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Interpersonal Mistreatment, Organizational Attitudes and Well-Being: The Impact of Instigator's Hierarchical Position and Demographic Characteristics

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ABSTRACT

Identifying the consequences of interpersonal mistreatment on the targets' organizational attitudes and well-being is key to promoting a healthy organizational culture. Across two experiments, we explored the impact of an instigator's hierarchical position and demographic characteristic on the targets' organizational attitudes and situational well-being. In the first experiment, respondents were presented with a vignette describing an interpersonal mistreatment scenario in which an instigator's hierarchical position and gender had been manipulated. As hypothesized, interpersonal mistreatment conducted by a supervisor significantly decreased the targets' organizational commitment and increased turnover intentions. Also, higher turnover intentions and more positive emotions were experienced by those mistreated by a male instigator. In the second experiment, we aimed to replicate these findings, adding an age condition. Consistent with the first experiment, the instigator's hierarchical position shaped the respondents' organizational attitudes. Interaction effects revealed that interpersonal mistreatment by an older male instigator decreased the targets' positive emotions significantly.

KEYWORDS

Affective well-being; conflict; interpersonal mistreatment; organizational commitment; turnover intention

Investigating those workplace behaviors that could deteriorate employees' performance and well-being is a primary concern in the organizational field (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Destructive types of behaviors such as abusive supervision, bullying, harassment, mobbing, and aggression, summarized as interpersonal mistreatment within the organization, could result in various negative consequences for employees, as they report, for example, lower commitment, higher turnover intentions, more psychological distress, less job and family satisfaction, and a decrease in performance (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Gabler, Nagy, & Hill, 2014; Schat & Frone, 2011; Tepper, Moss, Lockhart, & Carr, 2007). Despite abundant theoretical and empirical research on interpersonal mistreatment, more studies investigating the consequences of such mistreatment on the targets' organizational attitudes and well-being are still critically needed. Primarily, in the Martinko, Harvey, Brees, and Mackey (2013) review on abusive supervision, the authors questioned the validation issues of past studies, as no convincing causal explanation could be derived yet. Therefore, they

suggested a thorough study that focused on laboratory work, which the present study aims to address. As the impact of destructive workplace behaviors by various instigators and not just authority figures was investigated, the more general term "mistreatment" is used herein.

In a related but largely separate field of literature, research in the area of gender shows that such escalation of mistreatment would aggravate both parties (an instigator and a target) when gender bias and negative stereotypes were formed (Rahim, 1986). Certainly, gender plays a critical role as the workplace becomes increasingly diverse. A report from Grant Thornton International Business Report (2012) states that in 2010, 52% of women were in the labor force (United Nations New York, 2010), with an increase of 1% of women in senior management from 2011 to 2012. In line with the diversity issue, younger supervisor–older subordinate dyads are also becoming more common in organizations as more attention is being given to different types of management skills, such as creativity and the ability to handle new challenges successfully (Ray &

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The research was conducted during the completion of the main author's doctoral studies in Germany. The author would also like to thank Cosmina Piciu for assistance with data collection that greatly improved the study.

Myers, 1988). This is mainly seen as a result of Baby Boomers holding off retirement in response to intense global competition and financial incentives, an increase in life expectancy and better health, rising education levels, and a growing number of white-collar jobs that do not require physical strength (Munnell, 2011). Growing workforce diversity can cause interpersonal mistreatment conducted by an older or younger, male or female instigator. Hence, it is crucial for top management to tackle the cause and understand the adverse effects of interpersonal mistreatment on their employees (Holt & DeVore, 2005).

The current research contributes to the literature by adding knowledge to the investigation of the consequences of mistreatment on a conceptual level, and by overcoming shortcomings on a methodological level. In particular, the focus is twofold: (a) The first focus is on producing additional and consistent evidence of the consequences of interpersonal mistreatment by comparing its negative effect of instigators differing in central demographic (i.e., age, gender) and status characters (i.e., position), as suggested by Bowling and Beehr (2006). For example, with respect to hierarchical position, the question arises as to whether there will be a major discrepancy in the targets' emotions when they face interpersonal mistreatment from a supervisor (higher position) as opposed to an individual at the same level (colleague). (b) The second focus is on using an experimental setting by providing vignettes in which the participant is the target of mistreatment him- or herself. This approach offers a more realistic assessment of real behavior than that offered by simply filling in questionnaires. Foremost, it allows the derivation of causal conclusions and, with that, addresses the key methodological gaps in prior research in the field. To substantiate the findings, two experiments were conducted.

Drawing upon these two aims, this study attempts to systematically examine the status and demographic characteristic of the instigators: hierarchical position, gender, and age, and the consequences they have on the targets' organizational attitudes (operationalized by organizational commitment and turnover intentions) and situational affective well-being (operationalized by positive and negative emotions). We then draw upon numerous theories (e.g., power and agency-communion) and past empirical findings (e.g., Frone, 2000; Starratt & Grandy, 2010) to explain why we expect the magnitude of the outcomes to differ depending on the instigators' hierarchical position and demographic characteristics.

Central concepts

Interpersonal mistreatment, organizational attitudes and well-being

In this study, interpersonal mistreatment is defined as termination of normative positive action from at least one organizational member against another (Cortina & Magley, 2003). "Interpersonal" in this article carries a meaning of verbal abuse directed at the targets (i.e., individuals) and could be distinguished from organizational mistreatment, which focuses on obstruction and neglect by the organization (Harlos & Axelrod, 2005). The amount of negative consequences in the targets' sense of well-being is dependent upon the forms of mistreatment experienced by the targets, in which the intensity and level of harm are factors in determining the severity (Yang, Caughlin, Gazica, Truxillo, & Spector, 2014). Low-intensity forms of mistreatment refer to incivility, where the intention to harm the target is ambiguous. The most intense form of mistreatment refers to physical aggression that is clearly intended to harm the target (e.g., targets being kicked), but could also be committed by a form of nonphysical aggression. Yet not only the severity of single acts but also the duration and frequency of mistreatment have to be taken into account; bullying, for example, while estimated to have only moderate intensity, occurs repeatedly for a longer time, which makes it harder for targets to defend themselves. This article aims to explore the forms of nonphysical aggression among employees (involving moderate intensity with intention to harm) executed by one individual upon another (interpersonal) rather than by an organization.

In an explorative study by Starratt and Grandy (2010), various acts of abusive leadership behavior were revealed in and reflected by 11 items. These behaviors were shown to affect the younger workers' physical responses (i.e., retaliation, maintaining distance, and leaving to cope), their emotional responses (i.e., hopelessness, humiliation, and anxiety), and their evaluation of organizational outcomes (i.e., their turnover intention and negative perception of the corporate culture).

