Abusive supervision and employee creativity: the mediating role of passion for inventing and the moderating role of financial incentives and innovative culture

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Abstract
Based on work passion model and the substitutes for leadership perspectives, this study examines the process linking abusive supervision to employee creativity by focusing on the mediating influence of employees’ passion for inventing and the moderating influence of financial incentives and innovative culture. Data were obtained from 191 subordinates and their direct supervisor in China. We tested hypotheses using hierarchical multiple regression analyses. The results revealed that abusive supervision was negatively related to employee creativity, and employees’ passion for inventing mediated the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity. Furthermore, financial incentives weakened the negative relationship between abusive supervision and employees’ passion for inventing, while innovative culture could not change the above relationship. This study enriches the understanding of how abusive supervision is related to employee creativity by introducing the emotional mechanism and provides practical implications for reducing the harm of abusive supervision.

Keywords Abusive supervision · Creativity · Passion for inventing · Financial incentives · Innovative culture

Introduction
Creativity, as the generation of new and useful ideas for products, services, and procedures (Shalley & Gilson, 2004), is the key to achieving organizational innovation and organizational competitive advantages. Though much research in leadership has linked positive leadership, such as transformational leadership, with employee creativity (Shin & Jing, 2003), some scholars have proposed that employees are more responsive to negative than to positive leader behaviors, such as destructive leadership (Baumeister et al., 2001; Mackey et al., 2021). Abusive supervision, as a kind of destructive leadership, usually manifests hostile behaviors toward subordinates, such as public criticism, ridicule, derogating comments, loud and angry tantrums, rudeness, inconsiderate actions and coercion (Tepper, 2000). In the last decade, in response to the call for more studies about the dark side of leadership and its role in employee creativity (Liu et al., 2012; Schyns & Schilling, 2013), some scholars began to explore how abusive supervision is related to employee creativity (e.g., Akram et al., 2022; Jahanzeb et al., 2019; Shen et al., 2020a; Song et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2014), but at least two important questions remain unaddressed.

First, the understanding of the mechanisms linking abusive supervision and employee creativity ignored emotional mechanisms (Fischer et al., 2021; Han et al., 2017). Affect and emotion permeate the leadership process (Barsade & Gibson, 2007; Chiang et al., 2021; Glaso et al., 2018; Gooty et al., 2010). For example, Gooty et al. (2010) pointed out that “regardless of the leadership lens one looks through, affect and emotion are deeply intertwined with the process of leading, leader outcomes and follower outcomes” (p.979). What’s more, the work passion model suggests that affect is one of the important intervening mechanisms linking organizational context, such as leadership, with employees’ work behaviors (Zigarmi et al., 2009). And some studies have empirically found that leadership could evoke employees’
affect and emotions, which in turn influences employee creativity (e.g., Liu et al., 2011; Madjar et al., 2002; Xiao et al., 2020). In addition, research about abusive supervision has found that abusive supervisors can incur employees’ negative affect and suppress employees’ positive affect (Hoobler and Jia, 2013; Michel et al., 2016; Oh et al., 2017), and creativity research has proposed positive affect, such as passion for creative work, is the most important determinant for creativity (Amabile & Fisher, 2009). Thus, the work passion model and existing literature about abusive supervision and creativity suggest that affect, especially positive affect, may play a significant role in intervening in the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity. However, previous research has focused solely on how cognitions, motivations and behaviors mediate the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity (e.g., Jahanzeb et al., 2019; Jiang & Gu, 2016; Liu et al., 2016; Shen et al., 2020a, 2020b; Zhang et al., 2014), and has ignored the mediating effect of affect and emotion. Amabile and Fisher (2009) pointed that passion for inventing, as a positive affect for creative work, is the core drivers of employee creativity. Thus, we choose passion for inventing as a mediator linking abusive supervision and employee creativity. The current study responds to this gap by investigating whether employees’ passion for inventing, as a kind of intense positive affect toward creative work, acts as a pathway through which abusive supervision influences employee creativity.

Second, the recent literature review showed that the existing literature on abusive supervision largely missed the complementary role of organizational situations (Fischer et al., 2021). In other words, how organization-level situations augment or weaken the detrimental effect of abusive supervision remains unclear. According to the substitutes for leadership perspective developed by Kerr and Jermier (1978), leadership behaviors exist within the context of organizations, so the effectiveness of leadership may vary according to the organizational situations. Yukl (2008) further proposed that when leadership is ineffective for organizations, organizations could create alternatives to remedy the leadership ineffectiveness by modifying organizational situations. For instance, when a leader is ineffective in providing employees with cues about how to behave, organizational incentive systems and organizational culture can be a substitute for leadership by providing these behavioral cues (Chen et al., 2012; Eva et al., 2021; Hartnell et al., 2011). Based on the above-mentioned substitutes for leadership perspective and existing literature, organizational situations may act as buffers to mitigate the adverse effects of abusive supervision. However, the existing literature on the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity mainly focused on individual-level moderators, such as attribution, core self-evaluation, face and personality (Liu et al., 2012; Shen et al., 2020b; Song et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2014), and few research has explored how organization-level characteristics exert buffering effects. The lack of organizational moderators in the existing literature about abusive supervision hindered the theoretical understanding of what organizations can do to mitigate the detrimental effect of abusive supervision. In response to this gap, this study explores how organizational characteristics neutralize the negative effect of abusive supervision. Specifically, some scholars propose that organizational conditions can change a leader’s influence on employee creative behaviors by providing key resources and creating environments where employees can be motivated for creative work (Oke et al., 2009). Chen et al. (2012) proposed that financial incentives, as monetary rewards contingent on some criteria, is an important resource providing by organizations for motivating employees. And the authors also pointed that organization should creating innovative cultures to boosts employee innovative behaviors. Hence this study aims to investigate how financial incentives and innovative culture can change the negative effect of abusive supervision on employees’ passion for inventing.

