**Abusive Supervision in Israel:**

**Psychological and Organizational Antecedents and Consequences**

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**Introduction**

Abusive supervision refers to subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviours toward them; it is widespread in Israel as well as in other countries, and its consequences have been found to be detrimental for individuals as well as for organizations (Salton Meyer & Mikulincer, 2016). What predicts abusive supervision? What typifies its negative consequences in the workplace? In the past two decades, these significant questions have been at the centre of attention of a growing body of research striving to find explanations regarding its occurrence and the negative consequences related to it. The present chapter discusses these questions in the unique context of Israeli culture as they relate to the distinct values and rules of conduct portrayed in Israeli workplaces (e.g., low power distance, common disrespect and suspicion towards authority figures, and characteristic managerial behaviours). Furthermore, there is a common tendency for relatively close relationships, which affects interactions between supervisors and their subordinates, roughness and informality are typical in communication, and there is widespread gender inequality.

This chapter starts with a description of the unique Israeli context. It continues with a review of international studies as well as research performed in Israel that explores abusive supervision, highlighting the contribution of a few central psychological and organizational antecedents. One of these is attachment style, a much-investigated behavioural framework in the field of psychology that provides strong explanations for human functioning in relationships. Another topic that is discussed is ethical climate, a significant concept related to ethical behaviour in organizations. The chapter then presents a study conducted in an organization in the Israeli mental healthcare sector investigating the contribution of abusive supervision to several negative consequences for subordinates. The study examined self-reports of subordinates’ emotions, work-related attitudes, behavioural intentions, and descriptions of actual abusive behaviours they have experienced. The significance of these research findings will be discussed in the last part of this chapter, including their contribution to the advancement of research on negative workplace behaviours; their practical implications, which might support organizations in developing and implementing actions that could perhaps minimize the occurrence of abusive supervision and its consequences; and a discussion of the results’ unique significance in the Israeli context.

The current chapter focuses on abusive supervision, which has been compared to the concept of ‘bullying’ (Salton Meyer & Mikulincer, 2016). Both concern a situation where individuals in organizations view themselves as recipients of sustained negative deeds, which they feel challenged in dealing with and shielding themselves from. They both involve hostility without physical violence (Tepper, 2007). Abusive supervision focusses specifically on the interactions in the dyad of subordinate and direct manager. In this relationship, there are power variations between the participants due to the formal authority given to the supervisor by the organization; in the situation of abusive supervision, this authority is exploited to the disadvantage of subordinates (Salton Meyer, 2016). Abusive supervision is, therefore, considered abuse that is aimed hierarchically downward. Top-down bullying is often a focus of research, since this type of abuse is commonly portrayed in the negative workplace behaviours in some countries such as in India (D'Cruz, 2016), Turkey (D’Cruz et al., 2016), and Israel (Peperman & Bar Zuri, 2013). However, according to commonly used definitions in research, bullying can also be horizontal and upward (e.g., D’Cruz & Noronha, 2019). Furthermore, intention to cause harm is not required in the case of abusive supervision, which distinguishes it from how bullying is commonly viewed (e.g., Tepper, 2007).

**The Israeli Context**

Salton Meyer and Mikulincer (2016) reviewed some central Israeli features that are relevant to behavioural dynamics in workplaces, as will be described below. Israel is a small, densely populated, divided parliamentary democracy on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean. It is in an ongoing state of war with its neighbouring Arab countries, and there are violent clashes with Palestinians from within.

In 2019, Israel's population was around 9 million: approximately 74% of its citizens were Jewish, 21% were Arab, and the rest consisted of other minorities (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The modern form of Hebrew is the official language of the country, and the Arabic language has a unique status as well. For example, its use in governmental institutions will soon be defined by law. Although Jews represent the majority of Israeli citizens, the state is comprised of diverse ethnic and religious subgroups, such as secular, religious, and Orthodox Jews; Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews; and the Arab sector (see further detail below) contains subgroups with very different beliefs and lifestyles. Thus, Israel is viewed as a cleft national culture, along with countries such as Belgium and Italy (Gannon & Pillai, 2013). The present chapter relates primarily to the Jewish majority in the country.

Israel has actively encouraged incoming Jewish immigration since its establishment and has willingly received immigrants from all over the world. Accordingly, integrating and assimilating immigrants into the country is a core aspect of Israel’s core ideology, as reflected historically in its policies. Due to the large numbers of immigrants, their effective integration is at the heart of everyday Israeli life, including in many workplaces (Salton Meyer et al., 2018). However, a genuine socio-economic divide has formed, particularly between two groups, each of which constitute about half of the Jewish population: Ashkenazi and the Sephardic Jews. The first group immigrated to Israel from Eastern and Western Europe, America, and Australia, whereas the second immigrated from the Middle East, North Africa, Spain, and Portugal. Even though numerous Sephardic Jews have prospered in Israel, many have not; thus, a sense of inequality has continuously fuelled deep feelings of division between these groups (Gannon & Pillai, 2013).

