on the assumption that the survey instruments selected provided valid and reliable results as they provided in previous research. Moreover, it was assumed that through self-reporting, the participants would answer fairly and honestly about their current supervisor, current working conditions, and performance. Lastly, it was assumed there were enough willing participants to collect a statistically significant sample.

Limitations and Delimitations

Several delimitations existed in the research design. First, I aimed to examine the effects of an ASC in a B2B sales environment. Therefore, the audience was limited to those actively employed as a B2B salesperson. Second, the study was cross-sectional rather than longitudinal,

meaning that while correlations among the variables may be statistically significant, no causal relationships were derived from the analysis. Third, the data were not collected at the company level nor at the organizational hierarchy level. This means that while a generalized relationship could be established in terms of employee performance and employee engagement, due to the scope of the research, it was not possible to identify patterns among specific sales teams and their supervisors that could otherwise provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between sales teams and supervisors at the organizational level.

Summary

The research design for this study should provide insights into the effects of abusive supervisors, how leader–member interactions increase or decrease the effects, and how sales teams use psychological safety as a buffer from their abusive supervisor. Adherence to proper design and ethical practices will ensure the research is conducted to preserve human rights and provide robust statistical analysis.

Chapter 4 discusses the results of the data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter 4 also includes a deeper discussion into the statistical analysis, validity, and significance of the data. The ultimate goal through this process was to create a study that adheres to the quality standards and integrity worthy of a published dissertation.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine how an ASC impacts B2B sales performance and if psychological safety plays a mediating role. Furthermore, in this study I analyzed the moderating role of LMI. This chapter reports on the findings of the data collected, including demographics and descriptive statistics. Further discussion includes steps taken to scrub and cleanse the data in preparation for analysis and the regression analysis performed on survey data.

The results depicted in the following tables and figures of Chapter 4 illustrate how ASC impacts outcome sales performance (OSP) for B2B salespeople, both as a direct correlation as well as indirectly via LMI as a moderator and TPS as a mediator of ASC. Utilizing the Hayes Process, Model 7 (Hayes, 2022), I tested a moderated mediation model. One key finding of the statistical analysis performed on the data included a statistically significant inverse relationship between ASC and TPS among B2B salespeople. Second, the results showed a statistically significant and positive relationship between TPS and OSP. Finally, the model's moderating variable LMI was statistically significant as a moderating effect between ASC and TPS.

Summary of Results

The following section summarize the results of this study.

Audience Response

The target audience for this study included B2B salespeople who were currently employed full-time. Further, the participants could not be supervisors with any direct reports. I sent the survey through three separate channels: Amazon MTurk, Centiment, and LinkedIn. Amazon MTurk and Centiment offered audience panels and were paid services. LinkedIn was distributed through my own personal network and B2B sales-related groups.

LinkedIn was sent first and remained available for survey collection for approximately three weeks. Amazon MTurk and Centiment collected responses over the course of approximately 1 week each. In total, 404 surveys were returned, with 319 complete and usable responses. Seven participants did not consent after reviewing the survey's informed consent form. Eight participants did not qualify when responding "no" to the statement, "I am a full-time employee (40+ hours per work)," and 43 participants did not qualify when responding to the statement, "I am currently employed as a business-to-business (B2B) salesperson (non-supervisory)." The remaining 27 participants removed from the data set did not complete the survey.

All surveys were closed in Qualtrics and exported into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The raw data from the three exports were combined into a single Excel spreadsheet. Next, the participants that either did not qualify or did not consent were removed from the data set, along with the participants with incomplete survey responses, resulting in a sample size of 319. In addition, Likert-scale responses were converted to their numerical equivalent, including reverse-scored items (Psychological Safety, Questions 1, 3, and 5).

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Responses

A total of 319 participants completed the 27-item survey, consisting of five demographic questions and four measurement scales that evaluated the independent variable (ASC), the mediator (TPS), the moderator (LMI), and the dependent variable (OSP).

Demographic questions (see Appendix D) captured age range, gender, years in current position, and the number of years in B2B sales. Table 1 shows the largest group of respondents (48.9%) recorded an age range between 20 and 35, followed by 31.3% recording an age range

between 36 and 49. According to Zippia (2021), the average age of a B2B sales representative was 46.7 years old.

Table 1

Age Range of Participants

Age range	*f*	%
<20	3	.9
20–35	156	48.9
36–49	100	31.3
50–64	49	15.4
65+	11	3.4
Total	319	100.0

Table 2 indicates the majority (60.5%) of respondents were male, followed by 38.6% of respondents recording female. Three participants did not respond to the question (left blank), and none of the respondents recorded their gender as nonbinary / third gender or stated that they preferred not to say. The male-to-female distribution was relatively consistent with B2B demographics reported by Zippia (2021), stating that 67.8% of B2B of sales representatives were male and 32.2% were female.

Table 2

Gender

Gender	*f*	%
Female	123	38.6
Male	193	60.5
No response	3	.9
Nonbinary/third gender	0	0
Prefer not to say	0	0
Total	319	100.0

Table 3 shows a relatively broad cross section of industries. The percentage of respondents by industry varies widely, but all industries listed were represented. Some examples of industry percentages in the representative sample that compared closely with industry percentages reported by Zippia (2021) included the following: 13.2% for technology and 8.8% for finance, versus 14% and 7%, respectively, as reported by Zippia. But whereas Zippia reported automotive, construction, and health care industries at 1% each, these were 4.4%, 7.8%, and 10%, respectively, in this study. A table cross-referencing industry by average score of ASC, LMI, TPS, and OSP in in Appendix H.

Cumulative years of experience in B2B sales are shown in Table 4. The sample was a relatively experienced group, with the most significant percentage (42.6%) having at least 5 years of experience. Only 3.4% of the survey respondents had been in B2B sales for less than 1 year.

For years in the current role, Table 5 shows that 32.3% had between 1 and 3 years of experience, followed by 3–5 years and more than 5 years at 28.2% each. The respondents in the study tended to be more tenured than the industry average. According to Zippia (2021), 27% of B2B sales representatives have been in their role for less than 1 year, compared to 11.3% in this study. While the brackets do not match exactly, Zippia (2021) reported only 12% have been in their current role for 3–4 years and 11% between 5 and 7 years, whereas this study showed 32.3% of respondents reported 3–5 years and 28.2% more than 5 years in their current role. On the more tenured side, Zippia reported that 21% of B2B sales representatives are in their job for 5 or more years, compared to 28.2% in this study.

Table 3

Industry

Industry	*f*	%
Automotive	14	4.4
Construction	25	7.8
Education	12	3.8
Energy	6	1.9
Finance	28	8.8
Health care	32	10.0
Hospitality	6	1.9
Insurance	7	2.2
Manufacturing	46	14.4
Media	4	1.3
Nonprofit	2	.6
Other	26	8.2
Professional	12	3.8
Retail	40	12.5
Technology	42	13.2
Telecommunication	6	1.9
Transportation	7	2.2
Utilities	1	.3
Other	3	.9
Total	319	100.0

Table 4

Years of Experience in B2B Sales

Years of experience	*f*	%
< 1 year	11	3.4
1–3 years	86	27.0
3–5 years	85	26.6
> 5 years	136	42.6
No response	1	0.3
Total	319	100.0

Table 5

Years in Current Role

Years in current role	*f*	%
< 1 year	36	11.3
1–3 years	103	32.3
3–5 years	90	28.2
> 5 years	90	28.2
Total	319	100.0

Descriptive Statistics of Independent and Dependent Variables

Descriptive statistics for the model variables are in Table 6. As mentioned, the sample (N = 319) included only participants who completed the survey by answering all the questions.

Abusive Supervision Climate (ASC). The ASC scale has a range from 1 to 4. The sample reported M = 2.77 and SD = 1.394. There are no established norms to indicate the ASC was higher, average, or lower than a given baseline level. However, for reference, the seminal study on ASC by Priesemuth et al. (2014) showed M = 1.36 for ASC. Further, Shen et al. (2020) showed results for ASC of M = 1.63, and Tahir and Khan (2019) had results of M = 3.19. Cronbach's alpha for the ASC scale in this study was .960.

Leader–Members Interdependence (LMI). The LMI scale has a range of 1 to 7. The median score from the sample was 5.30, with a standard deviation of 1.294. The analysis showed a statistically significant ($p \leq .01$) correlation with ASC of .301. For comparison, the seminal study by Rousseau and Aubé (2018) showed a median of 5.92 and a standard deviation of .55. Cronbach's alpha of the LMI scale in this study was .867.

Team Psychological Safety (TPS). The TPS scale has a range of 1 to 7. The median score from the sample was 4.67, with a standard deviation of .990. The descriptive statistics in Table 6 show TPS had a statistically significant negative relationship ($p \leq .01$) with ASC (–.542) and LMI (–.053). Cronbach's alpha of the TPS scale in this study was .600.

Outcome Sales Performance (OSP). The OSP scale has a range of 1 to 5. The median score from the sample was 4.06, with a standard deviation of .633. The descriptive statistics in Table 6 show OSP did not have a statistically significant relationship with ASC but did have a statistically significant positive relationship ($p \leq .01$) with LMI (.248) and TPS (.248). Cronbach's alpha of the OSP scale in this study was .783.

Table 6

Mean, Standard Deviation, Coefficients, and Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4
ASC	2.77	1.394	(.96)			
LMI	5.30	1.294	.306**	(.87)		
TPS	4.67	.990	–.542**	–.053	(.60)	
OSP	4.06	.633	.094	.438**	.248**	(.78)

Note: $N = 319$.

**$p < .01$, two-tailed.

Tests for Normality, Linearity, Homoscedasticity, and Multicollinearity

I ran precheck tests for normality, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity prior to testing the moderated mediation model. Results of the pretest checks are shown in the following tables and figures.

Normality. I used Spearman's rho test for normality based on a sample size of less than 2000 for nonparametric data (Laerd Statistics, n.d.b). The results in Table 7 show that TPS→LMI (p = .350) and OSP→ASC (p = .095) are both less than .05, which fails to reject the null hypothesis of normal distribution, thereby indicating a normal distribution. All other variables show $p < .05$, rejecting the null hypothesis and thereby indicating a nonnormal distribution. The histograms in Figures 2–5 and Q-Q plots in Figures 6–9 provide visualizations of the distributions.

Table 7

Spearman's Rho

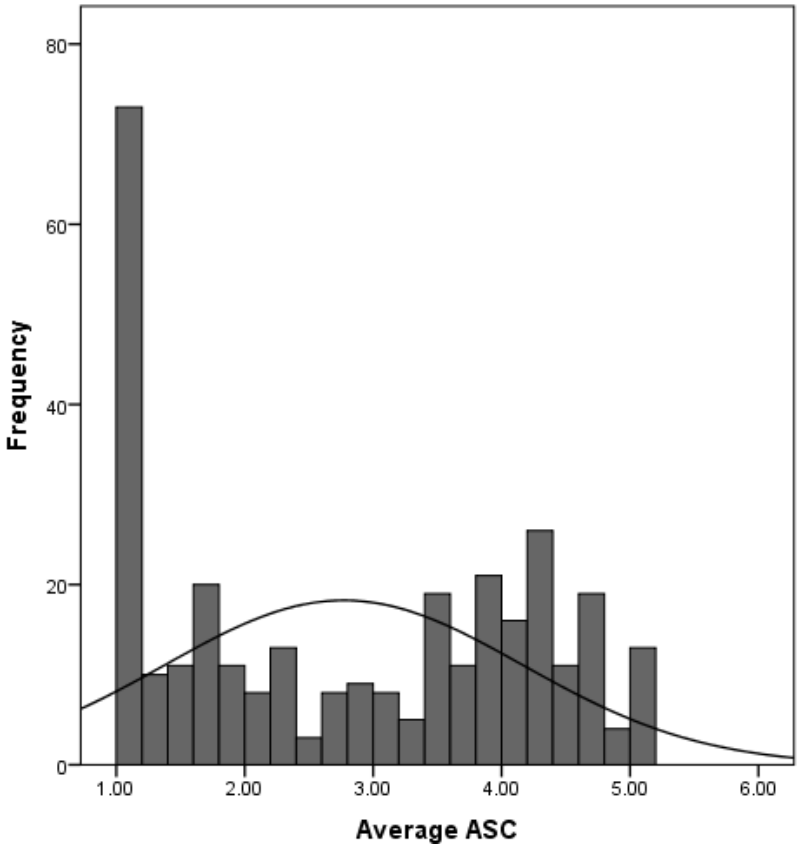
Variable		ASC	LMI	TPS	OSP
ASC	Correlation coefficient	1.000	.306**	–.542**	.094
	Sig. (two-tailed)		.000	.000	.095
LMI	Correlation coefficient	.306**	1.000	–.053	.438**
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.000		.350	.000
TPS	Correlation coefficient	–.542**	–.053	1.000	.248**
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.000	.350		.000
OSP	Correlation coefficient	.094	.000	.000	
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.095	.000	.000	

Note: N = 319.