When targets intend to leave an organization, they no longer feel committed to the organization in question (Frone, 2000; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Somers, 2009, 2010). Organizational commitment, described as employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in a particular organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991), is also one of the most important areas affected by abusive supervision (Gabler et al., 2014; Morrow, 2011). Other recent evidence indicates that employees' organizational commitment diminishes

while their turnover intention increases when they are mistreated at work by variety of sources (such as supervisors and colleagues), as this promotes feelings of injustice and frustration, which are likely to impact the effectiveness and functional ability of the employing organization in the long run (Cullen, Fan, & Liu, 2014).

Previous studies demonstrated that interpersonal mistreatment also influences affective well-being (e.g., Danna & Griffin, 1999), resulting from the creation of negative emotions and strain. In a job-related domain, Briner (1997) defined affective well-being as feelings that relate to that specific domain involving the frequent experiences of positive and negative affects. This job-related affective well-being includes factors such as supervisors, colleagues, working conditions, and the type of work undertaken. Research by Frone (2000) supports the notion that targets mistreated by colleagues experience higher depression and somatic symptoms than those mistreated by supervisors. This article also supports the theory that as employees seek to make sense of and react to interpersonal mistreatment, their cognitive and emotional abilities are severely impaired regardless of how definite the condition or how short- or long-term the consequences are.

The term *situational factor* has come to be used to refer to experiences that are unique to a given context (Inness, LeBlanc, & Barling, 2008). For example, employees' perceptions of treatment given by a person in authority is one of the situational factors that could predict supervisor-targeted aggression (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001).

Status and demographic characteristics as antecedents

Hierarchical position

Supervisors are defined as those who possess a formal status in a given hierarchy, hold higher ranking positions than their subordinates, and are in charge of assigning and organizing duties. Due to their formal positions, supervisors have the capacity to influence subordinates' attitudes about, and behaviors toward, the organization (Frone, 2000). In other words, they possess that which would fit the definition of "formal position power" (i.e., legitimate, coercive, and rewarding), as they have the ability to exert influence over others (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981). Subordinates are required to conform to decisions made by their supervisors because supervisors are people whom subordinates report to, regardless whether the decisions are in their favor or not. In Hershcovis and Barling's (2010) meta-analytic review, the targets reacted differently toward different instigators in terms of their relative

power. Moreover, organizational research revealed that although colleagues, subordinates, or even customers may have the opportunity to mistreat the employees, supervisors are the most likely to commit interpersonal mistreatment (Harlos & Axelrod, 2005). Furthermore, Frone (2000), Starratt and Grandy (2010), and Tepper (2007) found that mistreatment by supervisors has the greatest impact upon organizational outcomes, such as turnover intentions and organizational commitment. These past research findings concur with the power impact theory in which subordinates feel threatened by the fact that their supervisor has more power over the subordinates' employment and performance in the organization (Bruk-Lee, 2006).

In view of this, mutual respect may be lower in a supervisor-to-subordinate relationship than in a colleague-to-colleague relationship. For this reason, responses to interpersonal mistreatment by supervisors may be more apparent than mistreatment by colleagues. Targets also react differently toward instigators who have different levels of power. According to Hershcovis and Barling (2010), colleagues may possess more social power, to the extent that they are able to affect the presence and quality of social relationships within the employee group. Therefore, subordinates are expected to engage in more emotionally motivated and interpersonally harmful behaviors when seeking a level of belongingness greater than their feelings (Thau, Aquino, & Poortvliet, 2007). This is especially true when interpersonal mistreatment has been escalated to the level of interpersonal conflict, as this would severely impact the affective well-being of the targets. Frone (2000) found that negative emotions, depression, and low self-esteem were more strongly impaired in a conflict with colleagues than with supervisors. Similar effects derived from these negative emotions and stressors influence the human physiological system by increasing the adrenaline level, heart rate, and toxicity (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Quick, Quick, Nelson, & Hurrell, 1997). This pattern of results provides insight into the fundamental role the hierarchical position of the instigators plays in influencing targets' attitudes and behavior. We therefore predicted the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The hierarchical status of an instigator engaging in interpersonal mistreatment is related to a target's reaction to the interpersonal mistreatment, such that interpersonal mistreatment by supervisors will lead to (1a) higher turnover intentions and (1b) lower organizational commitment than will interpersonal mistreatment by colleagues. The hierarchical status of an instigator engaging in interpersonal mistreatment is also related to the a target's situational affective well-

being following the mistreatment, such that interpersonal mistreatment by colleagues will lead to (1c) lower positive emotions and (1d) higher negative emotions than will interpersonal mistreatment by supervisors.

Gender

Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel, and Vartia (2003) showed that gender is one of the main criteria in becoming an instigator. In a study of bullying, Rayner and Hoel (1997) suggested that male instigators aim at both males and females as their targets, while female instigators generally focus exclusively on female targets. This difference could be traced back to sex role theories and stereotypes: The theory of agency-communion is frequently used to describe two basic styles of how individuals relate to their social world (Bakan, 1966). Based on a review by Helgeson (1994), agency-communion theory is strongly associated with sex-role socialization; agency indicators are more related to men (e.g., dominance, independence, risk-taking), while communion indicators are more related to women (e.g., nurturing behaviors, sensitivity, relationship-oriented behaviors). Interpersonal mistreatment by males is thus expected to occur more frequently because of the dominance and risk-taking traits, while their female counterparts are more likely to display sensitivity and place a higher value on relationships.

According to social role theory (Eagly, 1987; Heilman, 2001), individuals will be judged more negatively when their behaviors are inconsistent with what is expected of their sex roles. In contrast to their female counterparts, males are principally socialized to have more emotional stability and vigilance in implementing decisions in relationships (Del Giudice, Booth, & Irwing, 2012). As a result, their up-front decisions will be perceived by the targets as more rational and the actions as more strongly justified than those of female instigators. Hence, while it is in line with the male role to appear dominant, direct, and sometimes aggressive, this is not so for females. Interpersonal mistreatment by a female is tolerated to a lesser degree, as women are presumed to value harmony. Therefore, should a female instigate an act of interpersonal mistreatment, she will attract more negative attention, leading to more devastating impacts for the instigator. Further, it could be expected that the affected targets will experience higher negative and lower positive emotions because of the uncommon and unpredicted occurrence of behaviors from this stereotypically compassionate gender group (Heilman, 2001). As such, turnover intentions and organizational commitment could decline due to an accumulation of negative emotions.