Based on work passion model and the substitutes for leadership perspective, the current study aims to explore the research question: how abusive supervision influences employee creativity through the emotional mechanism (passion for inventing) and how organizational factors (financial incentives and innovative culture) change the above influencing mechanism. The theoretical model is shown in Fig. 1. This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it advances the research on abusive supervision and employee creativity by introducing an emotional mechanism. Second, the study extends the research on abusive supervision by exploring organizational moderators. Third, the study enriches the research on passion by introducing leadership as an antecedent and employee creativity as an outcome.

**Literature review and hypothesis development**

**Abusive supervision**

Abusive supervision, as a kind of destructive leadership, is defined as ‘subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to
Passion for inventing

Passion for inventing is defined as a consciously accessible intense positive affect experienced by engagement in inventing activities, such as developing new products and services, working with new prototypes, and these activities are meaningful for individuals’ inventor identity (Cardon et al., 2009, 2013). Passion for inventing has been used as an independent construct in organizational research (e.g., Huyghe et al., 2016; Kang et al., 2016; Strese et al., 2018).

Some research has explored the individual and organizational consequences of passion for inventing. For example, Cardon et al. (2009) proposed that passion for inventing could enable an individual to recognize novel patterns of information and trigger creative problem-solving. Huyghe et al. (2016) found that passion for inventing of researchers in universities could improve their entrepreneurial self-efficacy and spin-off intentions. Strese et al. (2018) found that CEO’s passion for inventing can improve organizational radical innovation. However, to date, few researches has explored the antecedents of passion for inventing, and the only exception is the research conducted by Kang and his colleagues, which found that an innovative climate can trigger employees’ passion for inventing (Kang et al., 2016).

Abusive supervision and employee creativity

According to Amabile’s great work, creativity is a complex multi-stage process, including problem identification, preparation, idea generation and validation, which requires an individual to devote a large amount of time and effort to creativity (Amabile, 1988; Amabile et al., 1996; Amabile & Pratt, 2016). What’s more, creativity is a process of generating new and novel ideas that need an individual’s creative ability, such as flexible thinking, and making unusual connections among seemingly unrelated things (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Moreover, coming up with new ideas means a departure from the status quo, so creativity is a process full of uncertainty and risk. Thus, an individual’s propensity for risk-taking is important for creativity (George & Zhou, 2007). In general, a large amount of time and effort for creative work, creative ability and risk-taking are three fundamental factors for predicting individual creativity.

Following the above logic of individual creativity, we propose that abusive supervision is detrimental to employee creativity. First, previous studies have shown that supportive evaluations from a supervisor, such as praise, can enhance employees’ intrinsic motivation, and motivate employees to devote time and effort to creative work (Amabile et al., 2004; Chen & Yao, 2011). The seminal work by Tepper (2000) pointed out that abusive supervisors often give negative and hostile evaluations to employees, such as derogating comments and blaming for incompetence, which could undermine employees’ intrinsic motivation for spending much time and effort on creative work. Second, abusive supervision is cognitively evaluated as a workplace stressor and threatening work situation (Harris et al., 2013). On one hand, employees need to consume cognitive resources to cope with the stressor from their abusive supervisor, which would deplete employees’ cognitive resources for creative work (Byron et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2019). On the other hand, when the work environment is interpreted as threatening, employees tend to use rigid thinking rather than flexible thinking, which is detrimental to the generation of new ideas (Byron et al., 2010). Third, leadership literature has shown that when a supervisor treats employees with respect and consideration, employees will be willing to accept the risk that accompanies creativity because of the psychological safety brought by the supervisor (George & Zhou, 2007; Jia et al., 2018). Abuse-related behaviors, such as rudeness, ridicule and public criticism of employees’ incompetence, make employees feel less respected and considered by...
their supervisors (Liu et al., 2016). Thus, employees would become less risk-taking and reluctant to come up with new ideas. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Abusive supervision is negatively related to employee creativity.

Abusive supervision and passion for inventing

According to Vallerand and Robert (2008), when individuals come to value a specific activity and find it meaningful to themselves, they are likely to develop a passion for the specific activity. Thus, the formulation of passion depends on the cognitive appraisal of the specific activity’s value and meaning. In addition, the employee work passion appraisal model proposed by Zigarmi et al. (2009) suggests that the formulation of employee work passion occurs through ongoing appraisals of the work environment. Specifically, when employees appraise the work environment as enhancing for competency, they would generate passion for work. What’s more, Amabile and Fisher (2009) claimed that “the passion for creativity can be stimulated by an open flow of ideas across an organization in which people feel safe to give honest, constructive feedback on someone else’s brainchild-and to fearlessly share their own” (p. 491), which shows that a safe work environment in which employees can fearlessly express their ideas is beneficial for the formation of passion for creativity. In sum, leadership, as an important aspect of employees’ work context (Egan et al., 2017), can stimulate employees’ passion for creative work by helping employees construct the meaning of creative work, developing enhancing and safe work environment for creativity.