**$p < .01$, two-tailed.

Figure 2

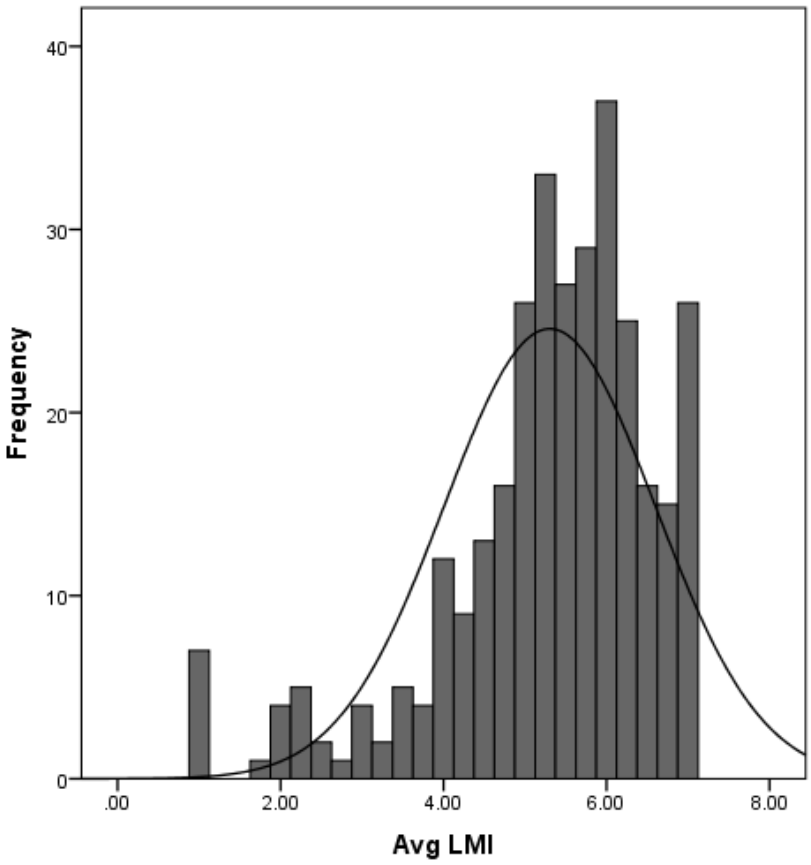
Histogram of Abusive Supervision Climate



Note: The figure indicates a somewhat flat, albeit normal, curve, with a slight skew to the right due to the large number of responses, indicating low levels (score = 1) of ASC; $M = 2.77$; $SD = 1.39$; $N = 319$.

Figure 3

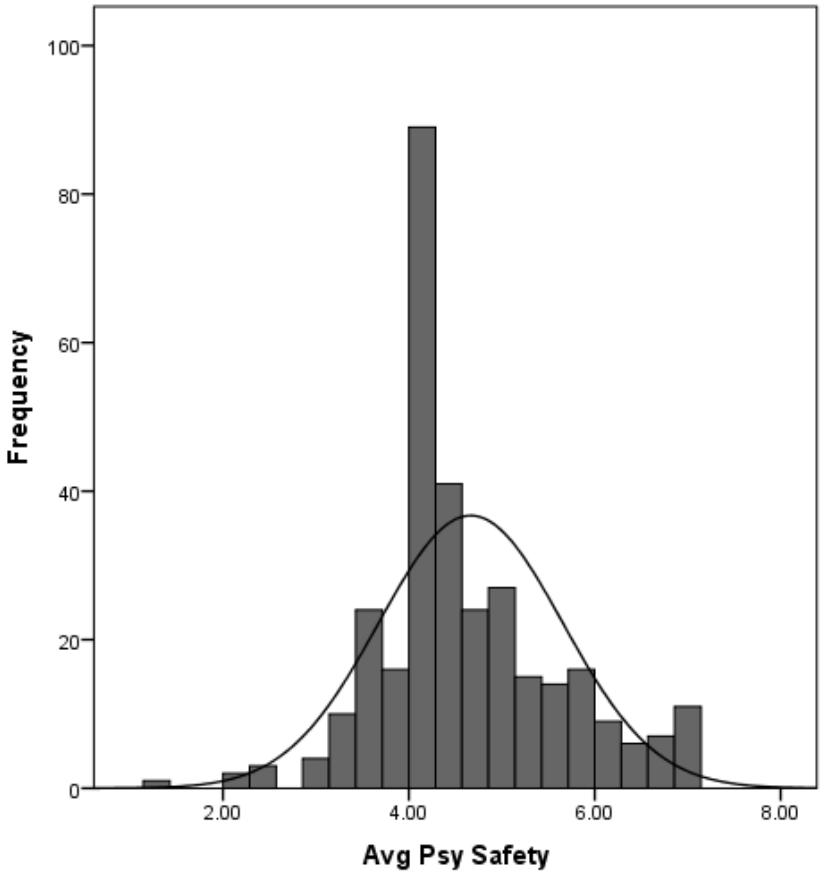
Histogram of Leader–Members Interdependence



Note: The figure indicates a normal curve skewed to the left due to a large number of responses higher than the scale's median value (4.00); $M = 5.30$; $SD = 1.294$; $N = 319$.

Figure 4

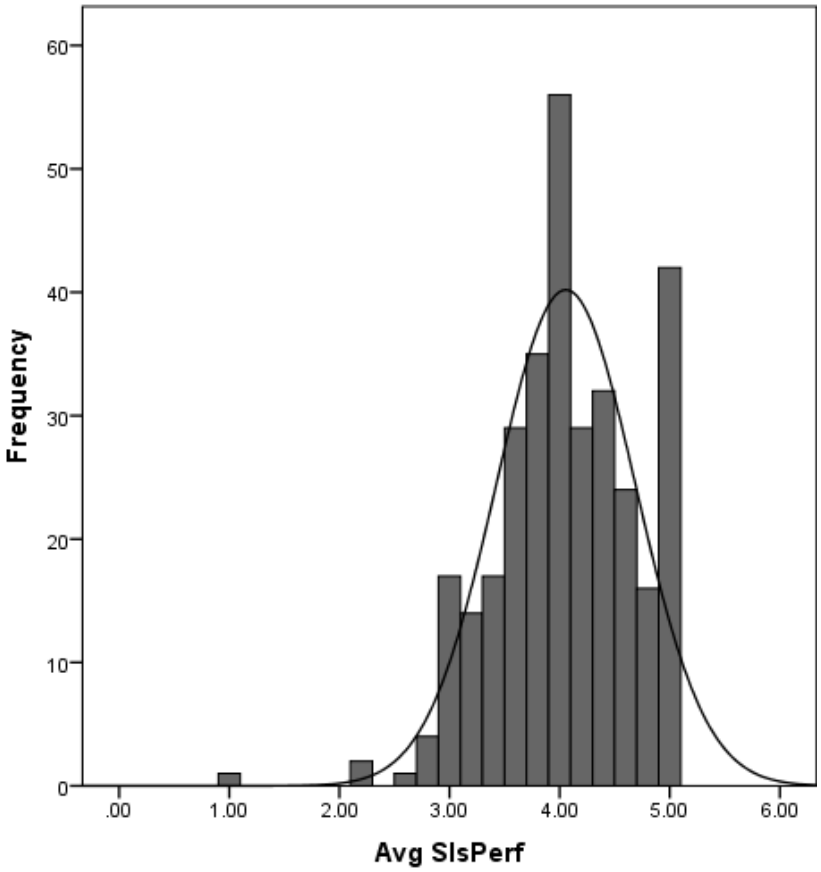
Histogram of Team Psychological Safety



Note: The figure indicates a normal curve with a slight skew to the right; $M = 4.67$; $SD = .99$; $N = 319$

Figure 5

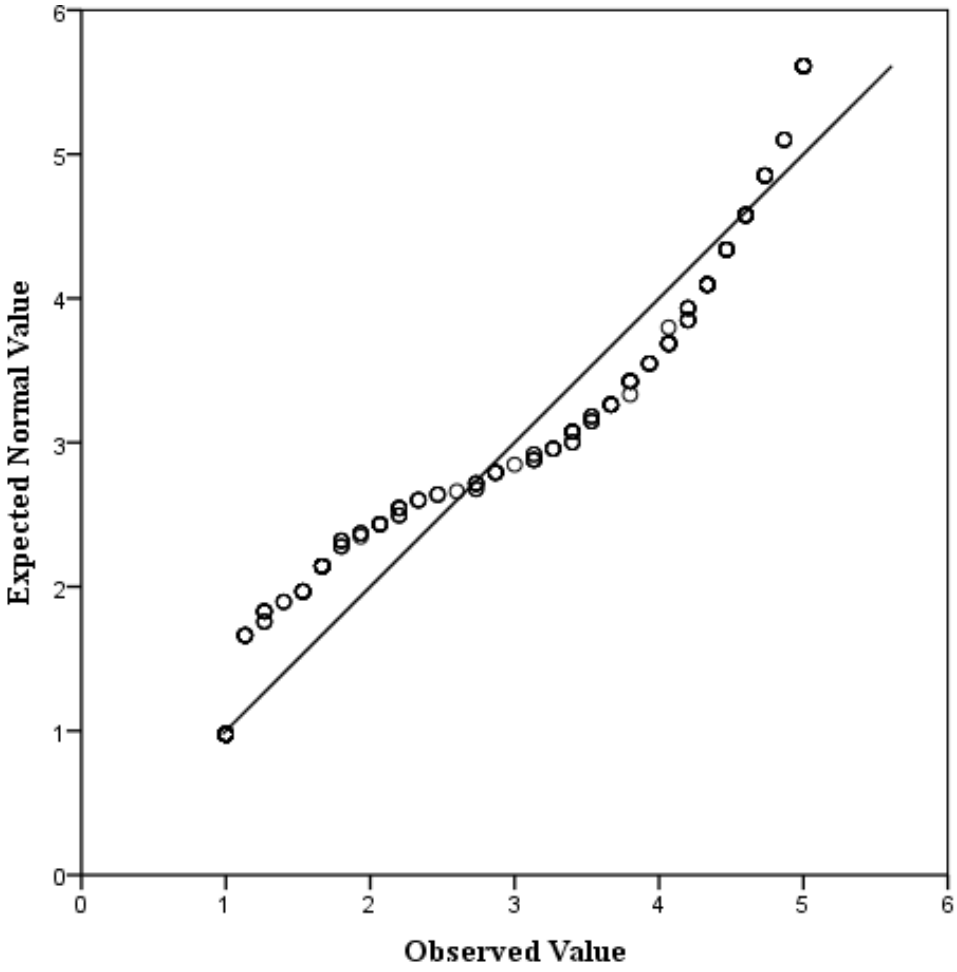
Histogram of Outcome Sales Performance



Note: The figure indicates a normal curve with a skew to the left; $M = 4.06$; $SD = .633$; $N = 319$

Figure 6

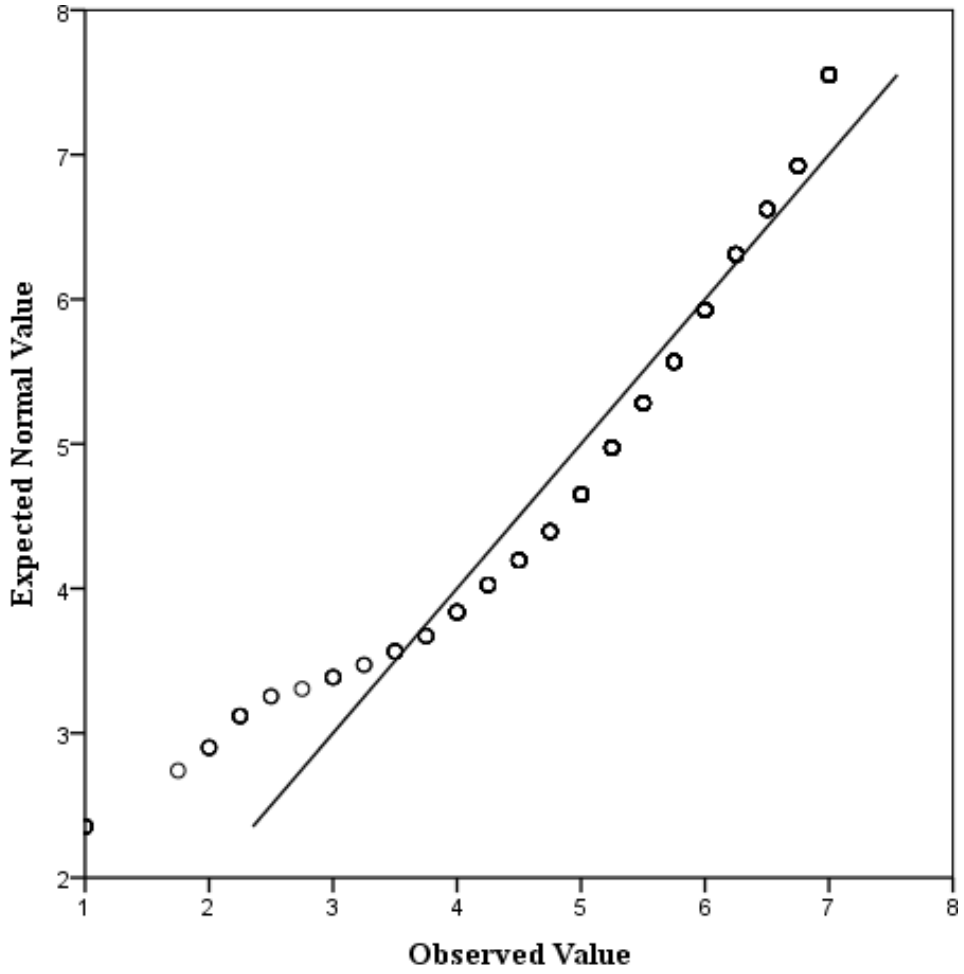
Q-Q Plot of Abusive Supervision Climate



Note: Data points stray from the diagonal line on the tails and the middle section, indicating nonnormal distribution.

Figure 7

Q-Q Plot of Leader–Members Interdependence



Note: Data points stray from the diagonal line on the tails and the middle section, indicating nonnormal distribution.