In line with these mentioned theories, we then posit our second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: The gender of an instigator engaging in interpersonal mistreatment is related to a target's reaction to the interpersonal mistreatment, such that interpersonal mistreatment by females will lead to (2a) higher turnover intentions and (2b) lower organizational commitment than will interpersonal mistreatment by males. The gender of an instigator engaging in interpersonal mistreatment is also related to the target's situational affective well-being following the mistreatment, such that interpersonal mistreatment by females will lead to (2c) lower positive emotions and (2d) higher negative emotions than will interpersonal mistreatment by males.

Age

Current economic conditions combined with people's increasing longevity have served to expand the range of employees' age in modern organizations. To date, there is no defined age at which an employee can be categorized as an older employee. Since 1986, employees between 65 and 80 years of age have been considered "old" (Zepelin, Sills, & Heath, 1986), but current generations only delineate themselves as old when they reach 80 years old (Pitt-Catsouphes & Smyer, 2006). This age segregation varies across not only historical periods but also industrial sectors.

Research related to age focuses more on involving major personnel decisions and unfortunately neglects important interpersonal relations issues (Finkelstein & Farrell, 2007). Drawing on theories of social categorization and stereotypes, age is one of the first social identities to be perceived and established. Research on older employees reveals that they are generally believed to be more dependable (Crew, 1984) and more experienced (Finkelstein, Higgins, & Clancy, 2000) than younger employees. Thus, it can be assumed that targets of mistreatment accept and expect older organizational members, regardless of their seniority in the organization, to be more proficient than themselves because of their experience. In cases where interpersonal mistreatment does occur, it may be taken as a form of constructive feedback or advice promoting the younger employees' potential and professional growth, rather than as a force destructive to their personal careers. This idea is supported by Deal, Altman, and Rogelberg (2010), who found that younger employees relied heavily on constant feedback in the pursuit of their goals; as such, the targets' emotions may not be as negatively affected as when they are mistreated by older instigators.

However, as opposed to interpersonal mistreatment by older instigators, targets' negative emotions are expected to increase, while their positive emotions decrease, when mistreated by younger instigators. Targets may believe that instigators in this age group intend to harm them and sabotage their careers, as they are assumed to possess limited work experience and commitment. To support this notion, in a study of millennial employees, the younger employees are perceived to be inconstant and entitled (Deal et al., 2010; Twenge, 2006), despite a broad variety of positive and negative characteristics (Matheson, Collins, and Kuehne (2000). Therefore, the following hypothesis can be derived:

Hypothesis 3: The age of an instigator engaging in interpersonal mistreatment is related to a target's reaction to the interpersonal mistreatment, such that interpersonal mistreatment by younger instigators will lead to (3a) lower positive emotions and (3b) higher negative emotions than will interpersonal mistreatment by older instigators.

Despite this, interpersonal mistreatment by any age group will not differ significantly in terms of their intentions to leave the organization, or interfere with their commitment toward it. This is possibly due to the fact that most studies conducted on organizational attitudes focused more on older employees (Finkelstein, Ryan, & King, 2013) and disregarded the younger employees. That said, evidence of younger employees' organizational attitudes is limited and therefore such a hypothesis concerning both age groups may not be justified.

How to react when mistreated? The role of conflict management styles

Escalating interpersonal mistreatment could lead to destructive conflicts between the instigator and the target. Negative consequences from destructive conflicts could be prevented if both parties recognize how to manage the conflicts accordingly. Acknowledging the importance of this, Rahim (1986) adopted five styles of conflict management based on the seminal work of Blake and Mouton (1964)'s Dual Concern Model. This model serves to explain the individuals' concern for themselves and for others when managing conflicts in the workplace. The five styles are integrating, involving openness, exchange of information, and examination of differences in order to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties; obliging, associated with playing down differences and emphasizing

harmony in order to satisfy the concerns of the other party; compromising, where both parties apply give-and-take approaches to make a mutually acceptable decision; avoiding, which is identified with withdrawal, or side-stepping solutions; and dominating, a win-lose orientation where one party applies forceful behavior to win a position.

Conflict management styles (CMS) were assessed as the covariates in the present study for two reasons. Firstly, from a methodological perspective, this rules out the possibility that the relations between the instigator, the organizational attitudes, and affective well-being were due to shared commonalities, such as personality. The second reason is that a considerable amount of literature has revealed significant associations between CMS and organizational outcomes (Rahim, 1986). Jameson (1999) showed that by applying a certain style required of a particular situation, organizational outcomes, such as satisfaction, can be achieved. For example, dominating styles are demonstrated to provoke conflicts within the organization, while integrating, accommodating, and obliging management styles lessen conflicts and prove to be more effective in achieving mutual decisions (Janssen & van de Vliert, 1996). In terms of well-being, subordinates who rated their supervisors as abusive experienced less psychological distress if they used direct communication rather than avoidance tactics (Tepper, 2007).

Experiment 1: Hierarchical position and gender

In the empirical part of our article, which follows, we describe the results of two experiments aimed at shedding light on the question of whether demographic characteristics of the instigator are worth being concerned about. In the first experiment, we focus on the instigators' hierarchical positions and their gender. In the following sections, we introduce the theoretical background of these factors in detail, leading to our hypotheses.

Methods

Sample

The sample was a selection of university psychology students in Germany with work experience ($N = 81$). The respondents did not receive credit points for participating in this experiment. Age ranged from 19 to 75 years ($M = 28.64$, $SD = 12.83$). The majority were females, 81.3% ($n = 66$), and 18.5% ($n = 15$) were males. For the convenience of the older respondents, the experiment was conducted with pencil and paper in a

laboratory setting to avoid difficulties answering questionnaires online.

Procedure

To begin this process, the respondents were randomly assigned to the different conditions of the instigators: a 2 (hierarchical position: supervisor vs. colleague) \times 2 (gender: woman vs. man) factorial design. Respondents first answered demographic-related questions about themselves and completed the conflict management styles measures. The respondents were then individually presented with the manipulated scenario (vignette), depending on the demographic group they belonged to. Finally, self-report measures of organizational attitudes and affective well-being were conducted.

Pretests

Before the implementation of the main experiments, two pretests were conducted among bachelor's degree students in the Work and Organizational Psychology department. The main purpose was to check for clarity, and to also assess time and resource problems that can occur during the main study. The "think-aloud" technique was employed in both tests.

The first pretest was performed on four respondents to assess its appropriateness and to apply a number of well-established instruments of assessing organizational commitment (i.e., Organizational Commitment Questionnaire: Maier and Woschée, 2002; English original by Porter & Smith, 1970) and well-being (i.e., PANAS: Krohne, Egloff, Kohlmann, and Tausch, 1996; English original by Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) as outcomes in the study. In these investigations, all four respondents criticized the construction of the commitment scale, in which only one respondent could answer the items hypothetically. In accordance with that, a follow-up pretest using six students was conducted to gather more feedback and confirm the previous pretests' findings. Upon receiving the feedbacks, extensive alterations were made to the measures and the experiments as a whole.