Following the above logic about the formulation of passion for creative work, we argue that abusive supervision is detrimental to employees’ passion for inventing. First, doing creative work means a departure from the status quo, and the creative process may be full of trial and error. When an abusive supervisor criticizes employees’ trial and error in the creative process, even in public or in front of their colleagues, employees will feel no respect from their supervisor (Tepper, 2000). The disrespect from the supervisor triggers employees to evaluate their creative work as valueless and meaningless (Ghadi et al., 2013), so employees could hardly form a work passion for inventing new products and new work procedures in the organization. Second, because of the hostile intentions embedded in the abusive leader behaviors, employees are unable to obtain constructive feedbacks for creative work from the abusive supervisor (Tepper et al., 2017), which leads employees to perceive their work environment as less enhancing for their creative competency (Amabile & Pratt, 2016; Amabile et al., 2004). Thus, abusive supervisors impede employees’ generating a passion for creative work. Third, an abusive supervisor usually mocks employees by hostily evaluating them as incompetent and even evaluating employees’ ideas as silly (Tepper, 2007). The negative evaluations and negations from an abusive supervisor contribute to employees’ feelings of an unsafe work environment, which makes them have no intention of expressing and sharing their new ideas for the organization. Thus, employees can hardly form a passion for generating new ideas and developing new products. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Abusive supervision is negatively related to employees’ passion for inventing.

Passion for inventing and employee creativity

According to the definition of passion for inventing, two key aspects are covered: intense positive feelings for inventing activities and self-identity in the inventing role (Cardon et al., 2013). Based on the definition of passion for inventing and the current literature on emotion and creativity, we propose that employee creativity can be enhanced by employees’ passion for inventing. First, studies on emotion have shown that positive affect can help individuals generate novel solutions and see connections between seemingly unrelated items, implying that positive affect can improve basic cognitive processes associated with creativity (Isen, 1987; Amabile & Pratt, 2016). Thus, passion for inventing, as a positive affect on inventing activities, can help employees generate more creative ideas about products and services and propose more new working prototypes. Second, according to identity theory, specific identity can motivate individuals to act in ways that are consistent with their roles, such as participating in activities that are meaningful for their identities (Hogg & White, 1995). Cardon et al. (2013) proposed that inventor role identity could drive individuals to engage in inventing activities and devote much effort and time to these activities. Thus, the inventor role identity embedded in employees’ passion for inventing can stimulate employees to deeply engage in inventing new things, such as new products and services. Based on the above inferences, we argue that employees’ passion for inventing can help employees immerse in creative work, which can enhance the generation of creative outcomes. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Employees’ passion for inventing is positively related to employee creativity.

The mediating role of passion for inventing

Work passion model suggests that the work environment impacts employees’ affect, which in turn, shapes employees’
work-related behaviors (Zig). Leadership, as an important work context for employees, has been shown to play an important role in arousing employees’ affective reactions (Gooty et al., 2010), such as positive affect and passion (Rego et al., 2014; Xiao et al., 2020). Moreover, as with the burgeoning research about emotion in organizations, leadership research has proposed that leadership may contribute or impede employee creativity through emotional mechanisms (Madjar et al., 2002; Rego et al., 2014; Xiao et al., 2020). For example, Rego et al. (2014) found that authentic leadership can improve employees’ positive affect, which, in turn, influences employee creativity. Xiao et al. (2020) claimed that work passion can mediate the relationship between temporal leadership and employee innovative behaviors. Considering the above inferences that abusive supervision impedes employees from forming a passion for inventing work and that passion for inventing can improve employee creativity, we expect that employees’ passion for inventing plays a vital role in translating the impact of abusive supervision to employee creativity. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Employees’ passion for inventing mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity.

Moderating role of financial incentives

Financial incentives, as a kind of external incentives, is defined as monetary rewards contingent on some objective criteria and standards, such as higher performance and creativity (Grandey et al., 2013). Financial incentives have long been thought to impact employee motivation and performance (Grandey et al., 2013). The literature review about external incentives showed that financial incentives could improve intrinsic motivation, subsequent behaviors and performance when the incentives are appraised as instrumental for competence, recognition, accomplishment, appreciation, and self-importance (Cerasoli et al., 2014). Financial incentives research has primarily focused on how financial incentives affect performance, individual effort and decision making (e.g., Dan & Ziebart, 1995; Liang et al., 2018; Stajkovic & Luthans, 2001), with few studies investigating how financial incentives, as a moderator, enhance or neutralize the effects of leadership. The only exception is the study conducted by Chen et al. (2012), where they found that financial incentives could neutralize the positive effect of transformational leadership on technological innovation.

We propose that financial incentives can alter the effects of abusive supervision on employees’ passion for inventing because of its important role in improving employees’ sense of recognition and competency. Financial incentives can convey organizational signals: the organization values the contributions of employees; the organization recognizes the accomplishments of employees; and the organization rewards employees’ competency (Cerasoli et al., 2014). The organizational recognition of employees’ contribution and competency would lead employees to perceive that their creative work is valuable and meaningful. As mentioned above, an abusive supervisor suppresses employees’ passion for inventing by damaging employees’ perception of work value and meaning. Financial incentives, as organizational management tools providing recognition of employees’ competency and contribution, can lead employees to appraise their creative work (e.g., inventing new products) as valuable and meaningful, which could substitute for leadership’s role in providing employees with work meaning. In sum, financial incentives could neutralize abusive supervision’s role in damaging employees’ passion for inventing by proving work value and meaning. According to the above logic, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Financial incentives moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and employees’ passion for inventing such that the negative relationship will be weaker when financial incentives are high.