Figure 8

Q-Q Plot of Team Psychological Safety

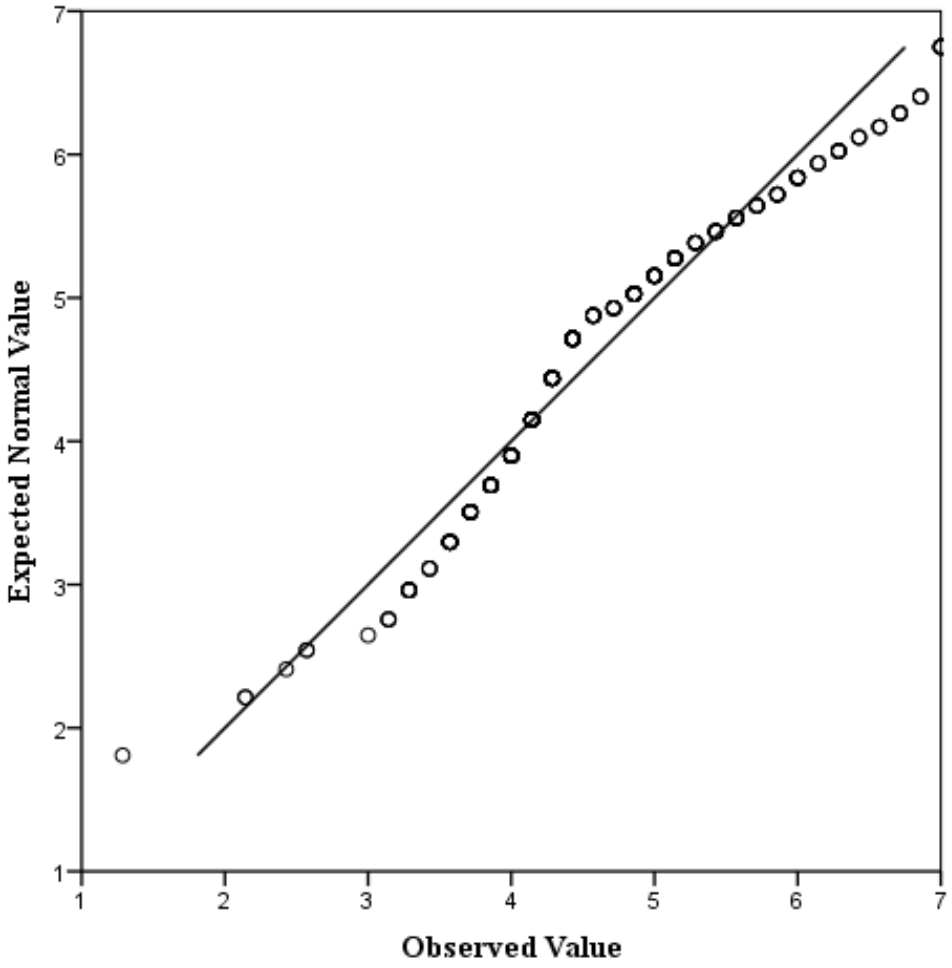
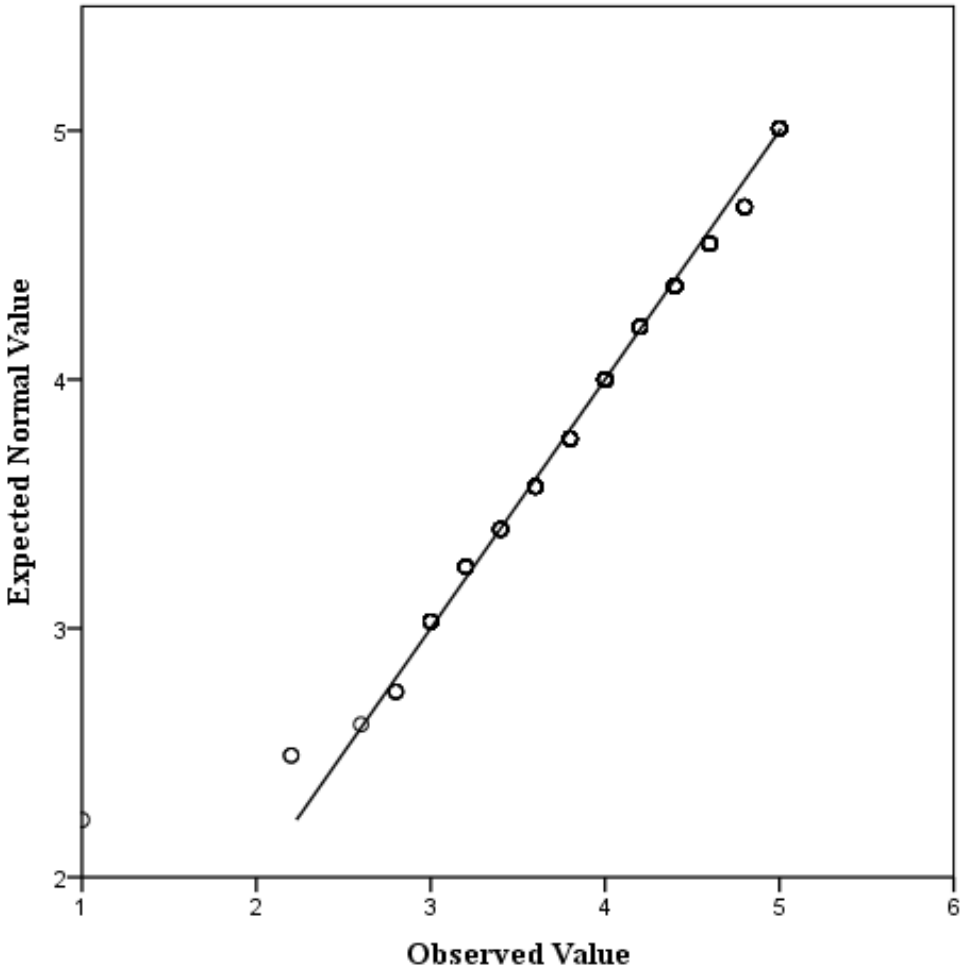


Figure 9

Q-Q Plot of Outcome Sales Performance

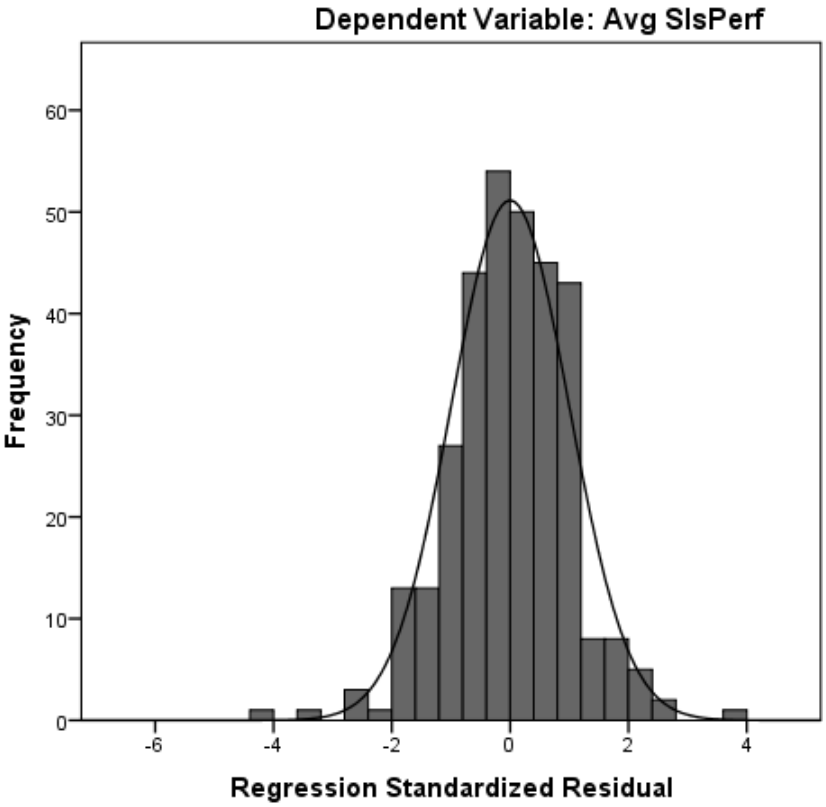


Note: The points follow closely along the diagonal line indicating normal distribution.

Linearity and Homoscedasticity. Figure 10 shows the results of the linearity and homoscedasticity tests among the variables. The P-P plot in Figure 11 illustrates that the observations follow closely along the diagonal line, supporting linearity and normal distribution of the error terms with no observable outliers. The scatterplot in Figure 12 indicates homoscedasticity with a square-shaped pattern and equal distribution of dots to either side of zero of the vertical and horizontal axes, along with a concentration of scores in the center (Moran, 2017).

Figure 10

Histogram of Standardized Residuals for OSP



Note: Histogram of standardized residuals for OSP shows normal distribution of the variance; M = 1.23E-15, SD = .995, N = 319

Figure 11

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Dependent Variable

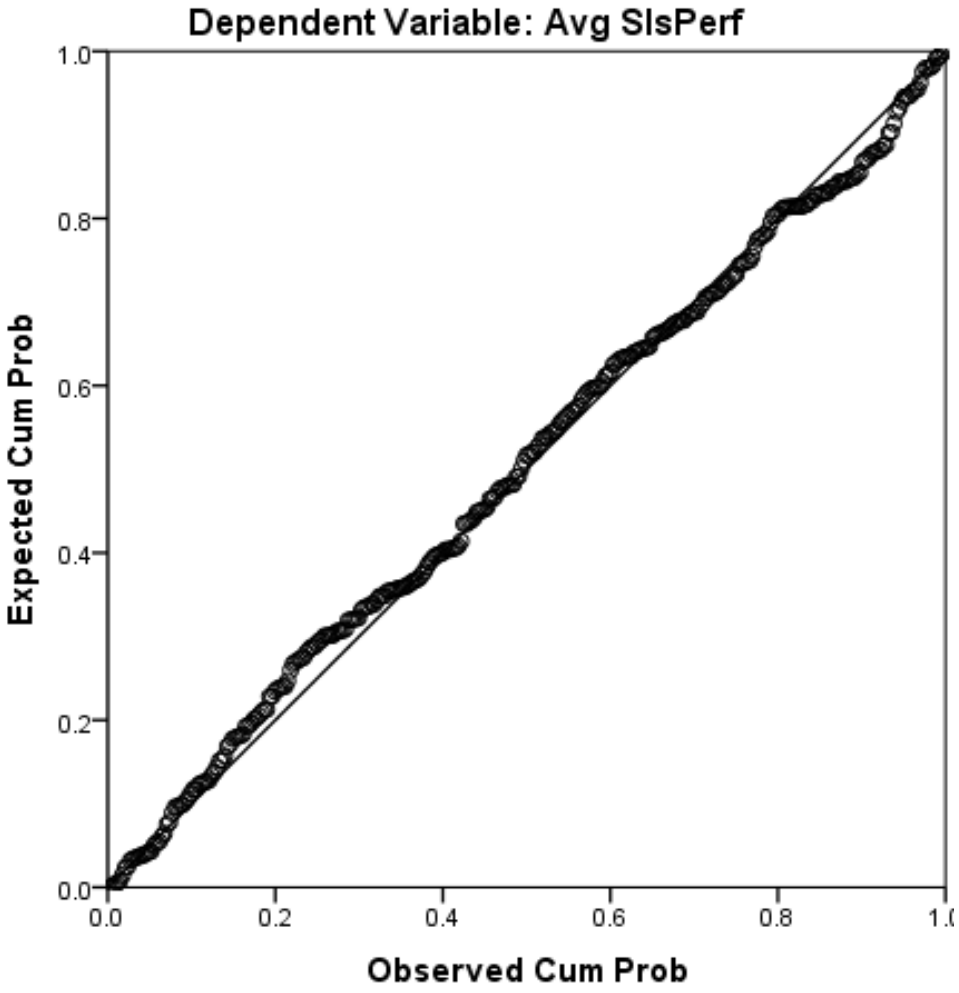
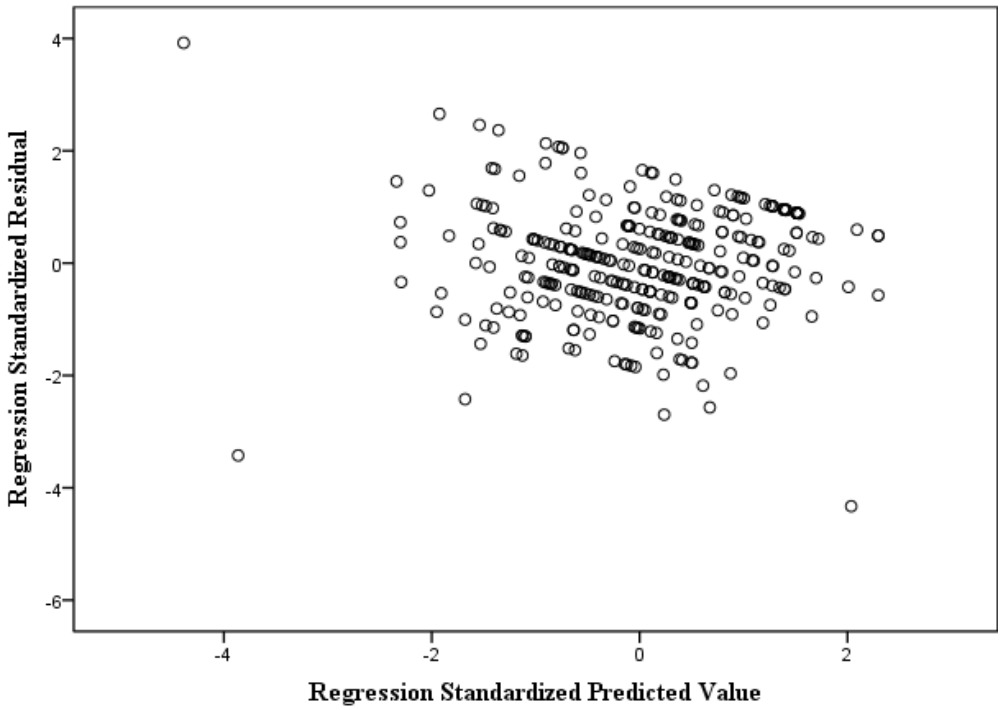


Figure 12

Scatterplot of the Standardized Residuals: Dependent Variable



Correlation. I selected the Spearman's correlation (Spearman's rho) test to assess the relationships among the variables. Spearman's rho is an ideal test for nonparametric (i.e., Likert) and nonnormally distributed data and can handle sample sizes less than 2,000. A summary of the results is shown in Table 7. The results show that Abusive Supervision was correlated with LMI (.306, $p < .01$) and TPS (–.542, $p < .01$). However, ASC was not statistically correlated with OSP (.094, $p > .01$). The remaining correlations and related significance levels are detailed in Table 7.