Instruments

Organizational attitudes. Results from the pretests conducted showed that the measures could not be accurately understood and answered by the respondents. Therefore, a single item, "I am proud to tell others that I work at this organization," was used to measure organizational commitment, while for turnover intention the following item was used: "If the

situation remains unchanged over a longer period of time, I would resign." The use of single-item measure (SIM) is critically important to prevent inaccurate results from the respondents. A study by Wanous and Hudy (2001) demonstrated that SIM is not necessarily unreliable, and supported their previous study on job satisfaction. Other research that employed SIM on commitment was conducted by Evanschitzky, Iyer, Plassmann, Niessing, and Meffert (2006), investigating overall normative commitment (based on perceived obligation) rather than multi-item measures. In a notable research paper, Cronbach (1961) argued that reliability is not present if the single-item measure demonstrates predictive validity equal to that of the multiple-item measure. In this case, the validity was proven from the feedback given by the respondents on the follow-up pretest. Both responses from the organizational attitudes items (organizational commitment and turnover intention) ranged from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 6 (*very likely*) on a Likert scale.

Affective well-being. The German version of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) from Krohne, Egloff, Kohlmann, and Tausch (1996; English original by Watson & Clark, 1988) was employed to assess the situational affective well-being of respondents. The scale contained 20 items on two affect scales. Half of the items referred to negative affect (e.g., *distressed* and *upset*), while the other half referred to positive affect (e.g., *interested* and *excited*). The reliability for PANAS in the study was PA $\alpha = .81$, while NA was $\alpha = .86$. Affective well-being was rated on a 1–5 Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*very slightly or not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*).

Control variables

To measure the conflict management styles of the participants, the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory¹ (ROCI-II: Rahim, 1983; adapted to German by Bilsky and Wülker [2000; ROCI-II-D]) was employed. It consists of 28 self-report items on a 5-stage scale (1 = *do not agree at all*, 5 = *agree completely*).

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the measure was $\alpha = .84$ for integrating (IN), $\alpha = .78$ for obliging (OB), $\alpha = .84$ for dominating (DO), $\alpha = .80$ for avoiding (AV), and $\alpha = .71$ for compromising (CO). A sample item for DO was "I use my influence to enforce my own ideas," while for IN a sample item was "I collaborate with my supervisor to come up with decisions acceptable to us."

Manipulation

On completion of the ROCI-II items, the respondents were presented with vignettes in which an instigator criticized the respondents' supervised project in a meeting. The respondents were asked to imagine themselves as a target of the interpersonal mistreatment situation prior to answering questions about the manipulation check and tested variables. Five out of 11 abusive behaviors from Starratt and Grandy (2010) were included in the vignette to demonstrate abusive behaviors from instigators with different hierarchical positions and genders. The abusive behavior items used were threatening employees, putting employees down, public criticism, blurring the lines between the personal and the professional, and telling lies. In their analysis of these items, Starratt and Grandy (2010) noted that employees do not need to experience all of the 11 behaviors to be considered abusive. The vignette reads as follows:

You have finished your academic studies and are now working in a major organization. You work in a demanding job with flexible hours that allows you to organize your tasks independently and the salary is very satisfactory. In order to successfully and quickly finish upcoming projects you always do your best. However, since 4 weeks, your **supervisor/colleague** (condition of position) criticized your assigned projects. In the next meeting **he/she** (condition of gender) negatively commented on the execution of one of the projects you were in charge of and complained about your working etiquette. You felt discredited by **him/her** because in your opinion there was no clear reason to justify the negative criticism. When you expressed this opinion to your **supervisor/colleague**, **he/she** insisted upon **his/her** point of view and refused to consider or accept your arguments. Moreover, **he/ she** imputed that you lack a capacity for discernment in front of everyone involved in the project. **He/she** threatened that in the future **he/she** will campaign for the

removal of this important project from you. You tried to have a resolving conversation with your **supervisor/colleague**. However, this attempt failed. A couple of weeks later you found out that **he/she** actually carried out this threat and campaigned for the removal of the project from you.

Following the vignette presentation, the respondents were asked to indicate the intensity of the mistreatment in the described scenario. The item "How would you rate the conflict?" could be answered on a 1–6 Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*weak mistreatment*) to 6 (*strong mistreatment*). This item was employed to check whether the scenario effectively depicted a mistreatment, and hence was used as a validity check.

Results

Validity check

As expected, results showed that, overall, respondents confirmed that the scenario depicted in the vignette was a true and valid kind of mistreatment. Considering the average score of the intensity ($M = 5.32, SD = 0.75$), the respondents evaluated the situation they experienced as "mostly strong" to "strong" mistreatment. This serves as an indicator that the manipulation of interpersonal mistreatment has been successful.

Hypotheses tests and discussion

Descriptive statistics among the variables are provided in Table 1. Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure that there was no violation of the assumptions of normality and linearity, homogeneity of variances and regression slopes, and the covariates reliability.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested with multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVAs) in which the variables of organizational attitude and affective well-being were

Table 1. Comparison of mean values between condition groups in Study 1 and Study 2.

Outcomes	Condition: hierarchical position				Condition: gender				Condition: age	
	Study 1 (n = 81)		Study 2 (n = 160)		Study 1 (n = 81)		Study 2 (n = 160)		Study 2 (n = 160)	
	SV	COL	SV	COL	M	F	M	F	OLD	YG
OC	2.49	3.63	2.99	3.58	3.25	2.85	3.19	3.38	3.12	3.43
TI	3.90	2.88	3.27	2.65	3.70	3.10	3.00	2.91	3.28	2.69
PE	2.45	2.57	2.47	2.73	2.63	2.40	2.53	2.68	2.53	2.67
NE	3.24	2.99	3.34	2.96	3.14	3.09	3.08	3.22	3.27	3.06
IN	4.14	4.13	4.10	4.06	4.14	4.14	4.09	4.08	4.08	4.08
OB	3.44	3.57	3.72	3.54	3.40	3.60	3.57	3.69	3.65	3.62
DO	3.13	3.16	3.08	3.21	3.03	3.26	3.07	3.23	3.22	3.09
AV	2.99	2.89	3.05	3.04	2.87	3.00	3.03	3.06	3.04	3.05
CO	3.98	3.99	3.89	3.89	3.86	4.11	3.95	3.83	3.84	3.93

Note. OC = organizational commitment. TI = turnover intention, PE = positive emotions, NE = negative emotions, IN = integrating, OB = obliging, DO = dominating, AV = avoiding, CO = compromising, SV = supervisor, COL = colleague, M = male, F = female, OLD = older, YG = younger.