Moderating role of innovative culture

Innovative culture refers to a set of shared values, beliefs, assumptions and symbols that could facilitate the creation and development of innovation (Ali & Park, 2016). Innovative culture, as a kind of organizational culture, is embodied in almost every aspect of an organization, such as values, leader behaviors, resources, processes and climate, which values innovation, creativity, flexibility, change, risk-taking and entrepreneurship (Ahmed, 1998; Büschgens et al., 2013). With an emphasis on creativity and risk-taking, the innovative culture promotes openness to new ideas, encourages new ways of thinking, provides a high tolerance for failure and ambiguity, which creates a safe work environment within which employees are motivated to engage in the risky creative processes (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2015). According to the literature about leadership and organizational culture, leadership can create and influence organizational culture, and organizational culture, as a context for leadership, can impact leadership effectiveness (Tsui et al., 2006; Yukl, 2008). Thus, leadership can influence the innovative culture on the one hand, while the innovative culture can influence the effectiveness of leader behaviors on the other. However, the existing literature about leadership and innovative culture mainly focused on how leaders foster and create an innovative culture, such as what kinds of leadership styles and leader’s characteristics are beneficial for innovative culture (e.g., Sattayaraksa and Boon-itt, 2016; Berson et al., 2008), few studies explored whether innovative culture can
enhance or neutralize the effect of leadership, especially the
detrimental effect of abusive supervision.

We propose that innovative culture could neutralize the
detrimental effect of abusive supervision on employees’ pas-
sion for inventing because of its role in providing a safe work
environment for creativity. As mentioned above, innovative
culture is characterized by openness to new ideas, encour-
ging new ways of thinking, and providing tolerance for failure (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2015). Amabile and Fisher (2009) pro-
posed that passion for developing new products and services
can be stimulated by a safe work environment within which employees can fearlessly express their new ideas and freely
share their ideas. Though abusive leader behaviors, such as
evaluating employees’ ideas as silly and criticizing employ-
ees in public places, create an unsafe work environment for
free idea expression and exchange, innovative culture can
substitute for the leader’s role in providing a safe work envi-
ronment for creativity. In other word, innovative culture can
act as “substitutes for leadership” (Guerrero et al., 2018;
Kerr & Jermier, 1978), which tends to negate the abusive
supervisor’s ability to impair employees’ passion for invent-
ing. According to the above logic, we propose the following
hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: Innovative culture moderates the relation-
ship between abusive supervision and employees’ passion
for inventing such that the negative relationship will be
weaker when innovative culture is high.

Methods

Sample and procedure

The participants in this study were 191 employees and their
direct supervisors in enterprises located in eastern China.
According to previous studies, employees in enterprises that
require their ability to demonstrate creativity and innovation
in some way are the targeted population for employee crea-
tivity research (Han et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2014). Thus,
employees in innovative enterprises that emphasize and
rely more on employees’ creative processing and creative
ideas are chosen as respondents in this study. To get inform-
ation about innovative enterprises, we collaborated with
the local Economic and Information Committee (EIC) to
conduct this survey. EIC, as an administrative department, is
responsible for establishing policies to stimulate innovation
in enterprises, providing support for industry collaboration
and technological cooperation among enterprises, univer-
sities and research institutes. So EIC keeps close contact
with enterprises and has a deep understanding of innovative
enterprises in the local area. First, EIC announced to the
innovative enterprises the aim of this research and claimed
that it was voluntary to participate in this study, and 235
innovative enterprises agreed to participate in our study.
Then, according to the contact information provided by EIC,
we invited the innovative enterprises to randomly select one
subordinates and his immediate supervisor, which means
every firm only chooses one subordinate and one supervisor.
Next, separated questionnaires were delivered to the sub-
ordinate and his/her immediate supervisor. Subordinates
were requested to evaluate abusive supervision, passion
for inventing, financial incentives and innovative culture,
while supervisors were required to evaluate the creativity
of their subordinate. Finally, 205 matched questionnaires
were returned. After excluding incomplete questionnaires,
the final sample for this study consisted of 191 subordinates
and 191 supervisors, and one supervisor is corresponding to
one subordinate. The demographic profile of the 191 partici-
ants is shown in Table 1.

Measures

All the measures were based on previous research to ensure
the validity of constructs. All items, except for items of
control variables, used five-pointed scales ranging from 1
(strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). And Table 2 show
the definition of all variables.

Abusive supervision was measured with a 5-item scale
developed by Mitchell and Ambrose (2007). The five-item
scale was adapted from Tepper (2000), and its validity and
reliability have been demonstrated (Jiang & Gu, 2016; Liu
et al., 2016). The five items are as follows: My supervisor
tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid; My supervisor
ridicules me; My supervisor puts me down in front of oth-
ers; My supervisor makes negative comments about me to
others; my supervisor tells me I’m incompetent.