Multicollinearity. Multicollinearity describes the occurrence of two or more independent variables being highly correlated (Laerd Statistics, n.d.a). When multicollinearity exists, it can lead to difficulty in differentiating the effect each variable contributes to the equation in explaining or predicting the outcome, in addition to issues in calculating an ordinal regression. I ran multicollinearity diagnostics in SPSS, and the results are shown in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8

Collinearity Diagnostics: Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor

Independent variables	Tolerance	VIF
ASC	.602	1.662
LMI	.908	1.101
TPS	.648	1.544

Table 9

Collinearity Diagnostics: Eigenvalue and Condition Index

			Variance proportions		
Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition index	ASC	LMI	TPS
1	3.755	1.000	.01	.00	.00
2	.195	4.391	.42	.00	.04
3	.041	9.624	.21	.91	.12
4	.010	19.720	.36	.09	.84

Table 8 shows that all variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below 3, indicating that the assumption was met at the most stringent level (< 10 was the minimum threshold, and VIF >10 indicates potential multicollinearity) and that each variable had little to no overlap in redundancy to the other (Pallant, 2016) in predicting OSP.

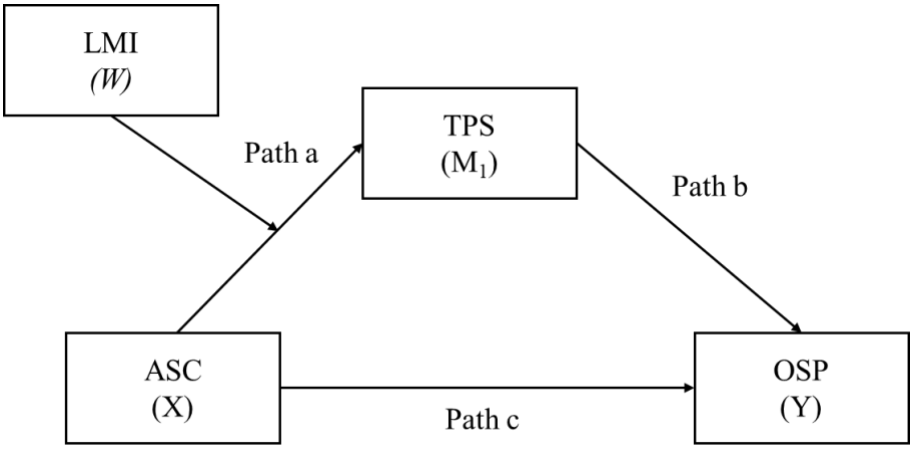
Additional collinearity diagnostics in Table 9 showed that only one condition index value was greater than 15, indicating a possible collinearity problem. However, none had a value of greater than 30, indicating a strong possibility of collinearity. Further, in the four rows under variance proportion, none appeared with two or more values greater than 0.9 in the same row. Based on the data in Tables 8 and 9, there was strong support showing that little to no collinearity existed between the variables.

The Moderated Mediation Model

Based on the conceptual framework (Figure 1) in Chapter 2, I selected the Hayes Process, Model 7 (Hayes, 2022), illustrated in Figure 13, which most accurately represents the proposed theoretical model.

Figure 13

Hayes Process, Model 7



The model summary from the first submodel in Table 10 shows that the predictors (ASC and LMI) accounted for a significant variation in TPS with an R^2 of .3947 and $p < .001$. Table 11 shows the mean-centered analysis of ASC and LMI and that the interaction (Int_1) between ASC and LMI was statistically significant in predicting TPS with $p < .001$.

Table 10

Model Summary of Outcome Variable: TPS

R	R^2	*MSE*	*F*	*df*1	*df*2	*p*
.6283	.3947	.5990	68.4780	3.0000	315.0000	.0000

Table 11

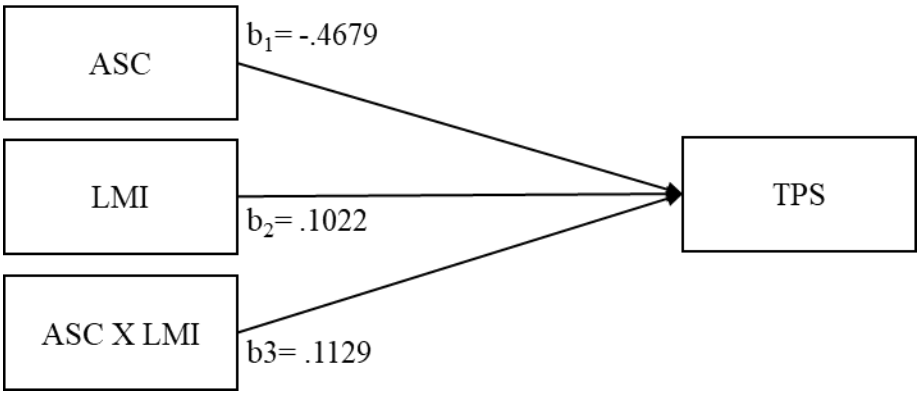
Model

Variable	Coeff.	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*LL* (CI)	*UL* (CI)
Constant	4.6040	.0452	101.7626	.0000	4.5150	4.6930
ASC	–.4679	.0337	–13.8904	.0000	–.5341	–.4016
LMI	.1022	.0385	2.6561	.0083	.0265	.1780
Int_1	.1129	.0240	4.6964	.0000	.0656	.1602

In this first submodel, the results in Table 10 show that the predictors accounted for significant variation in TPS, $R^2 = .3947$, $F(3, 315) = 68.4780$, $p < .01$. Table 11 shows that ASC was a negative and significant predictor ($b_1 = –.4679$. $SE = .0337$, $p < .001$) of TPS for cases falling at the mean on LMI. LMI was a positive and significant predictor ($b_2 = .1022$. $SE = .0385$, $p < .01$) of TPS for cases falling at the mean on ASC. Lastly, the combined interaction term was significant in the model ($b_3 = .1129$, SE .0240, $p < .001$). The first submodel (Figure 14) shows the resulting coefficients for TPS regressed on ASC and LMI, including the interaction term. The slope for ASC on TPS varies across levels of LMI, as visualized in the line graph in Figure 15.

Figure 14

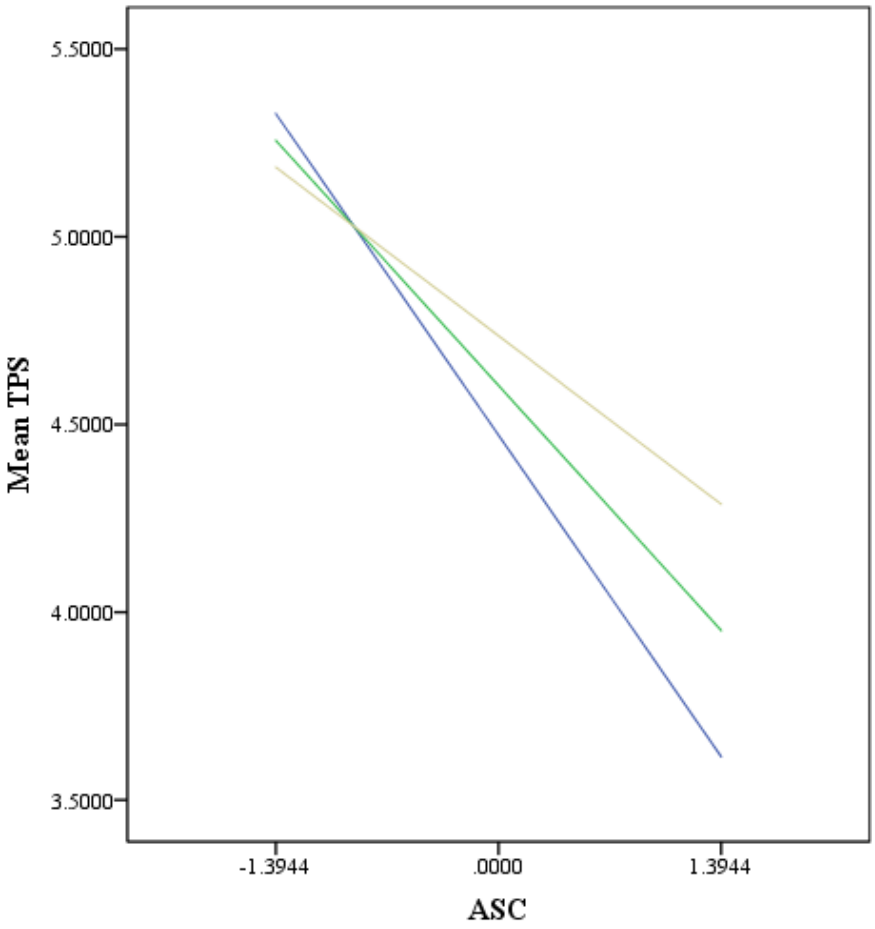
First Submodel, TPS



Note: Figure illustrates the effects of ASC, LMI, and the interaction of ASC and LMI on TPS.

Figure 15

Visualization of the Simple Slope +/– One Standard Deviation and at the Mean



Note: The graph shows that the simple slopes for the effect of ASC on TPS are becoming less and less negative with increasing levels of LMI. Purple line (–1.2944) reflects low LMI, green (.0000, mean) reflects moderate levels of LMI, and yellow (1.2944) reflects high LMI.

The simple slopes in Table 12 for LMI at –1 *SD*, 0, and +1 *SD* all show statistical significance with $p < .001$. Figure 15 presents a graphical visualization of the slopes one standard deviation below the mean, at the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean.

Table 12

Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor at Values of the Moderator

LMI	Effect	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LL (CI)	*UL* (CI)
–1.2944	–.6140	.0512	–11.9918	.0000	–.7148	–.5133
.0000	–.4679	.0337	–13.8904	.0000	–.5341	–.4016
1.2944	–.3217	.0398	–8.0813	.0000	–.4000	–.2434

The model summary in Table 13 shows the second submodel results of OSP regressed on ASC and TPS. The results demonstrate that ASC and TPS accounted for a statistically significant variation on OSP, $R^2 = .1281$, $F(2, 316) = 23.2093$, $p < .001$. ASC was a positive and significant predictor of OSP ($b_1 = .1580$, $SE = .0197$, $p < .001$), and TPS was also a positive and significant predictor ($b_2 = –.2741$, $SE = .0417$, $p < .001$; Table 14).

Table 13

Model Summary of Outcome Variable: OSP

R	R^2	*MSE*	*F*	*df*1	*df*2	*p*
.3579	.1281	.3517	23.2093	2.0000	316.0000	.0000

Table 14

OSP Model

Variable	Coeff.	*SE*	*t*	*p*	*LL* (CI)	*UL* (CI)
Constant	2.7778	.1973	14.0772	.0000	2.3895	3.1660
ASC	.1580	.0296	5.3371	.0000	.0998	.2163
TPS	.2741	.0417	6.5738	.0000	.1921	.3561

Note: ASC and TPS had a positive and statistically significant relationship with OSP.

Using the bootstrap confidence intervals, I identified if zero fell between the lower limit confidence interval (BootLLCI) and upper limit confidence interval (BootULCI) or outside of

the two terms. Table 15 shows that zero falls outside the upper and lower bounds confidence intervals, indicating that the conditional indirect effect was statistically significant at all three levels. The second submodel (Figure 16) shows the resulting coefficients of OSP regressed on ASC and TPS.

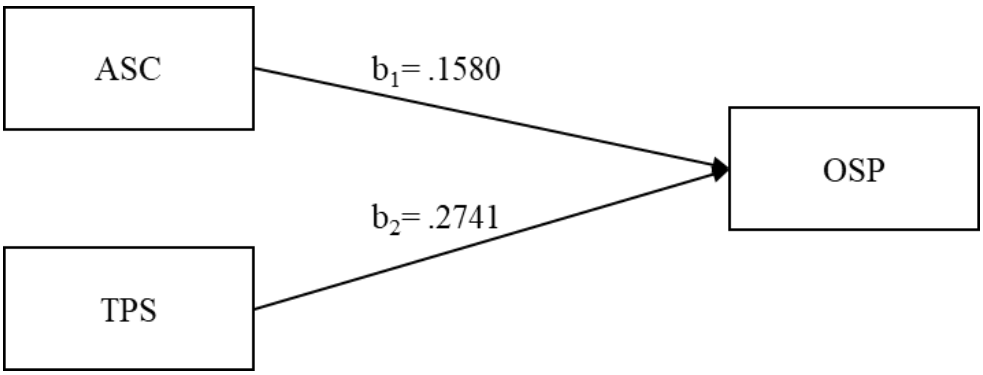
Table 15

Bootstrapping Test

LMI	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
–1.2944	–.1683	.0357	–.2449	–.1032
.0000	–.1282	.0274	–.1877	–.0787
1.2944	–.0882	.0231	–.1377	–.0482

Figure 16

Second Submodel, OSP, with Coefficients



The Index of Moderated Mediation (IMM) may be treated as an all-purpose test for moderated mediation. Table 16 shows that zero did not fall between the lower bounds (BBLCI) and upper bounds (BootUCLI), supporting that moderating mediation was statistically significant. In other words, the proposed model, that the indirect effect of X (ASC) on Y (OSP) via M (TPS) was moderated by W (LMI), was supported.

Table 16

Index of Moderated Mediation (IMM)

Variable	Index	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootUCLI
LMI	.0310	.0095	.0123	.0502

Note: Zero fell outside of the upper and lower bound, indicating moderated mediation.