Table 2. Comparison of multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) between experimental factors in Study 1 and Study 2.

MANCOVA	Results		
	Univariate <i>F</i> tests, <i>f</i> (d.f.) = <i>f</i> value	Significance of <i>F</i> (<i>p</i>)	Eta squared (η^2)
Study 1			
IN	<i>F</i> (4,69) = 0.75	.56	.041
OB	<i>F</i> (4,69) = 1.14	.34	.062
DO	<i>F</i> (4,69) = 3.07	.02*	.151
AV	<i>F</i> (4,69) = 4.86	.00*	.220
CO	<i>F</i> (4,69) = 0.04	1.0	.002
Hierarchical post	<i>F</i> (4,69) = 8.15	.00**	.321
Gender	<i>F</i> (4,69) = 3.56	.00**	.171
Gender × Hierarchical post	<i>F</i> (4,69) = 0.41	.80	.023
Study 2			
IN	<i>F</i> (4,144) = 7.20	.58	.02
OB	<i>F</i> (4,144) = 0.84	.50	.02
DO	<i>F</i> (4,144) = 6.71	.00**	.16
AV	<i>F</i> (4,144) = 2.17	.08	.06
CO	<i>F</i> (4,144) = 2.83	.06	.06
Hierarchical post	<i>F</i> (4,144) = 4.48	.00**	.11
Gender	<i>F</i> (4,144) = 0.80	.52	.02
Age	<i>F</i> (4,144) = 2.25	.06	.06
Gender × Hierarchical post	<i>F</i> (4,144) = 1.82	.13	.05
Gender × Age	<i>F</i> (4,144) = 2.61	.04	.07
Hierarchical post × Age	<i>F</i> (4,144) = 1.09	.36	.03
Gender × Hierarchical post × Age	<i>F</i> (4,144) = 0.50	.74	.01

Note. IN = integrating, OB = obliging, DO = dominating, AV = avoiding, CO = compromising. d.f. = degrees of freedom.

p* < .05, *p* < .01 (one-tailed).

included as dependent variables, and the conditions of “hierarchical position” and “gender” were included as between-subject factors (for details, see Table 2).

The analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) showed that organizational attitudes and affective well-being depend significantly on the instigator’s hierarchical position. Supporting previous research (Frone, 2000; Starratt & Grandy, 2010), turnover intention and organizational commitment were significantly related to the hierarchical position of the instigator in the expected way, $F(4, 69) = 8.15, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .32$. The turnover intention was evaluated as significantly higher when the interpersonal mistreatment was

executed by a supervisor rather than by a colleague, $F(1, 72) = 13.27, p < .001$. Another result that corroborated this research was the discovery that organizational commitment was lower when the instigator of the interpersonal mistreatment was a supervisor rather than a colleague $F(1, 72) = 22.76, p < .001$. For this reason, hypotheses 1a and 1b received full support.

On the other hand, hypothesis 1d, relating to affective well-being, was not supported because the significant findings between the factor of hierarchical position and negative emotions, $F(1, 72) = 3.38, p < .10$, are significant in a direction different from what we expected. Interpersonal mistreatment by colleagues, as shown in this study, was less detrimental to targets’ affective well-being than mistreatment by supervisors, challenging former empirical findings (e.g., Frone, 2000) and the social power theory (Thau et al., 2007). Hypothesis 1c is also rejected, which stated that such mistreatment by colleagues led to less positive emotions, because the findings were too insignificant.

Results for the second set of hypotheses revealed interesting findings in which gender also played a significant role in predicting organizational attitudes and affective well-being, $F(4, 69) = 3.56, p < 0.01, \eta_p^2 = .17$ (refer to Table 2). Supporting hypothesis 2b, interpersonal mistreatment by males as compared to by females was associated with higher organizational commitment, $F(1, 72) = 3.18, p < .10$ (refer to Table 3). Interestingly, interpersonal mistreatment by men also led to higher turnover intentions, $F(1, 72) = 4.04, p < .05$. This contradictory finding indicates that although the targets of interpersonal mistreatment by men experienced more positive emotions and stayed more strongly committed to the organization than those targeted by women, they still tended to consider leaving the organization.

With respect to affective mental well-being, significant differences were also revealed in positive

Table 3. Probability and *F* values for the condition groups and covariates (conflict management styles) by organizational attitudes and affective well-being outcomes for Study 1.

Covariates/conditions	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Organizational attitudes				Situational affective well-being			
			OC		TI		PE		NE	
			<i>p</i> Value	<i>F</i> value	<i>p</i> Value	<i>F</i> value	<i>p</i> Value	<i>F</i> value	<i>p</i> Value	<i>F</i> value
IN	4.14	0.51	.11	2.65	.59	0.30	.86	0.03	.99	0.00
OB	3.50	0.48	.98	0.001	.74	0.11	.44	0.89	.08	3.21
DO	3.15	0.70	.06	3.82	.36	0.84	.00**	10.32	.46	5.35
AV	2.94	0.77	.03*	5.22	.70	0.15	.08	3.12	.04*	4.52
CO	3.98	0.51	.94	0.01	.99	0.001	.92	0.01*	.74	0.11
Hierarchical post			.00**	22.76	.00*	13.27	.66	0.19	.07	3.38
Gender			.08	3.18	.05*	4.04	.03*	5.15	.29	1.14
Gender × Hierarchical post			.50	0.46	.34	0.92	.85	0.04	.88	0.02

Note. *N* = 81; *p* < .10 are in boldface. IN = integrating, OB = obliging, DO = dominating, AV = avoiding, CO = compromising.

p* < .05, *p* < .01 (one-tailed).

emotions. Interpersonal mistreatment by women caused lower positive emotions in the targets than that caused by men, $F(1, 72) = 5.15, p < .05$, supporting both theories of agency and communion (Bakan, 1966) and social role theory (Eagly, 1987). Targets might experience higher positive emotions because they were able to more effectively reach mutual decisions when responding to the males' more dominant and aggressive, but also direct and firm, communication manner. Thus, hypothesis 2c was supported. However, hypothesis 2d, the relationship between interpersonal mistreatment by men and less negative emotions, was not supported due to insignificant findings. Further analysis showed no significant interaction effect between hierarchical position and gender. However, the gender of the participant him- or herself could also play a role, so we looked at the target–instigator dyads. With respect to the potential interaction effects of the gender combinations of the targets and the instigators (i.e., man \times woman, man \times man, woman \times woman), we referred to the socially prescribed gender roles theory Grossman and Wood (1993), stating that women may be more open to experience and express emotions than men. Accordingly, a female target may experience both positive and negative emotions more strongly than a male target. In a more recent study, Haggard, Robert, and Rose (2011) investigated gender differences in responses to abusive supervisory behaviors. They found that female targets were more likely to ruminate and extensively discuss problems with others about abusive behaviors than were their male counterparts. In contrast, research done by Wall and Blum (1991) showed that there was a marginal and inconsistent relationship between gender and negotiation outcomes. In line with these mixed prior findings, no significant interactions between the gender of the targets and the instigators (i.e., dyadic approach) were found; one of the reasons for this might have been the gender imbalance in the study.