Table 1 Descriptive information on respondents (N=191)

| Item                  | Category            | No. in sample | % of sample | Percentage |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------|------------|
| Gender                | Male                | 169           | 88.5%       |            |
|                       | Female              | 22            | 11.5%       |            |
| Education             | High School or below| 7             | 3.7%        |            |
|                       | Associate degree    | 86            | 45.0%       |            |
|                       | Bachelor degree     | 89            | 46.6%       |            |
|                       | Master degree or above | 9         | 4.7%        |            |
| Age                   | Below 30 years      | 28            | 14.7%       |            |
|                       | 31–35               | 46            | 24.1%       |            |
|                       | 36–40               | 61            | 31.9%       |            |
|                       | Above 40            | 56            | 29.3%       |            |
| Tenure                | 5 years or below    | 63            | 33.0%       |            |
|                       | 5–8 years           | 88            | 46.1%       |            |
|                       | Above 8 years       | 40            | 20.9%       |            |
Passion for inventing was assessed with a 3-item scale adapted from Cardon et al. (2013). The three items are as follows: Searching for new ideas for products/services to offer is enjoyable to me; I am motivated to figure out how to make existing products/services better; Inventing new solutions to problems is an important part of who I am.

Creativity was assessed with a 4-item scale derived from Baer and Oldham (2006). The items are as follows: Suggests many creative ideas that might improve working conditions at [organization]; Often come up with creative solutions to problems at work; suggests new ways of performing work tasks; Is a good source of creative ideas.

Financial incentives were measured with two items derived from Sun et al. (2007). The items are as follows: Individuals in this job receive bonuses based on the profit of the organization; Close tie or matching of pay to individual/group performance.

Innovative culture was assessed with 4-item scale derived from Deshpandé et al. (1993). The items are as follows: My organization is a very dynamic and entrepreneurial place. People are willing to stick their necks and take risks; The head of my organization is generally considered to be an entrepreneur, an innovator, or a risk taker; The glue that holds my organization together is a commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being first; My organization emphasizes growth and acquiring new resources. Readiness to meet new challenges if important.

Control Variables. Employee demographics, including gender, education, age and tenure were controlled in this study, because previous studies showed that these variables play an important role in employee creativity (George & Zhou, 2002; Song et al., 2016).

Assessment of measures

Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability are used to test the variables’ reliability. As shown in Table 3, the values of Cronbach's alpha range from 0.67 to 0.96, all above the benchmark value of 0.60. Composite reliability ranges from 0.86 to 0.97, all being greater than 0.70. Then, we tested convergent validity through the average variance extracted (AVE) and the loading of items. The AVE scores range from 0.75 to 0.87 and above the benchmark value of 0.50, and the loadings of all items range from 0.83 to 0.97. The results indicate that the measurement has adequate convergent validity.

We assessed discriminant validity by comparing the relationship between the square roots of the AVEs for all constructs and the correlations between constructs. As shown in Table 4, the smallest value of AVE (0.75) is greater than the largest value of correlations between constructs (0.56), which indicates our measurement has satisfactory discriminant validity. Additionally, we performed a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to assess the discriminant validity. The results of CFA shown in Table 4 also demonstrated that our measurement has good discriminant validity.

Common method bias

Common method variance (CMV), arising from having a common rater, is a potential threat to the validity of research (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This study used procedural method to minimize CMV and employed statistical techniques to evaluate CMV’s magnitude. First, we chose different raters to assess variables. Specifically, we asked employees to assess abusive supervision, passion for inventing, financial incentives and innovative culture, and their direct supervisors assessing employee creativity. Second, by using...
Harman’s one-factor test, we checked the potential CMV. The result showed four factors with eigenvalues greater than one account for 75.75% of the total variance, and the first factor only accounts for 21.94% of the variance. Therefore, CMV was not a serious problem in our survey.

### Results

#### Descriptive statistics

Table 5 shows all the variables’ mean, standard deviation and correlations. As shown in Table 5, abusive supervision was negatively correlated with passion for inventing ($r = -0.31$, $p < 0.01$), and creativity ($r = -0.31$, $p < 0.01$). What’s more, passion for inventing was positively correlated with creativity ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$).

#### Hypotheses testing

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were used to test our hypotheses. Following Baron and Kenny (1986), three hierarchical regressions were conducted to test the mediating mechanism. Specifically, control variables and abusive supervision were first regressed to passion for inventing. Second, control variables and abusive supervision were regressed to creativity. Third, passion for inventing was entered.

As shown in Table 6, abusive supervision was negatively related to passion for inventing ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.001$, Model 2) and creativity ($\beta = -0.30$, $p < 0.001$, Model 4). So, H1 and H2 are supported. When passion for inventing was entered, passion for inventing was positively related to creativity ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$, Model 5). So H3 is supported. In addition, when passion for inventing was entered, the relationship between abusive supervision and creativity became less significant ($\beta = -0.15$, $p < 0.05$, Model 5). The results showed that passion for inventing partially mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and creativity, so H4 is supported.

In addition, following the work of Preacher and Hayes (2008), we adopted the bootstrapping procedure to further test H4. As shown in Table 7, the indirect effect of abusive supervision on creativity via passion for inventing is negative and significant (indirect effect = -0.11, 95 percentage CI = -0.15 to -0.06), which excluded zero. So, H4 is supported.