Another meaningful source of diversity in Israel is the degree of religiosity among Jews. At one end of the spectrum, there are many Israelis who are completely secular or atheistic (42%); at the other end are ultra-Orthodox Jews (8%), who adhere to Jewish laws and often see themselves as superior to the secular legal system (Gannon & Pillai, 2013). The remaining Jewish population resides somewhere between these two poles. Salton Meyer and Mikulincer (2016) point out that the rates of ultra-Orthodox Jews’ participation in the workforce are relatively low compared to those of the general population.

The Israeli workforce is rather highly educated: 20% are university graduates, second only to the United States. It also has a high percentage of engineers and is regarded as a global leader in technology and science (Gannon & Pillai, 2013). These fields are characterized by relatively high wages, abundant jobs, and excellent opportunities for professional development in favourable work conditions. Additionally, the prestige that comes from working in these fields can often enable excellent long-term career opportunities in leading local and global companies. The Israeli high-tech industry is viewed as highly successful internationally. It is ranked first in the world, after adjusting for national population size (Gannon & Pillai, 2013), and is thus central to the Israeli economy. However, employees in these fields usually come from limited parts of Israeli society, therefore reflecting significant inequality in access to highly valued career opportunities.

Most employees in the high-tech field are secular Jewish men. An examination of women’s representation in the field revealed that they occupied only 22% of technology positions and 18% of technology management positions. Furthermore, only 7% of Israeli technological start-ups are led by women. Other populations of Israeli society that are underrepresented in this sector are ultra-Orthodox Jews and Arab men and women. Although the representation of the latter group has grown in recent years, the percentage of women in high-tech remains stagnant (Carmy et al., 2019). On the other hand, in fields where women typically constitute the majority of employees, such as education, wages and status are relatively low and working conditions are often challenging.

Another field that contributes significantly to Israel's leadership in innovation is academia. Women comprise the majority of students for all academic degrees. However, as academic faculty their presence drops glaringly, particularly in the higher ranks, such that at the most senior level of full professor, women hold only 18% of positions. In addition, rates of female student participation in many areas of technology, engineering, and mathematics are relatively low (Ratzon & Herzog, 2020). Thus, female underrepresentation in the high-tech sector, which typically requires employees to be educated in these fields, is expected to continue. Although similar trends have been identified in many European countries, Israel is ranked below average in international comparisons on some central measures of gender inequality in the academic sector (European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, 2018). Thus, gender inequality is typical in some highly attractive sectors of the Israeli workforce.

Sources for gender inequality can be traced to two major local characteristics. The first is the dominance of religious and traditional values in large parts of Israel, where the accepted roles for women in society and at work are often limited. The second is the impact of the military on Israeli civilian life, including workplace dynamics. Israeli Jewish secular women are required to enrol in the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) at the age of 18, as are men. However, their roles in the IDF have historically been limited to less prestigious, often clerical, ones,. Although this is gradually changing, gender equality in the IDF is still a long way off. The knowledge and skills acquired in military roles are a common springboard for job opportunities in the civilian workforce, especially in technological organizations. For example, when soldiers who perform technological roles complete their military service, they are often regarded as excellent candidates for technological positions in civilian organizations and are consequently offered high salaries and good opportunities for career development. Women’s rates of participation in technological roles in the military are often lower than those of men. As a result, they may start careers in high-tech at a disadvantage. Additionally, social networks that develop in the military are often used later on in civilian workplaces, where employees recommend recruiting people with whom they worked previously in the army for new positions. This may lead to barriers for those who cannot get recommendations as easily, such as women.

**A Cultural Profile of Israel**

Salton Meyer and Mikulincer (2016) reviewed some of the characteristic Israeli values that form its cultural profile as relevant to the workplace, which will be presented below. Historically, in Israel, there was a greater emphasis on the needs of the group or society than on those of individual, particularly in the rural kibbutz communities. Since then, the private sector has developed, and Israeli participation in the global business world has become central to its economy (a good example is the successful high-tech industry described earlier). Regardless of these trends towards individualism, people still sacrifice a good deal for the collective, since military service is compulsory and taxes are quite high. In Hofstede's (1991) study, Israel fell in the middle along the individualism-collectivism spectrum compared with other countries. However, since then, it has moved more towards individualism (House et al., 2004).

Israelis are typically ‘doers,’ characteristically oriented toward accomplishing tasks, achieving goals, resolving problems, and actively managing situations. Their unique competence for improvising and providing creative solutions in both everyday and crisis situations is locally regarded as a source of pride (Gannon & Pillai 2013). This type of creativity supports the development of innovation in different fields, as described earlier in this chapter.

Israelis are often seen as rude, proud, and even pushy. They are inclined to improvise in business as well as in personal issues. This harshness reflects the rules of conduct within Israel and is considered a spill-over of anxiety triggered by continuous external and internal strife (Gannon & Pillai, 2013). Indigenous Israelis are nicknamed ‘sabras,’ which is the name of a native wild cactus whose fruits have thorns on the outside, but are sweet and soft on the inside. This is a common metaphor for Israelis, or their view of their own conduct: tough on the surface and sociable once one really gets to know them (Salton Meyer & Mikulincer, 2016).