Experiment 2: Hierarchical position, gender, and age

As mentioned previously, a follow-up experiment was conducted that aimed to replicate our significant first experiment results and to address its shortcomings. As can be seen from the statistics, the gender composition of the sample was strongly biased toward females; thus, the investigation of a more gender-balanced sample was required. Age was also included, in addition to gender and hierarchical position, as another important demographic characteristic of the instigator.

Method

Sample

Just over half of the sample ($n = 96$ from $N = 160$) was female, and ages were between 19 and 61 years ($M = 24.6, SD = 7.5$). Sixty-nine percent were working adults recruited from multiple organizations covering both urban and rural areas, while the remaining percentage were working students from the same university as in the first study.

Procedure

The same procedure was applied, respondents first answered demographic-based questions before completing the ROCI-II scales. A 2 (hierarchical position: supervisor vs. colleague) \times 2 (gender: female vs. male) \times 2 (age: younger vs. older) factorial design was then implemented.

Instruments

The same measures for organizational attitudes and affective well-being were employed to replicate the first study. In the second experiment, the reliability for PA was $\alpha = .82$, while for NA it was $\alpha = .87$, indicating high internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha for each of the CMS dimensions is as follows: integrating (IN) $\alpha = .77$, obliging (OB) $\alpha = .71$, dominating (DO) $\alpha = .84$, compromising (CO) $\alpha = .61$, and avoiding (AV) $\alpha = .80$.

Manipulation

The study variables of the second experiment were analyzed using the same procedures described for Experiment 1. Age was factored into the measurement of organizational attitudes and affective well-being from the instigators' antecedents. Here is the part of the vignette that was altered and added to the second study:

However, since 4 weeks your **younger/older** (condition of age) **supervisor/colleague** (condition of position) criticized your assigned projects. In the next meeting **he/she** (condition of gender) negatively commented on the execution of one of the projects you were in charge of and complained about your working etiquette.

Results

Hypotheses tests and discussion

Consistent with our first experiment, for the hierarchical position condition, interpersonal mistreatment by supervisors resulted in lower organizational commitment, $F(1, 147) = 7.75, p < .01$, and higher turnover intentions, $F(1, 147) = 8.45, p < .001$, than when the same conditions occurred with colleagues (refer to

Table 4. Probability and *F* values for the condition groups and covariates (conflict management styles) by organizational attitudes and affective well-being outcomes for Study 2.

Covariates/conditions	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Organizational attitudes				Situational affective well-being			
			OC		TI		PE		NE	
			<i>p</i> Value	<i>F</i> value	<i>p</i> Value	<i>F</i> value	<i>p</i> Value	<i>F</i> value	<i>p</i> Value	<i>F</i> value
IN	4.08	0.44	.82	0.05	.91	0.01	.87	0.03	.11	2.62
OB	3.63	0.47	.79	0.07	.12	2.45	.96	0.003	.38	0.78
DO	3.15	0.76	.21	1.61	.39	0.76	.00*	22.29	.91	0.02
AV	3.05	0.73	.66	0.20	.11	2.62	.92	0.01	.04*	4.16
CO	3.89	0.51	.08	3.11	.39	0.75	.12	2.42	0.29	1.11
Hierarchical post	1.51	0.50	.01*	7.75	.00**	8.45	.02*	5.44	.00**	8.64
Gender	1.49	0.50	.46	0.55	.44	0.61	.29	1.15	.38	0.79
Age	1.45	0.50	.16	1.97	.01*	6.68	.06	3.54	.11	2.53
Gender × Hierarchical post			.53	0.40	.49	0.48	.57	0.31	.06	3.58
Gender × Age			.73	0.12	.44	0.61	.00**	8.65	0.53	0.39
Hierarchical post × Age			.22	1.53	.30	1.10	.47	0.52	.87	0.03
Gender × Hierarchical post × Age			.44	0.62	.44	0.59	.10	0.00	.42	0.64

Note. *N* = 160; *p* < .10 are in boldface. IN = integrating, OB = obliging, DO = dominating, AV = avoiding, CO = compromising.
p* < .05, *p* < .01 (one-tailed).

Table 4). Thus, hypotheses 1a and 1b were confirmed. For affective well-being outcomes, respondents experienced lower positive emotions, $F(1, 147) = 5.44$, $p < .05$, and higher negative emotions, $F(1, 147) = 8.64$, $p < .001$, when the instigator was the supervisor. Thus, hypotheses H1c and H1d were not supported.

In contrast to Experiment 1, we did not find any significant differences in organizational attitudes and affective well-being based on the instigator's gender, leading us to reject H2a to H2d. Interestingly, though, there was a significant finding about affective well-being with respect to the age condition. It showed that interpersonal mistreatment by older instigators resulted in lower positive emotions, $F(1, 147) = 3.54$, $p < .10$, than by younger instigators. Therefore, H3a had to be rejected as the results contradicted our expectation: Lower positive emotions were experienced in interpersonal mistreatment by older instigators.

Hypothesis 3b was also not supported because of the nonsignificant result.

Over and above this unexpected direct relationship, we obtained a significant interaction between the instigators' gender and age condition on positive emotions, $F(1, 147) = 8.65$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .56$. As shown in Figure 1, the effect of gender on the instigators' positive emotions differed between older and younger instigators. In other words, the relationship between gender and positive emotion was stronger when the instigator was older than when the instigator was younger.