Table 8 shows the results of the moderated regression analysis. In model 1, control variables were regressed to passion for inventing. In model 2, we entered abusive supervision. In model 3, we entered financial incentives. In model 4, we entered the interaction between abusive supervision and financial incentives. The results show that financial incentives positively moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and passion for inventing ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.05$). So, H5 is supported. In model 5, control variables, abusive supervision and innovative culture were regressed to passion for inventing. In model 6, the interaction between abusive supervision and innovative culture was entered. The results show that innovative culture has no significant

### Table 4 Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA)

| Models            | $\chi^2$ | df  | CFI  | TLI  | RMSEA |
|-------------------|---------|-----|------|------|-------|
| Five-factor model | 257.90  | 125 | 0.96 | 0.95 | 0.08  |
| Four-factor model | 614.05  | 129 | 0.84 | 0.81 | 0.14  |
| Three-factor model| 741.47  | 132 | 0.79 | 0.76 | 0.16  |
| Two-factor model  | 1209.18 | 134 | 0.64 | 0.58 | 0.21  |
| One-factor model  | 1983.22 | 135 | 0.37 | 0.29 | 0.27  |

Five-factor model (abusive supervision, passion for inventing, financial incentives, innovative culture, and creativity); four-factor model with one factor collapsing abusive supervision and passion for inventing; three-factor model with one factor collapsing abusive supervision, passion for inventing and financial incentives; two-factor model with one factor collapsing all independent variables, mediators and moderators; one-factor model with all variables loaded on a single factor

### Table 5 Means, standard deviations and correlations

| Variables                  | Mean | SD  | 1   | 2   | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    | 8    | 9    |
|----------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1. Gender                  | 0.88 | 0.32|     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 2. Education               | 2.52 | 0.65| 0.12|     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 3. Age                     | 37.49| 6.53| 0.07| -0.11|      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 4. Tenure                  | 6.65 | 2.76| 0.05| -0.16*| 0.53**|      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 5. Abusive supervision     | 1.86 | 0.75| -0.02| 0.05| 0.08 | 0.04 | 0.87 |      |      |      |      |
| 6. Passion for Inventing   | 4.40 | 0.50| -0.10| 0.06| -0.06| -0.10| -0.31**| 0.82 |      |      |      |
| 7. Financial Incentives    | 4.10 | 0.61| -0.06| -0.08| -0.11| -0.11| -0.19**| 0.23**| 0.75 |      |      |
| 8. Innovative culture      | 4.29 | 0.59| -0.02| -0.05| -0.03| 0.08 | -0.19**| 0.39**| 0.56**| 0.76 |      |
| 9. Creativity              | 4.33 | 0.55| -0.17| -0.03| -0.10| 0.02 | -0.31**| 0.52**| 0.28**| 0.47**| 0.81 |

$N = 191$. *$P < 0.05$, **$P < 0.01$; the numbers in bold font are the square roots of AVEs

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moderating effect on the relationship between abusive supervision and passion for inventing ($\beta = 0.01$, ns). So H6 is not supported. To test the robustness of the moderating effect, we entered both financial incentives and innovative culture in model 7, and then entered the two interactions (abusive supervision *financial incentives and abusive supervision* innovative culture) in model 8. The results show that financial incentives have a positive moderating effect on the relationship between abusive supervision and passion for inventing ($\beta = 0.21, p < 0.01$), while innovative culture has
no significant moderating effect on the above relationship ($\beta = -0.11$, ns). The robustness analysis further supports H5 and does not support H6.

To further facilitate interpreting the moderating mechanism of financial incentives, we plotted the interaction effects in Fig. 2. As shown in Fig. 2, abusive supervision has a significant negative relationship with passion for inventing when financial incentives are low. However, when financial incentives are high, the negative relationship between abusive supervision and passion for inventing becomes less significant. Thus, H5 is supported.

Discussion

Based on work passion model and the substitutes for leadership perspective, this study developed an integrated conceptual model to examine how abusive supervision influences employee creativity through employees’ passion for inventing and how financial incentives and innovative culture change the above influencing mechanism. We found that abusive supervision was negatively related to employee creativity. This finding was consistent with the existing research about the negative relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity (Jahanzeb et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2012; Song et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2014). We also found that employees’ passion for inventing could mediate the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity. This finding was consistent with the existing research conducted by Xiao et al. (2020), which found harmonious passion can mediate the relationship between leadership and employee innovative behaviors. Further, we found that financial incentives could attenuate the negative effect of abusive supervision on employees’ passion for inventing. And this finding is consistent with prior research that found financial incentives can improve motivation (Cerasoli et al., 2014). However, in contrast to our prediction, the results indicated that innovative culture cannot mitigate the detrimental effect of abusive supervision on employees’ passion for inventing.

The reason why innovative culture could not play a moderating role in the relationship between abusive supervision and employees’ passion for inventing may be the intensity of culture. According to Ahmed (1998), strong cultures exert great control over employees’ beliefs and behaviors, while weak cultures exert a weak and even no effect on employees. When a culture is not pervasive in the organization, the culture can be defined as a weak culture. Thus, under conditions that top managers create and promote a culture in organization level, while the subcultures of a department or group do not accept the culture, the culture at the organizational level is a weak culture (Ahmed, 1998). Consistent with the above argument, Chen et al. (2012) proposed that subcultures in business units (e.g., group culture and department culture) are stronger than the main culture in the organization level, so subcultures can exert more influence on employees than organizational culture. According to the above logic, the innovative culture in the organizational level may be perceived as weak by employees who are experiencing abusive leadership behaviors. And the abusive culture existing in the group or department level that is created by abusive supervisors is a strong culture for employees. Thus, innovation culture at the organizational level, in fact, cannot provide a safe environment for employees. According to the above logic, an abusive supervisor damages employees’ perception of safe environment for creative activities, so employee can hardly form a work passion for inventing. Hence, when innovative culture cannot provide employees with safe work environment for creativity, innovative culture cannot change the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity.