I conducted additional validation of the moderated mediation model by using the pairwise contrasts between the conditional indirect effects, as shown in Table 17. The data in Table 17 also show that zero fell outside the lower (BootLLCI) and upper (BootULCI) bounds of the bootstrapping confidence intervals, further supporting the moderated mediation model, indicating a significant difference in conditional effects between +/–1 standard deviation.

Table 17

Pairwise Contrasts Between Conditional Indirect Effects

Effect1	Effect2	Contrast	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
–.1282	–.1683	.0401	.0122	.0159	.0650
–.0882	–.1683	.0801	.0245	.0319	.1301
–.0882	–.1282	.0401	.0122	.0159	.0650

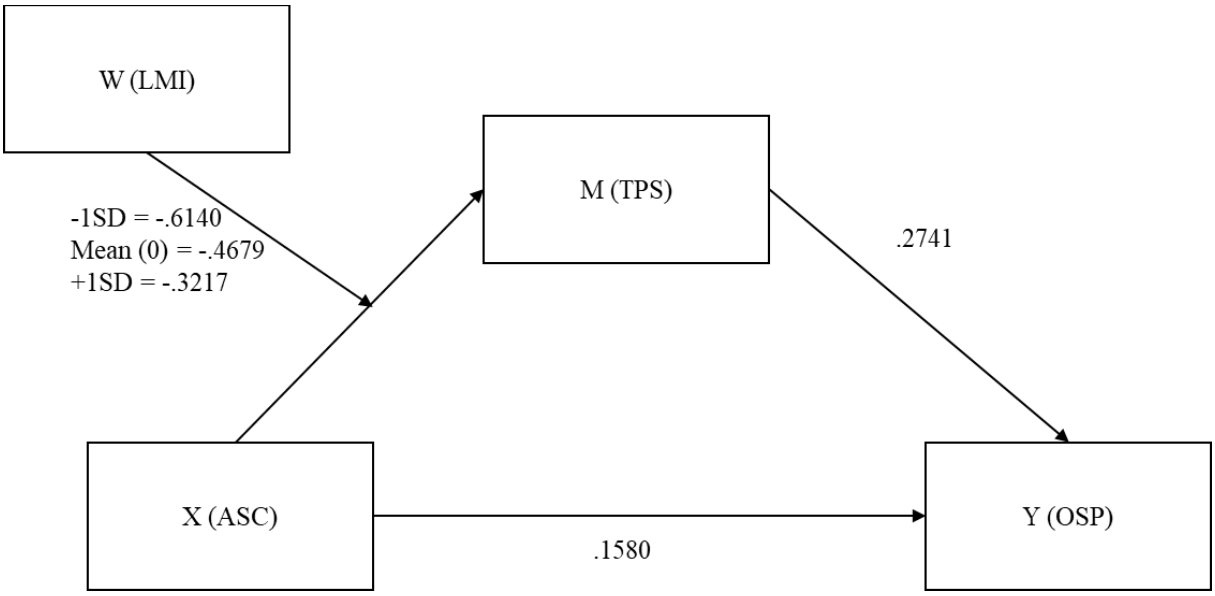
Figure 17 illustrates the complete model with coefficients, including the three effects of the moderating variable at the mean and +/–1 standard deviation from the mean, as described in the following bullet points:

- The conditional indirect effect of ASC on OSP at –1SD on LMI was –.6140 * .2741 = –.1683.
- The conditional indirect effect of ASC on OSP at mean on LMI was –.4679 * .2741 = –.1282.

- The conditional indirect effect of ASC on OSP at +1 *SD* on LMI was –.3217 * .2741 = –.0882.

Figure 17

Moderated Mediation Model With Coefficients



Summary

In this study, I examined how an ASC affected B2B sales performance, if TPS had a mediating effect, and if LMI moderated the relationship between an ASC and TPS, as depicted in Figure 17. Results indicated a statistically significant inverse relationship between ASC and TPS among B2B salespeople. In addition, the results showed a statistically significant and positive relationship between TPS and OSP. Finally, the model's moderating variable, LMI, was statistically significant as a moderating effect between ASC and TPS.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed summary of results with the intent to understand if the conceptual framework and proposed research question were either supported or rejected. The analysis results indicated that the data supported the moderated mediation model, as shown in Figure 17. Chapter 5 discusses how the results of this study compare and add to previous related

studies. Implications and recommendations for sales supervisors and salespeople, B2B sales organizations, and future research on sales leadership and performance are also addressed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

B2B sales professionals and the organizations they work with continue to experience increased competition and unprecedented external forces such as pandemics and disruptive technologies that can impact their performance and well-being (Rangarajan et al., 2021). The continuous pressure placed on sales organizations by senior leaders, investors, and other stakeholders to grow revenue and seek a return on capital can encourage stakeholders' short-term thinking, increase abusive supervision tactics, and muffle ideas and innovation. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed how B2B salespeople interact with their clients, requiring rapid adaptation to stay relevant and competitive (Rangarajan et al., 2021).

No research has examined the relationships between ASC, LMI, TPS, and B2B sales performance. This quantitative correlational study focused on answering the following research question: How does an abusive supervision climate predict B2B sales performance, and does psychological safety among sales team members have a mediating effect? Further, I also examined a moderated mediation model by including the construct of LMI to identify whether it had a moderating effect on ASC and TPS.

I designed the experiment in the following manner: the sample population included B2B salespeople actively employed. The salespeople could not have any direct reports or supervisory duties. I collected the data through LinkedIn as a social post and two paid survey panels, Amazon MTurk and Centiment. The final sample consisted of 319 complete responses. The independent variables examined were ASC (predictor), LMI (moderator), and TPS (mediator). The measurement scales utilized included the Abusive Supervision Climate scale (Priesemuth et al., 2014), the Leader–Members Interdependence scale (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018), and the Psychological Safety scale (Edmondson, 1999).

The data showed that an ASC significantly and negatively affected TPS. The moderating variable LMI and the interaction of ASC and LMI were also found to be statistically significant with TPS.

Discussion of the Findings

I analyzed the survey data to determine how ASC impacted OSP, if TPS mediated the relationship between ASC and OSP, and if LMI moderated ASC and TPS.

Abusive Supervision Climate as a Predictor of Outcome Sales Performance

In this study, the Hayes Process, Model 7, showed that ASC was a statistically significant positive predictor of OSP (.1580, $p < .001$). The Hayes Process analysis also showed that ASC had a statistically significant indirect conditional effect on OSC with TPS (–.4679, $p < .001$) as the mediator.

The positive relationship between ASC and OSP, while unexpected, may be explained by a study using a similar construct, peer abusive supervision (PAS; Shao et al., 2018). The study showed that third parties had higher performance when they witnessed one or more of their peers being mistreated by their supervisor (Shao et al., 2018). In another study, abusive supervision supported innovation by enhancing challenge-related stress (Zhu & Zhang, 2019). Performance enhancement through challenge-related stress may provide insight into why ASC positively impacted sales performance when sales teams witnessed abusive supervision of their peers. A longitudinal study could determine if the positive OSP can be sustained over the long term.

Abusive Supervision Climate's Relationship With Team Psychological Safety

ASC showed a statistically significant negative relationship with TPS. The Spearman's rho results in Table 7 show ASC was significantly negatively correlated (–.542, $p < .01$). Additionally, the Hayes Process macro also demonstrated a statistically significant negative

relationship between ASC and TPS (–.4679, $p < .001$). No peer-reviewed studies were identified that examine ASC and the mediating role of TPS. However, some studies on abusive supervision and psychological safety as a mediator (Liu et al., 2016; Zhu & Zhang, 2019) also showed a statistically negative relationship between them and that abusive supervision impacted employee creativity and innovation.

Team Psychological Safety as a Mediator of Abusive Supervision Climate

The second part of the research question stated that the relationship between ASC and OSP was mediated by TPS. Based on a 5,000 bootstrap sample, the data revealed that the indirect effect of ASC on OSP was statistically significant, supporting the research question.

Leader–Members Interdependence as Moderator

To probe the moderating effect, I used the Johnson–Neyman technique (Hayes, 2022), which identifies the ranges of LMI in which ASC is statistically significant. The data indicated that the relationship between ASC and TPS was significant ($p < .01$) at all ranges.

To visually illustrate the significant moderating effect, I plotted the moderating effect and one standard deviation below the mean, one standard deviation above the mean, and at the mean of the moderating variable, LMI (Hayes, 2022). Figure 15 shows that at low levels of LMI the effect of ASC on TPS was much higher than at high levels of LMI.

Limitations

The relationships found among the variables in this study (ASC, LMI, TPS, and OSP) provide a new perspective on the interactions between sales supervisors and their B2B sales teams. However, due to this study's cross-sectional nature, a causal relationship between ASC, LMI, TPS, and OSP cannot be definitively established. Future research with a longitudinal design would further validate the moderated mediation model proposed in this study.

Despite having chosen scales validated in previous studies, using supplemental or different measurement instruments could improve the reliability, especially concerning self-reported measures. This is because self-report scales can introduce personal bias, especially as it relates to exaggerating one's performance, and may impact the accuracy of the results. Therefore, future studies could utilize supplementary data such as managerial or peer feedback on sales performance or company-based sales and quota data to validate financial performance.

Delimitations included focusing the study on B2B salespeople currently employed. It was realized that additional data could have been gathered, such as quota performance, revenue targets, or profit from company sources, which may have added an extra layer of insight into sales performance. Furthermore, the research was quantitative only and did not include any qualitative or mixed-methods data gathering. Incorporating qualitative data such as interviews of B2B salespeople and sales supervisors could have revealed additional context around the data constructs and the proposed model, providing further insights into the results (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

A further delimitation was limiting the independent variable to an ASC. Adding questions to measure levels of abusive supervision could have provided a comparison by which to identify those salespeople who witnessed abusive supervision of their peers (climate) versus the perception of their supervisor being directly abusive to them. To further deepen this analysis, additional insights could have been gained by comparing groups who witnessed and experienced abusive supervision relative to those who witnessed but did not experience abusive supervision.

Implications for Research

This study contributed to the study of leadership, including both the combination of positive and negative leadership constructs and the dynamics between the leader at the dyad and

team levels. Moreover, the study contributed to understanding of ASC and LMI. Several implications can be drawn from the findings of this study.

First, a decrease in the justice climate from perceived injustices by the supervisor on salespeople could reduce psychological safety. Ambrose et al. (2021) stated that an unjust climate could lead to less engagement by employees, which may lead to fewer ideas and opinions shared by the team for fear of being treated unjustly for speaking up. Edmondson (1999) and Kahn (1990) also stated that employees feeling supported (as opposed to punitive treatment) was critical to establishing psychological safety, including interpersonal relationships, as well as group and intergroup dynamics.

Second, the study showed that ASC had a significant negative relationship with psychological safety. This implies that when salespeople are in an ASC (they witness abusive supervision inflicted on their peers) their level of psychological safety decreases. Lower TPS has been shown to lower team learning due to a lack of willingness to share ideas, express opinions, or engage in creative problem-solving (Edmondson, 1999), which can be so crucial in B2B sales (Ge, 2020; Liu et al., 2020). TPS also affects team learning and innovation, which are critical to modern high-performing sales teams. Steps should be taken to minimize any negative impacts on TPS, such as ASCs. Further, due to the positive effect of TPS on OSP, additional antecedents that foster TPS should be encouraged to provide an environment where learning and innovation can thrive.

Third, when LMI is added as a moderator, the relationship between TPS and the interaction between ASC and LMI becomes more positive. The attenuating effect of LMI on ASC is similar to the attenuating effect from a study by Pan and Lin (2018), which showed that higher levels of LMX attenuated the negative effects of abusive supervision. Another example is

from He et al. (2021), who showed the negative relationship between abusive supervision and creativity weakened with higher levels of LMX. Due to LMI being a hybridized construct of LMX and task interdependence, this similar interaction is feasible. Lastly, Agarwal (2019) examined LMX as a moderator of abusive supervision and psychological capital to predict outcomes of turnover intention and perceived stress and found that higher levels of LMX attenuated abusive supervision. In conclusion, this study is consistent with Agarwal (2019) in that the behavior of LMI was directionally similar and that higher levels of LMI also attenuated ASC.

Lastly, this study responded to the call for further understanding of moderators on abusive supervision (Agarwal, 2019; Oh & Farh, 2017). Examining the moderating effects of LMI on ASC provides another perspective on the complex nature of abusive supervisors and their impact on their employees.

Implications for Practice

This research has several practical implications for sales supervisors, organizations, and sales professionals. First, organizations that wish to drive learning and innovation within their B2B sales teams should take measures to prevent an ASC. Moreover, organizations should encourage positive leadership practices that promote psychological safety and other positive leadership practices that foster improved sales performance.

Second, the results of this study showed that higher levels of LMI weakened the impact of an ASC. This conditional effect implies that a salesperson who witnesses their peer(s) being abused by their supervisor will perceive the environment as less harsh if their supervisor works with that salesperson more closely on their interdependent tasks. Furthermore, the attenuating effect of LMI on ASC may also result from the salesperson interpreting the high level of LMI as

the manager supporting them in achieving their goals. Since the salesperson cannot avoid their supervisor when there is high LMI, the close interaction may provide an opportunity for the salesperson to ingratiate themselves or reframe by mentally decreasing the threat associated with the abusive supervisor as a coping mechanism (Yagil et al., 2011). In addition, the salesperson's close interaction with their supervisor may make them feel safer and part of the in-group as opposed to the peer they witnessed receiving abusive supervision.

In summary, organizations that encourage healthy LMI and collaboration between supervisor and salesperson can help to mitigate against ASCs. Interventions through training, policies discouraging abusive supervision practices, and encouraging just and ethical behaviors could be put in place to provide a more positive workplace for employees.

Recommendations for Future Research

The cross-sectional scope of this study did not establish causal relationships between the variables or the model over time. A longitudinal study design could help confirm the validity of the model and the potential for causal relationships and their effects over time. In addition, a longitudinal study may provide additional insights into the short- and long-term effects of an ASC on TPS and how that may impact sales performance over the long run.