Further analysis using the target's age as a covariate showed four significant correlations between instigator's hierarchical positions with all the dependent variables. As shown in Table 5, regardless of their age, targets experienced higher turnover intentions, $F(1, 147) = 7.40$, $p < .001$, and negative emotions $F(1, 147) = 7.85$, $p < .001$, when interpersonally mistreated by supervisors,

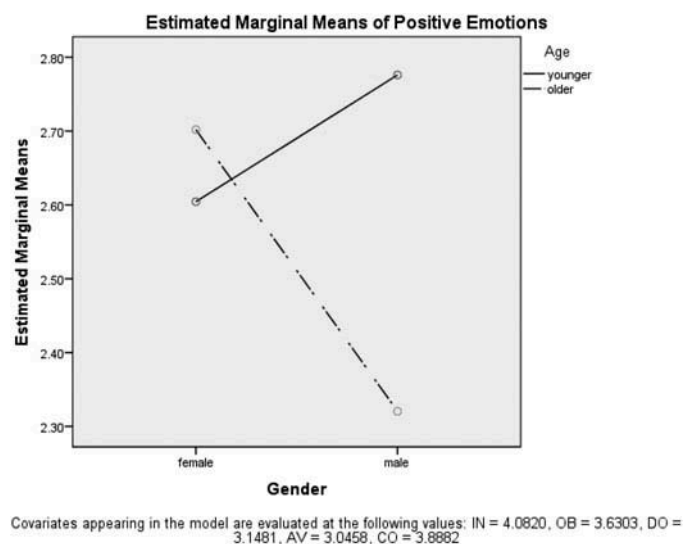


Figure 1. Interaction effect of gender with age on positive emotions.

Table 5. Probability and *F* values for the condition groups, covariates (conflict management styles and targets' age) by organizational attitudes and affective well-being outcomes for Study 2.

Covariates/conditions	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Organizational attitudes				Situational affective well-being			
			OC		TI		PE		NE	
			<i>p</i> Value	<i>F</i> value	<i>p</i> Value	<i>F</i> value	<i>p</i> Value	<i>F</i> value	<i>p</i> Value	<i>F</i> value
IN	4.08	0.44	.71	0.14	.99	0.00	.64	0.22	.070	3.41
OB	3.63	0.47	.78	0.08	.13	2.33	.89	0.02	.34	0.93
DO	3.15	0.76	.21	1.61	.40	0.70	.00**	21.0	.82	0.05
AV	3.05	0.73	.72	0.13	.14	2.24	.99	0.00	.054	3.77
CO	3.89	0.51	.08	3.16	.41	0.70	.19	1.70	.22	1.51
Targets' age	24.62	7.52	.14	2.24	.21	1.58	.06*	3.71	.10	2.68
Hierarchical post	1.51	0.50	.01*	6.74	.00**	7.40	.03*	4.78	.00**	7.85
Gender	1.49	0.50	.31	1.04	.31	1.06	.18	1.82	.52	0.42
Age	1.45	0.50	.24	1.40	.02*	5.67	.10	2.81	.16	2.00
Gender × Hierarchical post			.48	0.49	.36	0.84	.57	0.33	.06	3.56
Gender × Age			.80	1.70	.20	0.06	.00**	8.68	.54	0.39
Hierarchical post × Age			.19	1.71	.33	0.94	.44	0.60	.84	0.04
Gender × Hierarchical post × Age			.47	0.53	.45	0.57	.84	0.04	.34	0.94

Note. *N* = 160; *p* < .10 are in boldface. IN = integrating, OB = obliging, DO = dominating, AV = avoiding, CO = compromising. **p* < .05, ***p* < .01(one-tailed).

parallel to lower organizational commitment, $F(1, 147) = 6.74$, $p < .01$, and positive emotions, $F(1, 147) = 4.78$, $p < .05$. Higher turnover intention was also experienced by the targets when mistreated by older instigators, regardless of their age, $F(1, 147) = 5.67$, $p < .05$. Similar interaction effects between age and gender of the instigator revealed that targets experienced lower positive emotions when mistreated by older males, $F(1, 147) = 8.68$, $p < .001$. As conducted in the first experiment, the effects of the gender combination of both parties (females × females, males × females, males × males) or gender dyads were also analyzed, but no interaction was found in the second study either. This result showed that the unbalanced number of respondents of both genders in the two studies did not contribute to the results of the research, and that more research on the role of gender dyads is necessary.

General discussion

The primary aim of our research was to add new evidence to mistreatment literature by investigating the instigators' job and demographic characteristics on the targets' organizational attitudes and affective well-being. This study sought to answer this question by using an experimental approach (providing a vignette) to tackle the methodological gap in previous literature. Based on a sound theoretical framework (e.g., power and social role theory) and former empirical findings (Frone, 2000; Starratt & Grandy, 2010), we created two experimental studies. We expected that the respondents' organizational commitment, turnover intentions, and positive and negative emotions would be influenced by the instigators' hierarchical position, gender, and age.

Overall, we found an overwhelming support for the importance of hierarchical position in explaining organizational attitudes. Across both experiments, it was shown that higher turnover intentions and more negative emotions were reported by targets mistreated by supervisors as compared to colleagues. Similarly, organizational commitment was lower in situations of interpersonal mistreatment by supervisors. Comparing the role of a supervisor and a colleague, it is a managerial fact that a supervisor holds the power to form and delegate work, provides constructive feedback, has authority over decision making, and acts as a role model within an organization (Frone, 2000). For this reason, the supervisor has a greater influence on the targets' attitudes and well-being than a colleague. For example, a supervisor can adjust his or her subordinates' autonomy within the organization by delegating professional tasks diligently or inadequately and/or by increasing/decreasing the autonomy of the subordinate. Therefore, it seems plausible that turnover intentions are more likely to result from mistreatment by a supervisor than by a colleague.

With respect to the role of instigators' gender, the pattern of results in the first experiment revealed that interpersonal mistreatment by women decreased organizational commitment more effectively than similar treatment by men. This underpinned the agency-communion theory (Bakan, 1966), corresponding with the stereotype that approaches to reasoning, personalities, social relationships, and self-concepts (Diehl, Owen, & Youngblade, 2004) lead to improved organizational communication and personal interactions. Consequently, interpersonal mistreatment by males as opposed to female instigators allows the individual to stay more committed to the organization. Yet the turnover rate of these same

targets was surprisingly higher. This unexpected finding indicates that although targets of interpersonal mistreatment by men experienced more positive emotions and stayed more strongly committed to the organization, their turnover intentions were higher at the same time. Higher turnover intention may be due to the fact that the intensity of male mistreatment or harassment is stronger than that of their female counterparts, as the nature of men's interpersonal communication is presumed to be more up front and candid. However, this is only a post hoc speculation that calls for further research. While we found in the first study that gender was important in and of itself, we could not replicate this finding in our second study, despite providing a more gender-balanced sample in the second study, as no significant results were found in the gender combination analysis. One simple explanation could be that by adding the age condition, the diversity issue became more complex and as a consequence the role of gender diminished.