Theoretical implications

This study has several theoretical implications. First, it advances the research on abusive supervision and employee creativity. Although the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity has received attention in the recent decade (Liu et al., 2012), the results are inconsistent that some research found negative relationships (e.g., Liu et al., 2012; Song et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2014) and one research found an inverted U-shaped relationship (Lee et al., 2013). This study provides new evidence to validate the negative relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity. Furthermore, this study supplements new theoretical perspectives for abusive supervision by introducing an emotional mechanism. With the burgeoning of emotion research in organizational behaviors (Barsade & Gibson, 2007), emotion has been introduced into leadership research and many scholars have found emotion permeates the leadership process (Gooty et al., 2010; Velez & Neves,
2018), including the abusive leadership process (Jain et al., 2021). For example, both Michel et al. (2016) and Li et al. (2021) found that the experience of abusive supervision is linked to employees’ affect (e.g., anger, fear) and subsequent work deviance. What’s more, scholars in creativity research have proposed that affect and emotion play an important role in generating creativity (Baas et al., 2008; George & Zhou, 2002), and Amabile and Fisher (2009) further proposed that individuals’ passion for work, as a kind of intense positive affect for work, can fuel individuals’ creativity. The above literature indicates that affect (e.g., passion) may be a mediating mechanism linking abusive supervision and employee creativity. However, the existing literature about abusive supervision and employee creativity mainly focused on contextual, motivational, and behavioral mediators, such as psychological safety, organizational identification, intrinsic motivation, and knowledge hiding (Jahanzeb et al., 2019; Jiang & Gu, 2016; Liu et al., 2016; Shen et al., 2020a, 2020b; Zhang et al., 2014), and few empirically addressed how abusive supervision affect employee creativity through the emotional process. Thus, the current study enriches the literature about abusive supervision and employee creativity by introducing passion for inventing as a mediator.

Second, this study extends the research on abusive supervision by exploring the organizational moderators. Abusive supervision is detrimental to many organizational outcomes, such as damaging employee creativity, reducing employee intrinsic motivation, increasing workplace deviance. So many scholars try to find ways to attenuate the negative influence of abusive supervision by exploring situational conditions (Martinko et al., 2013; Tepper et al., 2017; Fischer et al., 2021). According to the substitutes for leadership perspectives, individual characteristics, tasks, and organizational variables can act as moderators to change the effectiveness of leadership. However, the recent literature review about abusive supervision showed that most research explored how employee and leader factors, job characteristics and team factors accentuate or attenuate the effect of abusive supervision (Fischer et al., 2021), few researches explored the organizational moderators. The absence of organizational moderators in abusive supervision limits our understanding of what organizations can do to buffer the detrimental effect of abusive supervision (Harris et al., 2013). Thus, the current study enriches the abusive supervision literature by exploring organizational incentives and culture, specifically financial incentives and innovative culture, as moderators for the relationship between abusive supervision and passion for inventing, which helps academics understand that financial incentives can attenuate the detrimental effect of abusive supervision on passion for inventing, while innovative culture cannot change the above negative effect.

Third, this study enriches passion research by introducing leadership as an antecedent of passion for inventing. Though passion has been a hot topic in organizational research, the research exploring the antecedents of passion, especially specific work passions, such as passion for creative work, is limited (Newman et al., 2021; Pollack et al., 2020). Scholars have called for more studies to explore the formulation of passion (Egan et al., 2017; Vallerand et al., 2014). For example, Egan et al. (2017) indicated that “understanding the formulation of employee work passion, that is, the psychological processes that are experienced by employees when they become passionate (or dispassionate) about their work activities, is in its nascent stage of development” (p.396). And Egan et al. (2017) further proposed that limited research has been conducted on the role of leadership behaviors in encouraging or discouraging employee work passion, and how such a process occur remains unanswered. Until now, only one research has responds to this call by investigating how temporal leadership affect employees’ work passion (Xiao et al., 2020). Thus, this study contributes to passion research by investigating how abusive supervision impacts employees’ passion for inventing.

Forth, this study expands on creativity research by looking into the relationship between employees’ passion for inventing and employee creativity. Creativity is an emotionally charged event because the creative cognitive processes are shaped by emotional experience (Amabile et al., 2005; Isen et al., 1987). Scholars have proposed that positive affective states can help individuals broaden their perception of information, generate more novel solutions and see more interconnectedness among items (Baas et al., 2008; Ma et al., 2017). Passion, as a type of intensively positive affect, has received burgeoning attention from management scholars in the last decade, and scholars proposed that there is an urgent scholarly attention for the role of passion in creativity (Chen et al., 2015). Thus, by empirically exploring the relationship between employees’ passion for inventing and employee creativity, this study enriches the research on creativity.