In addition to ASC, adding a measure for abusive supervision to enable collecting responses on both abusive supervision and ASC would allow a comparison of the participants' perceptions of how their supervisor treats them versus other teammates. In addition, collecting additional data points to measure sales performance could help eliminate any self-reporting bias inherent in the OSP scale. For example, the ability of the supervisor to rate the salesperson's performance, historical sales and quota performance, and sales rankings that also include the salesperson's peers could provide a more precise measurement of sales performance.

LMI is a relatively new construct that warrants further research, and it may explain additional variance than either LMX or task interdependence. LMI was introduced as a construct by Rousseau and Aubé (2018), and to date, other peer-reviewed articles with this construct have yet to be published. Because it is a brand-new construct, understanding how it differs from its parent constructs of LMX and task interdependence is to be determined. As referenced in the previous section, LMI appears to behave similarly to LMX as a moderator. From a practical standpoint, LMI would seem to have an important role in the B2B sales supervisor–salesperson dyad because the nature of the work in B2B sales can be collaborative and necessary for high-performing B2B sales teams.

In terms of further support in the theoretical framework, it might be useful to incorporate social exchange theory to better understand the social exchanges at the team and dyad levels, especially among ASC, LMI, and TPS. Lastly, designing a qualitative study or conducting a mixed-methods study could add additional context to the perceptions of their supervisors and their own sales performance.

Recommendations for Practice

Companies that wish to have high-performing B2B sales teams should look at implementing policies and interventions to reduce or eliminate abusive supervision and the climate it creates. For example, 360-degree evaluations and feedback systems (Day & Dragoni, 2015) could help supervisors become more aware of how their behaviors are perceived and develop higher levels of self-awareness and what is considered acceptable behavior within their organization.

A focus on leadership interventions for sales supervisors has the potential to yield significant improvements. Within supervisory roles, sales supervisors, in particular, have an

especially large influence on the performance of their team. Providing the sales supervisors with leadership training, especially in the areas of coaching, collaboration, psychological safety, and supporting attributes such as trust and ethics, could provide the framework for sustainable growth in the sales organization. In addition, creating a pipeline of high-potential leaders within the sales ranks and grooming them for future leader roles would help support continued growth while maintaining the culture and environment, facilitating the organization's success.

Summary and Conclusion

In this study, I aimed to understand how ASC impacts B2B sales performance and if LMI moderates the conditional indirect effects of ASC on sales performance mediated by TPS. The data support the proposed moderated mediation model and the ability of LMI to buffer the negative effects of ASC.

First, the study contributed to ASC in the workplace, specifically within a B2B sales environment. Most of the current research in this field focuses on abusive supervision at the supervisor–employee dyad level and does not consider the impact at the team level. On the other hand, ASC is similar to other climate constructs and encompasses employees' shared experiences (Uğur & Öztürk, 2021). Therefore, the study contributed to expanding climate research in the area of abusive supervision, bringing attention to the significant negative effect of witnessing abusive supervision.

Second, the study contributed to the field of B2B sales performance, the positive influence TPS has on sales performance, and the negative effect ASC has on a team's psychological safety. According to Priesemuth et al. (2014), an ASC "fractures the psychological safety that allows team members to seek and provide the feedback, help, and expertise that underlie its ability to learn and engage, . . . which negatively affects the group's performance" (p.

1526). The trickledown (and across) effects of ASC are an essential consideration in understanding the full impact the act of abusive supervision has on the individual and on those also witnessing the perceived injustice.

Third, the study contributed to the literature by testing the new construct of LMI as a moderator between ASC and TPS and answers the call to expand our understanding of how abusive supervision influences work outcomes (Mackey et al., 2017; Martinko et al., 2013). In addition, examining LMI as a moderator also answers the call for research (Oh & Farh, 2017; Tepper et al., 2017) to better understand the moderating role of relational factors on abusive supervision to outcomes.

In summary, this quantitative correlational study explored how an ASC can influence sales performance within the context of a moderated mediation model. The research achieved its purpose in understanding the mediating role of TPS and moderating role of LMI between ASC and OSP. Chapter 5 discussed the findings of the study, including a summary of the results, how it relates to other research in the field, contributions, recommendations, and limitations. Moreover, despite evidence that abusive supervision and ASC are low-base-rate phenomena, the severity of the impact as it trickles throughout the organization can be significant. Further, TPS plays an important role in sales performance and how companies can foster a psychologically safe environment creating a thriving environment for sales teams to interact, share, learn, and perform at increasingly higher levels. Organizations that wish to create high-performing B2B sales teams that can adapt to changing markets and customer needs, think critically, and solve new challenges would do well to minimize ASCs in order to allow creativity, innovation, and collaboration to emerge.

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Appendix A: Social Media Post for Survey Invitation

If you are a business-to-business (B2B) salesperson, I need your help! I am conducting research on how sales supervisors can affect sales performance. The survey should take approximately 10-12 minutes to complete. The survey link is anonymous and will not ask any personally identifiable information. All responses will only be shared in an aggregated format in support of my dissertation research.

You may exit the survey at any time and for any reason. You must click submit/next to submit your responses. Should you have any questions, you can message me, or email me through my University email xxxxxx@acu.edu

[Survey Link]

This survey is also 508 compliant.

Appendix B: Inclusionary Criteria

To confirm your eligibility in this survey, please respond to the following statements:

I confirm that I am a full-time employee (40+ hours per week)
- Yes
- No

I am currently employed as a business-to-business (B2B) salesperson
- Yes
- No

Please select the industry that most closely matches the organization you currently work for
- Automotive
- Construction
- Education
- Energy
- Finance
- Health Care
- Hospitality
- Insurance
- Manufacturing
- Media
- Non-Profit
- Professional
- Retail
- Technology
- Telecommunication
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Other

Appendix C: Informed Consent

Research Title: How Business-to-Business (B2B) Sales Teams Succeed Despite an Abusive Supervisor: The Roles of Leader–Members Interdependence and Psychological Safety on Sales Performance

You may be able to take part in a research study. This form provides important information about that study, including the risks and benefits to you as a potential participant. Please read this form carefully You may also wish to discuss your participation with other people, such as your family doctor or a family member.
Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop your participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION: This study explores how sales managers interact with their sales team, and how those interactions influence a salesperson's performance. In addition, the study will explore how some sales teams interact and work together to creatively solve problems and share best practices that help them be more successful and engaged in their work. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete an anonymous electronic survey consisting of approximately 47 questions that will take 20-25 minutes to complete.

RISKS & BENEFITS: There are risks to taking part in this research study. Below is a list of the foreseeable risks, including the seriousness of those risks and how likely they are to occur:

- There is the risk that some questions may cause emotional discomfort.
- Some of the survey questions ask about unpleasant experiences and may be distressing to you as you think about your experiences.

You may not experience any personal benefits from participating in this study. However, your input will be helpful in understanding sales supervisor behaviors and potential outcomes for B2B sales professionals that can inform future decisions for research and in practice.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY: Your participation in this survey is completely anonymous. No personally identifiable information will be requested. Any information you provide will be confidential to the extent allowable by law. The primary risk with this study is a breach of confidentiality. However, we have taken steps to minimize this risk. We will not be collecting any personal identification data during the survey. However, Qualtrics may collect information from your computer. You may read their privacy statements here: https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/.

CONTACTS: If you have questions about the research study, the lead researcher is Matthew Daniel, EdD Doctoral Candidate at Abilene Christian University, and may be contacted at xxxxxx@acu.edu. If you are unable to reach the lead researcher or wish to speak to someone other than the lead researcher, you may contact Dr. Dool, D.Mgt., Management/Organizational Processes from the University of Maryland UC, at xxxxxxx@acu.edu. If you have concerns about this study, believe you may have been injured because of this study, or have general questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research,

Megan Roth, Ph.D. Dr. Roth may be reached at
(xxx) xxx-xxxx
xxxxxxxx@acu.edu
320 Hardin Administration Bldg, ACU Box 29103
Abilene, TX 79699

Additional Information

If you are located in the state of California, you may review your rights under the California Consumer Privacy Act.

Consent Signature Section

Please select the option "Yes, I consent" below if you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Click only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. If you wish to have a copy of this consent form, you may print it now. You do not waive any legal rights by consenting to this study.

- o Yes, I consent
- o No, I do not consent

Appendix D: Demographic Questions

What is your age?

- <20
- 20-35
- 36-49
- 50-64
- 65+

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary/third gender
- Prefer not to say

How much experience do you have in business-to-business (B2B) sales?

- <1 Year
- 1-3 Years
- 3-5 Years
- >5 Years

How long have you been in your current role?

- <1 Year
- 1-3 Years
- 3-5 Years
- >5 Years

Appendix E: Survey Questions

Abusive Supervision Climate

1. Think of the interactions between the members of your sales team and your direct supervisor. For each statement, select the most appropriate response, starting with the phrase “My supervisor...”

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My supervisor ridicules members of my sales team					
My supervisor tells members of my sales team their thoughts or feelings are stupid					
My supervisor puts members of my sales team down in front of others					
My supervisor makes negative comments about members of my sales team to others					
My supervisor tells members of my sales team they are incompetent					

Leader–Members Interdependence

2. Think about the amount of interaction you and your sales team have with your sales manager, and select the most appropriate response, starting with the phrase “To do our work we need to....”

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
To do our work we need to collaborate with our team leader							
To do our work we need to coordinate our efforts with our team leader							
To do our work we need							

to exchange information with our team leader							
To do our work we need to consult our team leader							

Psychological Safety

3. Think about how you interact with your sales team. When you are on team meetings and feedback or ideas are requested, how often do or others on your team you respond? Is it just the same people or is their broad participation? If you don't share ideas or feedback in these team meetings often or at all, why? Based on the question, reflect on these team dynamics (how you and/or the team speaks up, provides feedback, and shares ideas) over the last 6 months to 12 months. Once you have reflected adequately on the question, select the most appropriate response.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.							
Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues							
People on this team sometimes reject others for being different							
It is safe to take a risk on this team.							
It is difficult to ask other members of							

this team for help							
No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts							
Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized							

4. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the statements below regarding your own your sales performance?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Contributing to my company's market share					
Selling high profit-margin products					
Generating a high level of dollar sales					
Generating sales of new company products					
Exceeding sales targets					

Appendix F: Permissions

Permission to Use the Abusive Supervision Climate Scale

RE: [EXTERNAL] Permission request for abusive supervision climate

MS Marshall Schminke <[redacted]>
To: Robert Folger; Manuela Priesemuth
Cc: [redacted]; Maureen Ambrose

Reply | Reply All | Forward
Sun 2/6/2022 1

Good luck with your work, Matt.

From: Robert Folger <[redacted]>
Sent: Sunday, February 6, 2022 10:57 AM
To: Manuela Priesemuth <[redacted]>
Cc: [redacted]; Marshall Schminke <[redacted]>; Maureen Ambrose <[redacted]>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Permission request for abusive supervision climate

Fine with me

Sent from my iPhone

> On Feb 6, 2022, at 8:49 AM, Manuela Priesemuth <[redacted]> wrote:
>
> Hi Matt,
>
> Sure, go ahead. Good luck with your dissertation.
>
> Manuela
>
> Manuela Priesemuth, Ph.D.
> Villanova School of Business

From: [redacted]
Sent: Saturday, February 5, 2022 5:05 PM
To: Manuela Priesemuth <[redacted]>
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Permission request for abusive supervision climate

Dr. Priesemuth,

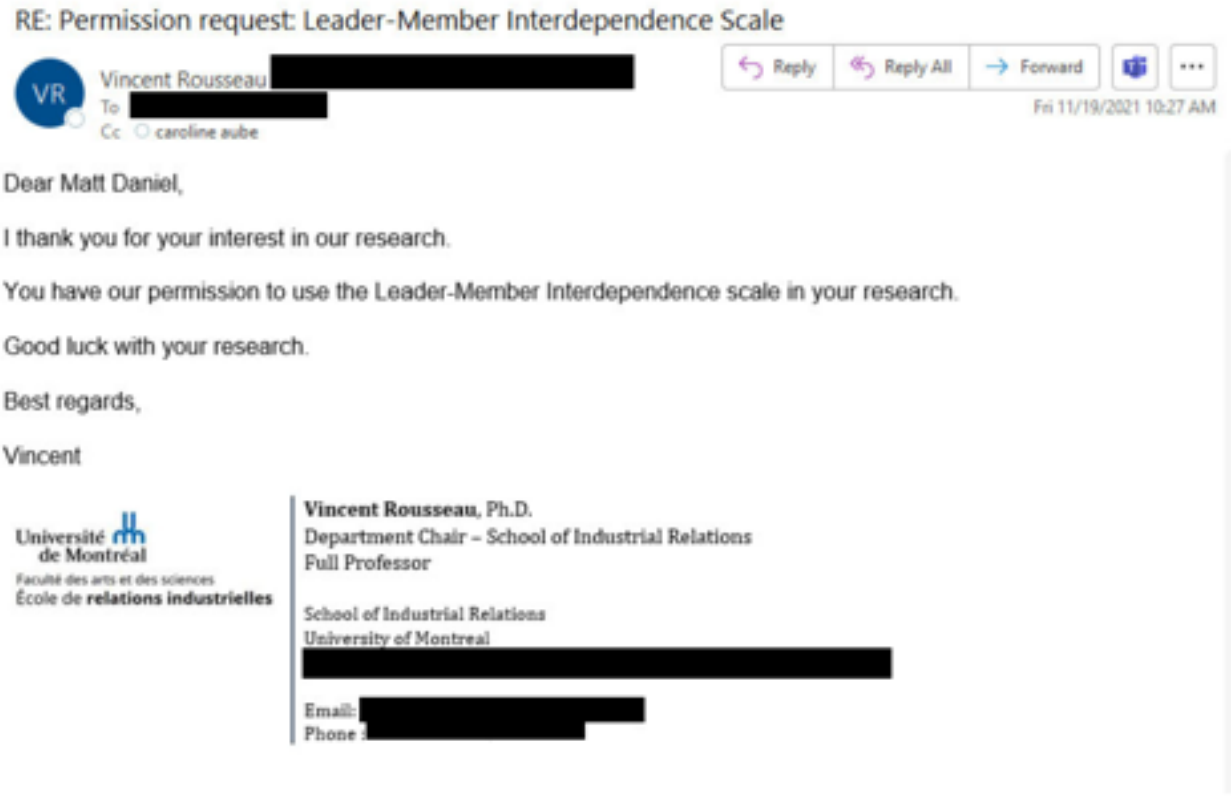
I am a graduate student at Abilene Christian University and am requesting your permission to use the 5-item abusive supervision climate scale in my dissertation titled *"How Business-to-Business (B2B) Sales Teams Succeed Despite an Abusive Supervisor: The Moderating Role of Leader-Member Task Interdependence and the Mediating Role of Psychological Safety on Sales Performance"*.