Challenging the theories around age difference, we found that less positive emotions followed an interpersonal mistreatment when the instigator was older than when she or he was younger. One plausible explanation for this contradictory finding could stem from social perception theory (Bodenhausen & Hugenberg, 2009). When the targets become aware that they are not able to confront or argue with the older instigators, positive emotions may accumulate within them. Targets were also anticipated to accept the older instigators' instructions even when mutual decisions are not achieved, due to increased levels of compliance and obedience.

We turn now to the interaction analysis between gender and age. Gender turned out to be relevant when explaining positive emotions, as targets' positive emotions declined more rapidly when they were mistreated by older males than by older females. In addition, the targets' positive emotions also decreased, although they proved more stable, when the male instigators were older, rather than when they were younger. The already-mentioned social perception theory may suggest an understanding that interpersonal mistreatment by a dominant group (men), who are, in particular, more knowledgeable (older), exceptionally diminished targets' positive emotions. In contrast, interpersonal mistreatment by an older communicative group (women) did not decrease targets' positive emotions.

Following our discussion of the role of supervisors, we managed to control the relative impact on the targets' age perception of older or younger instigators. For instance, a 60-year-old instigator would be categorized as an older instigator by both a 20-year-old and a 50-year-old target and may produce different

consequences on the dependent variables. Consistent results were found across Experiment 1 and Experiment 2, indicating that targets who were interpersonally mistreated by supervisors experienced lower organizational commitment and positive emotions, along with higher turnover intentions and negative emotions.

Though not hypothesized, we found some interesting results with respect to conflict management styles on affective well-being. In both studies, a dominating conflict management style was found to be strongly correlated with positive emotions, indicating that targets who use dominating conflict management styles demonstrated higher positive emotions even after experiencing interpersonal mistreatment. This finding is consistent with the findings of Friedman, Tidd, Curall, and Tsai (2000) and the Dual Concern Model (Blake & Mouton, 1964), in which individuals who prefer the dominating conflict management styles will perform in accordance with their own interest (i.e., neglecting other people's needs and interests), which implies more subjective control over outside circumstances. For avoiding styles, higher negative emotions were demonstrated, proving that a low concern for self (target) and the other (the instigator) does not improve satisfaction levels.

Limitations and future research

There are several reasons to exercise caution when interpreting the findings of this research. First, in Experiment 1, our study was conducted in a lab with mainly undergraduate students. Even though they reported having some work experience, these may not have been of the same magnitude as for people in the workforce. We overcame this shortcoming by also investigating employees in Experiment 2. Yet the working second sample was more heterogeneous than the first as we drew from a wide range of industries rather than a single university, but the sample was located in a specific part of Germany. Consequently, although our conclusions are not limited to a particular job or company, they are limited by region: Our samples were located in East Germany, where business supervisors were more likely than their Western counterparts to favor a confrontational managerial style over a communicative one (Brodbeck & Frese, 2007). It cannot be ruled out that samples from other geographic regions in Germany might have produced different results.

Similarly, the fact that the results for well-being in the present experimental study differed from those of Bruk-Lee and Spector's (2006) field study may also be due to cultural values. Power distance is one of the

five cultural dimensions; it is defined as the extent to which inequality and hierarchy are accepted and expected within a society (Hofstede, 2001). In this study, both experiments were conducted in Germany; Germans, on average, are considered to value a lower power distance than most other nations, with a score of 35 (Hofstede, 2001). Bruk-Lee and Spector's study (2006), however, was conducted in the United States, where a power distance score is slightly higher than that in Germany (with a score of 40). Yet, following the Cultural Dimension Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) studies (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), East Germans scored among the highest levels of power distance (ranked number 15 in the world) in terms of the degree of how its society perceives power inequality ("as is"). In contrast, West Germans perceived moderate levels of power distance (rank 30) despite their same values of expected power inequality ("should be").

Previous research also showed that employees in lower power distance countries are less likely to perceive abusive supervision as unfair, report less negatively of abuse, and suffer from weaker psychological health than that of employees in higher power distance countries (see Martinko et al., 2013). Therefore, future research should conduct cross-cultural studies comparing the impact of mistreatment in countries that have different power distance scores by employing the same research scope (e.g., Germany vs. Sweden, which has a score of 31, indicating less power distance than Germany). For a more comprehensive study, a collectivistic country, which usually has a very high power distance (e.g., Malaysia with a score of 100), should be included to observe how cultural variability impacts upon the relationship between hierarchical position, well-being, and organizational attitudes. In the same review, Martinko et al. (2013) revealed that no cross-cultural research has been done to investigate cultural differences from the perspective of conceptual development or study designs.

Despite these limitations, it would also be interesting to assess interpersonal mistreatment by clients, subordinates, or customers, rather than just by supervisors and colleagues within the same scope. Supervisors and colleagues are employees who work in the same organization and perform tasks to achieve the same ultimate organizational goal. Customers, in contrast, are outsider individuals whom these two different hierarchical levels are required to serve and attend to. Investigating the difference between these two categories would give a better understanding and provide greater insight

into the role of hierarchical position both inside and outside an organization. With regard to demographic characteristics and diversity, the role of instigators' and targets' ethnicity/culture of origin should also be explored. Finally, our experiments were manipulated by presenting a vignette to respondents (reading), instead of requesting them to perform certain behaviors (doing). Therefore, further research should focus on such experimental manipulations that involve respondents demonstrating and performing anticipated behaviors.

Implications

Our results offer several practical implications. First, this experimental research more accurately determined the causality effect. Most research on interpersonal mistreatment is based on questionnaire approaches; however, this experimental design offered the considerable advantage of making causal statements in light of the cause-and-effect common direction assumption (Martinko et al., 2013). Consistent results across the two experimental studies suggest that the supervisory position of the instigators plays a significant role in shaping employees' organizational attitudes, namely, organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Thus, in order to preempt these undesirable challenges and to strengthen the subordinates' commitment to the organization, training in communication and well-being would be particularly advantageous for supervisors.

It is not surprising that there is an extensive amount of research emphasizing how supervisors can improve their leadership skills, behavior, and management within an organization to improve subordinates' job performance and well-being (e.g., Ilies, Johnson, Judge, & Keeney, 2011; Munir, Nielsen, Garde, Albertsen, & Carneiro, 2012; Römer, Rispens, Giebels, & Euwema, 2012). However, another possible implication of our research is that employee representatives should also take a keen interest in the issue of interpersonal mistreatment, as a failure to do so may eventually lead to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, which would in turn pose a long-term threat to the employees and to the organization (Einarsen & Nielsen, 2015).

Notes

1. *Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II, Form A*: Used with permission from and copyright by the Center for Advanced Studies in Management. Further use or reproduction of the instrument without written permission is prohibited.

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