**Practical implications**

This study has several practical implications. First, this study found that abusive supervision can exert a negative effect on employee creativity and employees’ passion for inventing, which suggests that organizations should recognize the detrimental effect of abusive supervision. Organizations can reduce the abusive supervisor behaviors through a series of human resource management processes. At the stage of selecting supervisors, organizations should employ some effective measurement tools, such as psychological test and leaderless group discussions, to judge whether an individual has abusive propensity. An individual with a high proclivity for abuse may be not a good candidate for supervisor. Then, at the stage of training, such as leadership
development programs, organizations can announce the low
tolerance for abusive supervisor behaviors and stress that the
high accepted and favorite leader behaviors are providing
support and concern for subordinates. At the stage of perfor-
mance evaluation for supervisors, abusive behavior toward
subordinates should be a part of the performance evaluation.
Meanwhile, performance evaluation for supervisors should
include the voice and assessment of subordinates. If some
supervisors do indeed have abusive behaviors toward sub-
ordinates, they should be provided with some appropriate
behavioral interventions, such as leadership development
programs that aim to increase leaders’ skills to communicate
and motivate employees. In addition, the covid-19 pandemic,
as a global health crisis, has caused economic downturn and
eroded profitability and survival of firms. During times
of covid-19 pandemic, leaders experienced more stresses
(Caringal-Go et al., 2021). Previous studies have showed
that work stress can induced more abusive behaviors toward
subordinates (Zhang et al., 2015). Thus, the work stress
caused by covid-19 pandemic would increase the frequency
of abusive behaviors of leaders. Under this condition, leader-
ship development programs are needed for leaders to
improve their ability of crisis management, which is helpful
to reduce leaders’ work stress and abusive behaviors.
Second, this study indicates a positive relationship
between employees’ passion for inventing and their crea-
tivity. Thus, enhancing employees’ passion for inventing is
helpful for improving employee creativity. Though very little
research has explored the antecedents of passion for invent-
ing, we can employ the methods of improving work passion
as a reference for enhancing passion for inventing, such as
providing work meaning and a supportive work environment
(Zigarmi et al., 2009; Amabile & Fisher, 2009). Specifically,
in the culture dimension, organizations should establish a
strong innovative culture permeating both organizational
level and group level and encourage creative behaviors,
which could help employees recognize that creative behav-
iors are meaningful. In the resource dimension, organiza-
tions should provide enough support for employees’ crea-
tive behavior, such as a free communication platform, timely
feedbacks and training programs for creativity.
Third, this study found that financial incentives could
attenuate the detrimental effect of abusive supervision. Thus,
when abusive supervisor cannot provide enough support
for employees’ passion for inventing, organizations should
provide resources, such as financial resources, to substitute
abusive supervisor’s ineffectiveness in stimulating employ-
es’ passion for inventing. In addition, many industries have
been affected by covid-19 pandemic, and the incomes of
employees have been reduced, especially for the employees
in tourism industry and other service industry (Shin et al.,
2022). Thus, under pandemic, providing financial incentives
is more important to attenuate the negative effect of abusive
supervision. what’s more, this study found that though an
innovative culture at the organizational level can improve
employees’ passion for inventing, it cannot weaken the neg-
ative effect of abusive supervision on employees’ passion
for inventing. The result indicates that only by establish-
ing an innovative culture at the organization level cannot
mitigate the harm caused by abusive supervision. Therefore,
organizations should, on one hand, employ some appropriate
behavioral interventions to reduce abusive leader behaviors,
and on the other hand, establish strong innovative culture
with high pervasiveness and prevalence among all levels of
leaders and employees (Ahmed, 1998).

Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations. First of all, though cou-
pled with the work passion model, a causal direction from
abusive supervision to employee creativity can be suggested.
Given the cross-sectional nature of the study, causal infer-
ences cannot be supported. One can argue that low employee
creativity evokes leaders’ abusive behaviors. Thus, future
research should employ longitudinal designs or experiments
to investigate the relationship.
Second, this study only examines employees’ passion
for inventing as a mediator. The existing abusive supervi-
sion literature has explored many mediators such as justice
perception, social exchange, perceived organizational sup-
pport and work stress (Tepper, 2000; Peng et al., 2014; Tepp-
er et al., 2017; Mackey et al., 2017). Tepper et al. (2017)
suggest that the relationship between abusive supervision
and its distal outcomes is complex and many mediating
mechanisms may exist at the same time, and Tepper and his
colleagues call for more studies to explore multiple media-
tors in a single model to check which mechanism has more
explanatory power. Mackey et al. (2017) also propose that
different mechanisms provide explanations for the negative
effects of abusive supervision, and “identifying the primary
mechanism underlying the abusive supervision—employees’
performance relationships offers insights about how to man-
age the consequences of abusive supervision” (p.3). Thus,
future research should include multi mediators, including
cognition (e.g., justice perception), relationship (e.g., social
exchange), and emotion (e.g., negative affect) in a signal
model to link abusive supervision and employee creativity.
Third, according to the existing literature about abusive
supervision, some negative affect, such as anger and anxiety
are the direct emotional reactions to abusive behaviors (Li
et al., 2022; Mawritz et al., 2014; Michel et al., 2016). Anger
and anxiety, as the primary emotions, may exert a negative
effect on passion for inventing. Thus, future research should
explore whether abusive supervision firstly incur negative
affect (e.g., anger and anxiety), which in turn affect work
passion. What’ more, negative affect can be beneficial for
creativity under some circumstances (George & Zhou, 2002), so, future research could explore whether negative affect can mediate the relationship between abusive supervision and employee creativity.

Fourth, this study only explored how organizational variables affect the relationship between abusive supervision and passion for inventing. According to the substitutes for leadership theory, substitutes’ characteristics (e.g., emotional stability, negative reciprocity belief and attribution), and task/team characteristics (e.g. meaning of work, job autonomy, team member support and team climate) (Fischer et al., 2021) may change the relationship between abusive supervision and employees’ emotion. Thus, future research could explore more individual and task/team-level moderators in the emotional influencing mechanism of abusive supervision.

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Data availability The datasets analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in line with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the declarations of Helsinki.

Informed consent Informed consent was obtained from all the participants that were included in the study.

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