If you have any questions regarding my research, please let me know.

Thank you in advance, I look forward to receiving your permission.

Best Regards,
Matt Daniel
Doctoral Student, Abilene Christian University
[redacted]

Permission to Use the Four-Item Leader–Members Interdependence Scale



RE: Permission request: Leader-Member Interdependence Scale

VR Vincent Rousseau [redacted]
To [redacted]
Cc caroline aube

Reply | Reply All | Forward

Fri 11/19/2021 10:27 AM

Dear Matt Daniel,

I thank you for your interest in our research.

You have our permission to use the Leader-Member Interdependence scale in your research.

Good luck with your research.

Best regards,

Vincent

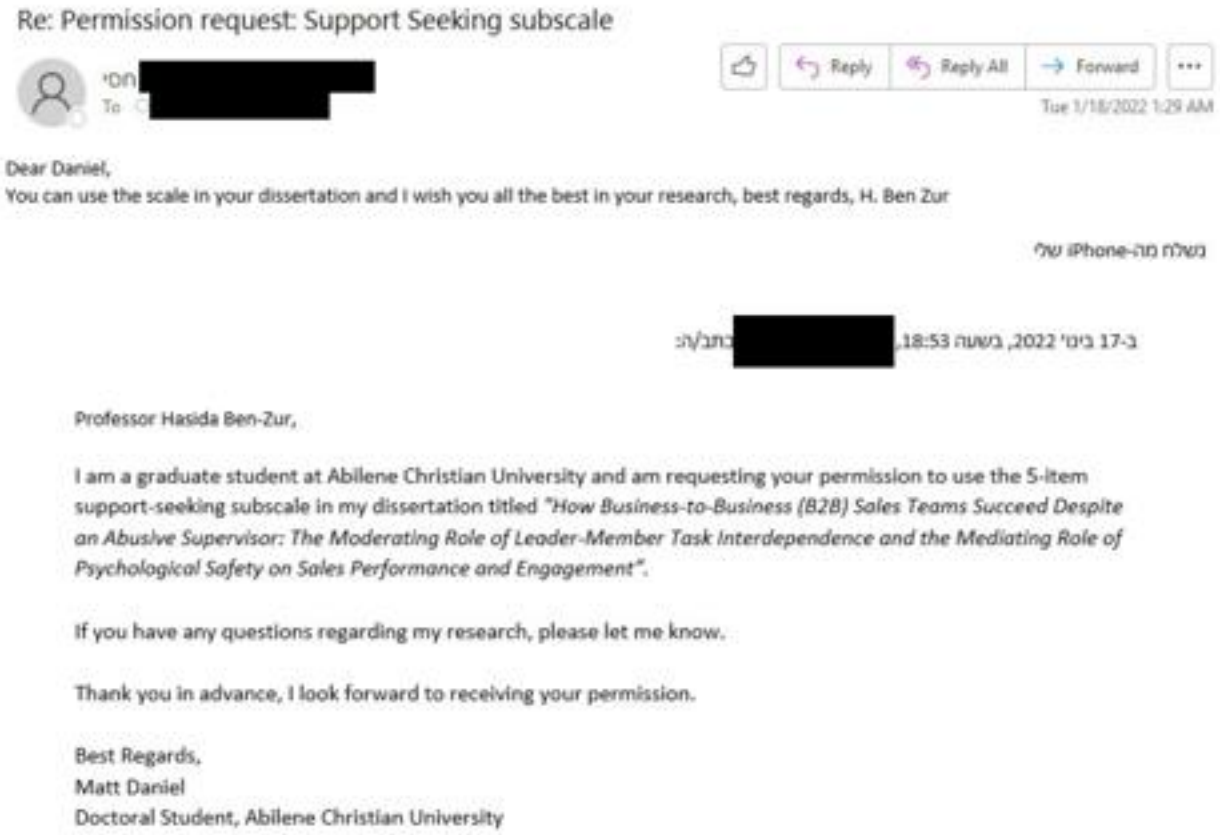
Université de Montréal
Faculté des arts et des sciences
École de **relations industrielles**

Vincent Rousseau, Ph.D.
Department Chair – School of Industrial Relations
Full Professor

School of Industrial Relations
University of Montreal
[redacted]

Email: [redacted]
Phone [redacted]

Permission to Use the Support Seeking Scale



Re: Permission request: Support Seeking subscale

[redacted]

Reply | Reply All | Forward | ...

Tue 1/18/2022 1:29 AM

Dear Daniel,
You can use the scale in your dissertation and I wish you all the best in your research, best regards, H. Ben Zur

נשלח מה-iPhone שלי

ב-17 ביוני 2022, בשעה 18:53, [redacted] כתב/ה:

Professor Hasida Ben-Zur,

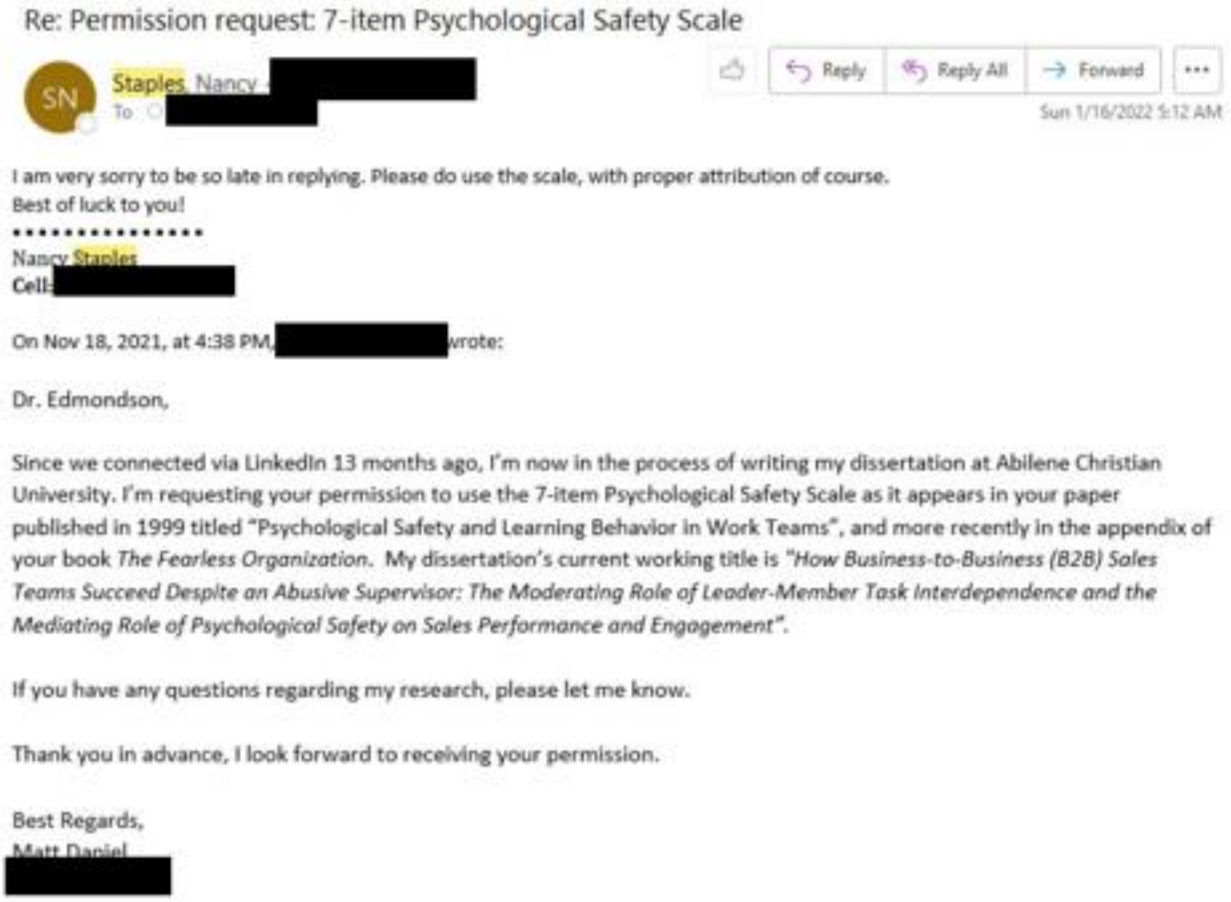
I am a graduate student at Abilene Christian University and am requesting your permission to use the 5-item support-seeking subscale in my dissertation titled *"How Business-to-Business (B2B) Sales Teams Succeed Despite an Abusive Supervisor: The Moderating Role of Leader-Member Task Interdependence and the Mediating Role of Psychological Safety on Sales Performance and Engagement"*.

If you have any questions regarding my research, please let me know.

Thank you in advance, I look forward to receiving your permission.

Best Regards,
Matt Daniel
Doctoral Student, Abilene Christian University

Permission to Use the Seven-Item Psychological Safety Scale



Re: Permission request: 7-item Psychological Safety Scale

SN Staples, Nancy [redacted]
To [redacted]

Reply | Reply All | Forward | ...
Sun 1/16/2022 5:12 AM

I am very sorry to be so late in replying. Please do use the scale, with proper attribution of course.
Best of luck to you!
****
Nancy Staples
Cell: [redacted]

On Nov 18, 2021, at 4:38 PM, [redacted] wrote:

Dr. Edmondson,

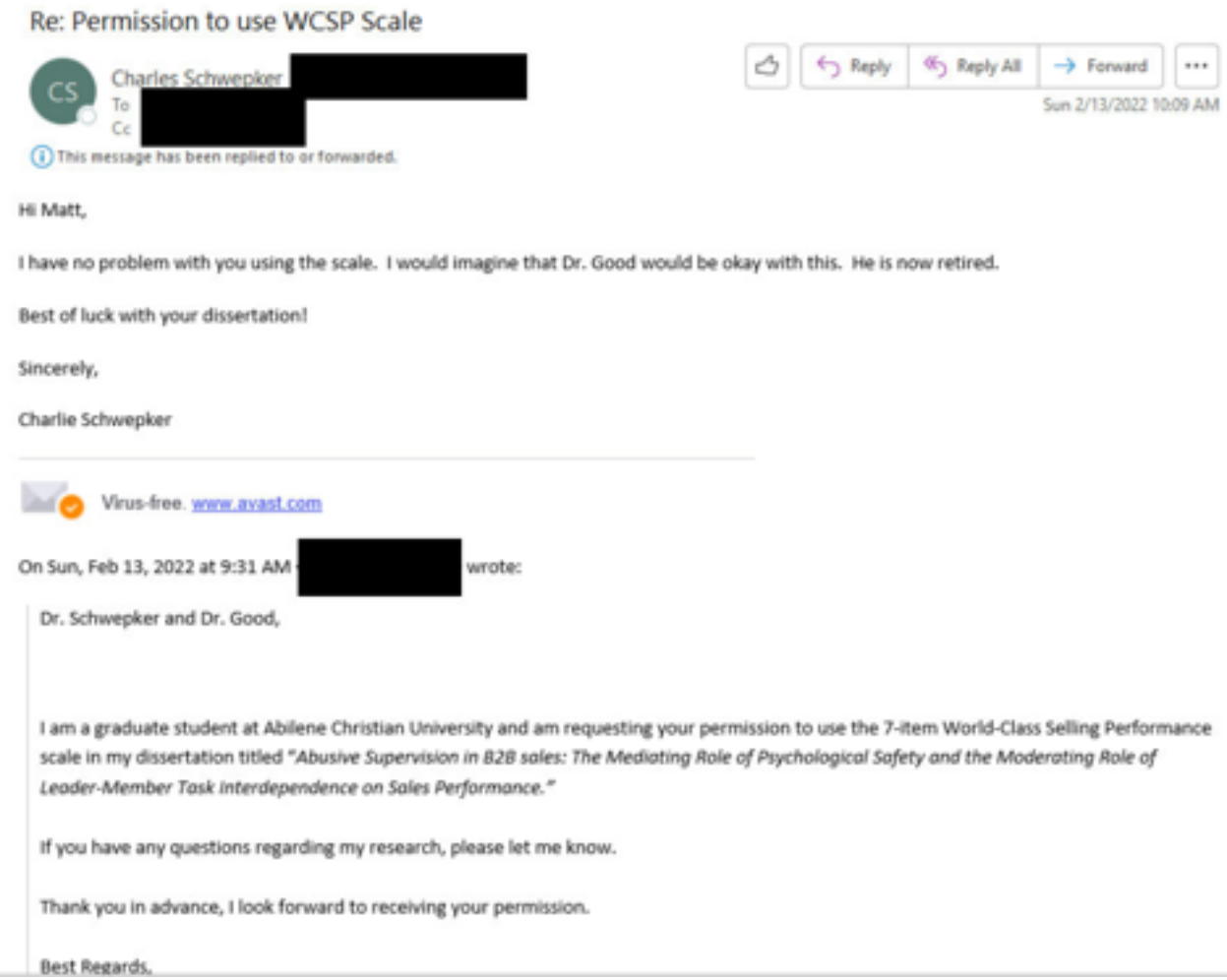
Since we connected via LinkedIn 13 months ago, I'm now in the process of writing my dissertation at Abilene Christian University. I'm requesting your permission to use the 7-item Psychological Safety Scale as it appears in your paper published in 1999 titled "Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams", and more recently in the appendix of your book *The Fearless Organization*. My dissertation's current working title is *"How Business-to-Business (B2B) Sales Teams Succeed Despite an Abusive Supervisor: The Moderating Role of Leader-Member Task Interdependence and the Mediating Role of Psychological Safety on Sales Performance and Engagement"*.

If you have any questions regarding my research, please let me know.

Thank you in advance, I look forward to receiving your permission.

Best Regards,
Matt Daniel
[redacted]

Permission to Use the Outcome Performance Scale



Re: Permission to use WCSP Scale

CS Charles Schwepker [redacted]
To [redacted]
Cc

Reply | Reply All | Forward | ...
Sun 2/13/2022 10:09 AM

This message has been replied to or forwarded.

Hi Matt,

I have no problem with you using the scale. I would imagine that Dr. Good would be okay with this. He is now retired.

Best of luck with your dissertation!

Sincerely,

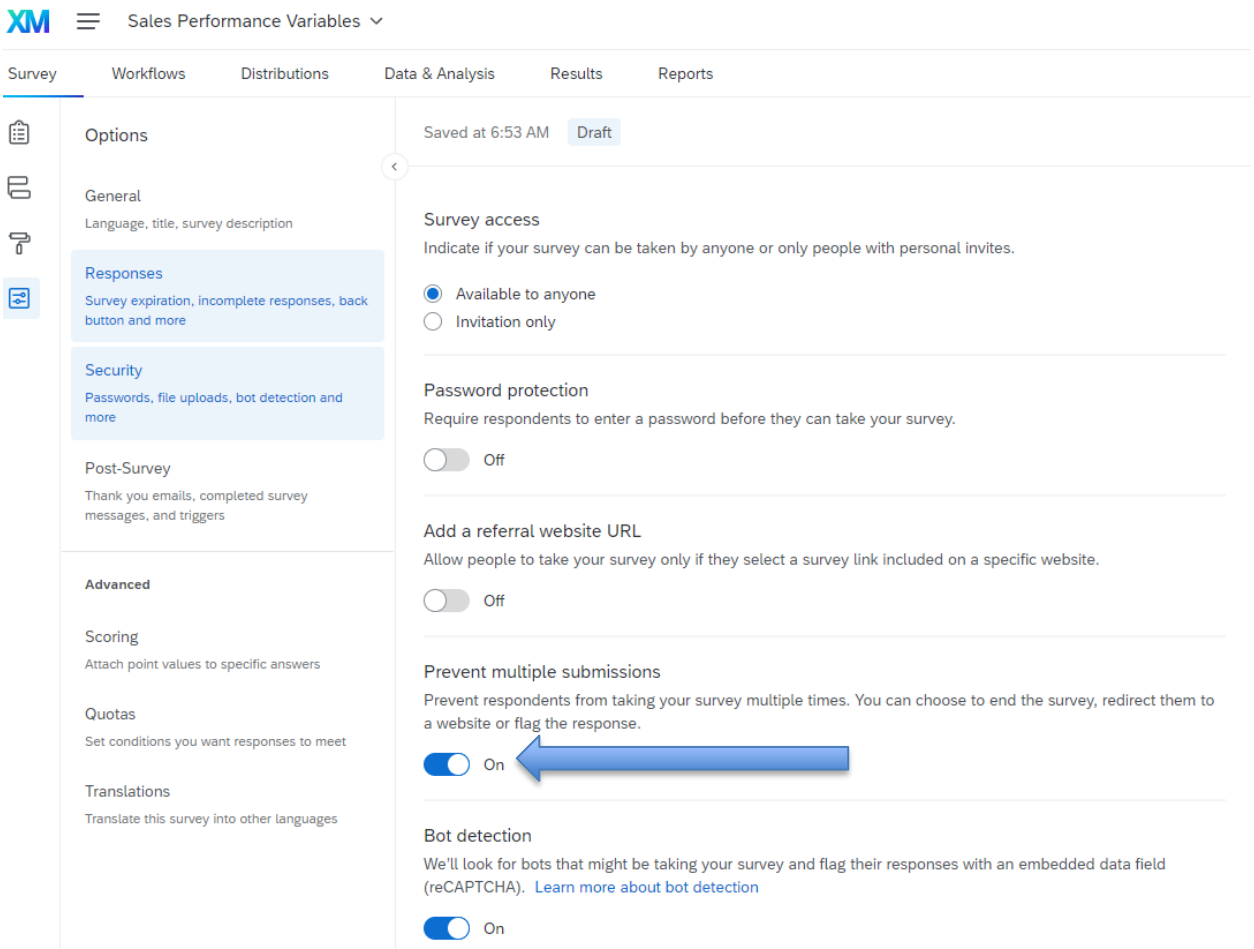
Charlie Schwepker

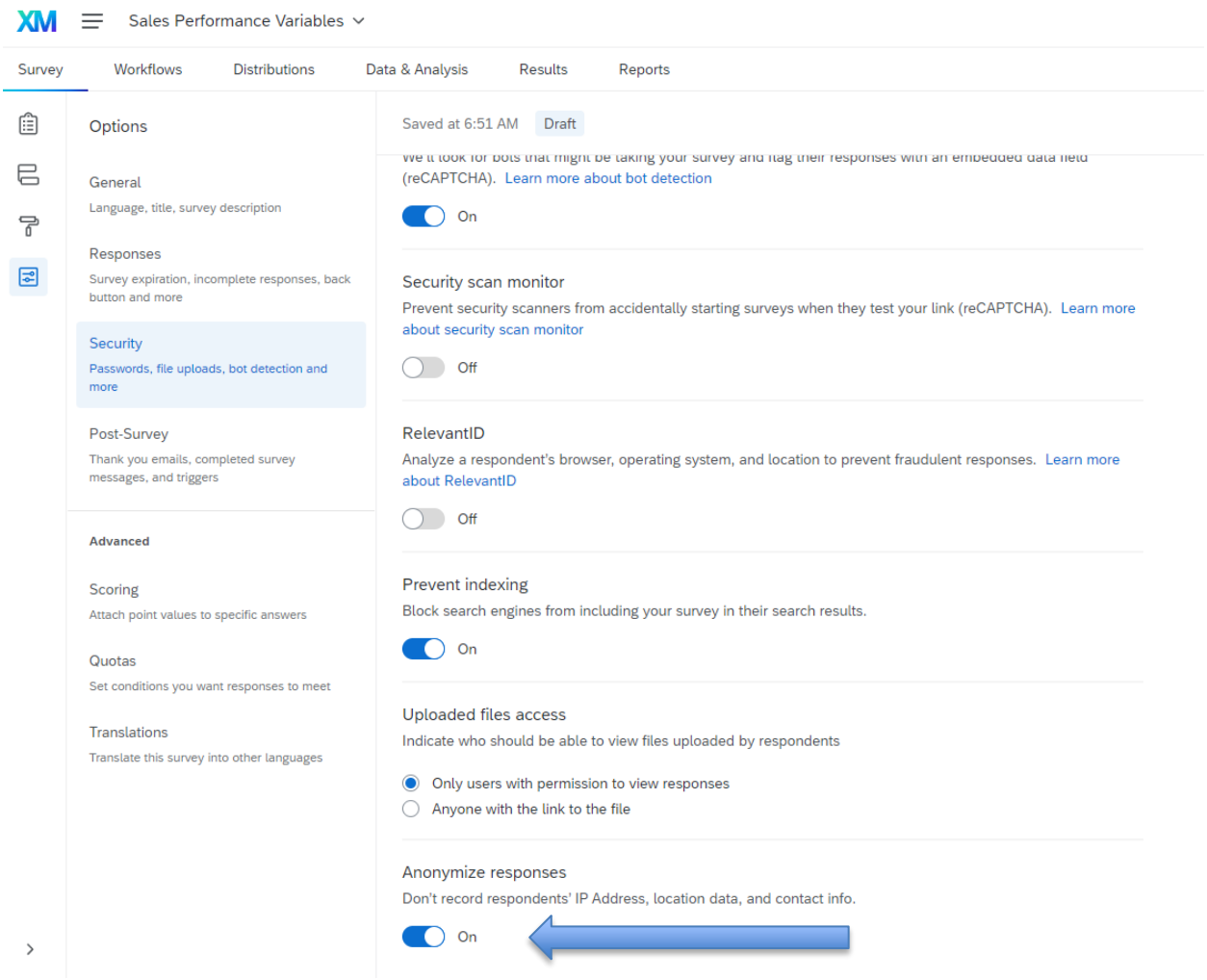
Virus-free. www.avast.com

On Sun, Feb 13, 2022 at 9:31 AM [redacted] wrote:

> Dr. Schwepker and Dr. Good,
>
> I am a graduate student at Abilene Christian University and am requesting your permission to use the 7-item World-Class Selling Performance scale in my dissertation titled "*Abusive Supervision in B2B sales: The Mediating Role of Psychological Safety and the Moderating Role of Leader-Member Task Interdependence on Sales Performance.*"
>
> If you have any questions regarding my research, please let me know.
>
> Thank you in advance, I look forward to receiving your permission.
>
> Best Regards,

Appendix G: Qualtrics Security Setting for Anonymous Response and Duplicate Response Prevention




XM
Sales Performance Variables
Survey
Workflows
Distributions
Data & Analysis
Results
Reports
Options
General
Language, title, survey description
Responses
Survey expiration, incomplete responses, back button and more
Security
Passwords, file uploads, bot detection and more
Post-Survey
Thank you emails, completed survey messages, and triggers
Advanced
Scoring
Attach point values to specific answers
Quotas
Set conditions you want responses to meet
Translations
Translate this survey into other languages
Saved at 6:51 AM
Draft
(reCAPTCHA). Learn more about bot detection
On
Security scan monitor
Prevent security scanners from accidentally starting surveys when they test your link (reCAPTCHA). Learn more about security scan monitor
Off
RelevantID
Analyze a respondent's browser, operating system, and location to prevent fraudulent responses. Learn more about RelevantID
Off
Prevent indexing
Block search engines from including your survey in their search results.
On
Uploaded files access
Indicate who should be able to view files uploaded by respondents
Only users with permission to view responses
Anyone with the link to the file
Anonymize responses
Don't record respondents' IP Address, location data, and contact info.
On

Appendix H: Average ASC, LMI, TPS, and OSP Scores by Industry

Industry	ASC	LMI	TPS	OSP	# of respondents	% of all respondents
Nonprofit	4.33	2.88	2.29	3.90	2	1%
Education	4.14	5.79	4.10	4.25	12	4%
Finance	3.31	5.47	4.20	3.94	28	9%
Health care	3.24	5.35	4.45	3.93	32	10%
Hospitality	3.09	5.92	4.67	4.37	6	2%
Telecom	3.02	5.58	4.67	4.33	6	2%
Manufacturing	2.95	5.42	4.57	4.05	46	14%
Insurance	2.87	5.14	4.69	4.11	7	2%
Technology	2.70	5.49	4.72	4.12	42	13%
Construction	2.70	4.84	5.03	4.07	25	8%
Energy	2.67	5.13	4.79	3.90	6	2%
Retail	2.51	5.38	4.82	4.04	40	13%
Media	2.37	5.13	5.04	4.20	4	1%
Transportation	2.22	5.29	5.22	4.00	7	2%
Automotive	2.21	5.39	4.79	4.24	14	4%
Professional	2.08	4.60	5.10	3.88	12	4%
Utilities	1.93	5.00	4.57	4.80	1	0%
Other	1.91	5.02	4.81	4.03	26	8%

Appendix I: IRB Exemption Letter

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
328 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29145, Abilene, Texas 79699-9145
[redacted]

June 24, 2022

Matthew J. Daniel
Department of Graduate and Professional Studies
Abilene Christian University

Dear Matt,

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

" How an Abusive Supervision Climate Impacts Business-to-Business (B2B) Sales Performance, and the Roles of Leader-Member Interdependence and Psychological Safety".

(IRB# 22-076) is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects. If at any time the details of this project change, please advise our office of the change(s) by email, so that the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work!

Sincerely,

Russell P Kruzelock

ACU Vice President of Research

Additional Approvals/Instructions:

WAIVER OF DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT, based on the following justification:

* The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects, and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

The following are all responsibilities of the Primary Investigator (PI). Violation of these responsibilities may result in suspension or termination of research by the Institutional Review Board. If the Primary Investigator is a student and fails to fulfil any of these responsibilities, the Faculty Advisor then becomes responsible for completing or upholding any and all of the following:

- If there are any changes in the research (including but not limited to change in location, members of the research team, research procedures, number of participants, target population of participants, compensation, or risk), these changes must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
- Report any protocol deviations or unanticipated problems to the IRB promptly according to IRB policy.
- Should the research continue past the expiration date, submit a Continuing Review Form, along with a copy of the current consent form and a new Signature Assurance Form approximately 30 days before the expiration date.
- When the research is completed, inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. If your study is Expedited or Full Board, submit an Inactivation Request Form and a new Signature Assurance Form. If your study is Exempt, Non-Research, or Non-Human Research, email orsp@acu.edu to indicate that the research has finished.
- According to ACU policy, research data must be stored on ACU campus (or electronically) for 3 years from inactivation of the study, in a manner that is secure but accessible should the IRB request access.
- It is the Investigator's responsibility to maintain a general environment of safety for all research participants and all members of the research team. All risks to physical, mental, and emotional well-being as well as any risks to confidentiality should be minimized.

For additional information on the policies and procedures above, please visit the IRB website
https://cdn01.acu.edu/community/offices/academic/orsp/human-research/overview.html
or email orsp@acu.edu with your questions.