Israelis are also typically described as getting swiftly to the heart of matters in their communication (Starr, 1991). They express their thoughts directly and are quick to criticize when they have a different point of view or think the other party is mistaken (Starr, 1991). Within Israeli society, this behaviour is seen as a manifestation of openness and effectiveness that enables quick advancement and problem solving. However, foreigners often view this form of conduct as too critical, impolite, or aggressive.

Additionally, Salton Meyer and Mikulincer (2016) describe informality as a norm in dialogue in Israeli society. For example, people use first names in conversation regardless of status or rank. Such is the case between children and their teachers, soldiers and their commanders, or subordinates and their managers. This reflects Israelis’ propensity to understate status differences and their characteristic intolerance of rituals, formalities, and bureaucratic procedures (Gannon & Pillai, 2013). Consequently, relationships are quite close in comparison to other cultures, often accompanied by a strong sense of unity.

When comparing cross-national cultural values, Israel was found to have low power distance, similar to such nations as the United States and Australia, indicating the comparatively low cultural approval of inequality between people. In contrast, high power distance nations are regarded as more autocratic, and people in them tend to accept differences in power and wealth. Examples of high power distance nations include India, France, and Mexico (Rinne, Fairweather et al., 2012). Low power distance is a noticeable value influencing behaviour in Israeli organizations. One representative example is the customary practice known as ‘open-door’ management, where subordinates spontaneously initiate meetings with their supervisors without scheduling them in advance. They simply step into their manager’s office and open a conversation. Another example of low power distance is the openness with which Israeli employees frequently express disagreement with their managers in public (Salton Meyer & Mikulincer, 2016). Low power distance is also present in the Israeli military. For example, Elon (1971) described the marginal power distance between soldiers and officers, where officers have many responsibilities with few benefits and are mostly addressed by their surnames. As military service is required at the age of 18 for most men and women, norms established while in the army, navy or air force are often carried over into the civilian workforce.

Another meaningful characteristic of Israeli society is a common lack of respect for authority, probably related to a historically rooted expectation for social equality (Gannon & Pillai, 2013). This culturally driven view of power and authority is particularly relevant to our research in Israel, as it focuses on abusive supervision, or what can be viewed as supervisors’ extreme use of power in the eyes of their subordinates (Salton Meyer & Mikulincer, 2016).

***Workplace Culture***

Salton Meyer and Mikulincer (2016) also outline the way the values and rules of conduct described earlier influence organizational culture in Israeli workplaces. Low power distance, customary disrespect, and distrust of authority figures all have an impact on the leadership styles and managerial behaviours that are effective in Israeli workplaces. Thus, relatively egalitarian managerial conduct with subordinates is often more common and more accepted by them. Also, action orientation, impatience for formalities and bureaucratic procedures, as well as the tendency to improvise have an impact on how assignments are carried out. For example, resolving challenges in a creative manner while overlooking formal procedures is common and culturally accepted, especially when it results in success. The propensity for close relationships impacts the way people interact, the type, and the proximity of accepted working connections between supervisors and their subordinates. For example, people tend to share personal matters with their colleagues and managers, to help develop friendly relationships with them and even with their families, which often extend beyond the workplace. The characteristic tendency to openly express disapproval and challenge opinions, combined with the typical roughness and casualness, impact people’s communication styles in organizations. For instance, professional differences can sometimes turn into loaded arguments that may sound like a real conflict to an outsider.

Workplaces in different sectors have different cultures that are often related to the industry in which they operate. For example, banks are highly regulated, and so there is more emphasis on procedures, hierarchy, and formality than in high-tech organizations, which usually stress creativity and flexibility. Thus, it is central to consider not only values that are characteristic of Israel in general, but also those that are specific to a certain sector or even organization (Salton Meyer & Mikulincer, 2016). The present study was conducted in an Israeli organization delivering mental healthcare services. Its characteristics will be described later on in this chapter.

In Israel, there is currently no law prohibiting negative workplace behaviours, such as abusive supervision and bullying. Therefore, the prevention and treatment of these behaviours depend on an organization’s good will (Salton Meyer et al., 2018).

**Psychological and Organizational Antecedents and Consequences of Abusive Supervision in Israel**

***Abusive Supervision***

Supervisors in organizations often hold considerable power in relation to their subordinates, which manifests through decisions they make about how resources essential for workers’ functioning are allocated, how tasks are assigned, how performance is evaluated, and how compensation is determined. These decisions, in turn, often influence related decisions about promotions, termination, and more. Thus, managers' power can have a direct impact on the behaviour of their subordinates. Having that kind of influence enables supervisors to be effective at their work and to promote the achievement of organizational goals. An example of supervisors’ positive impact on employee functioning can be seen in the findings of a study carried out in Israel, where managers’ recognition of employee accomplishments (with a simple ‘thank you’ note) had a similar positive impact on employees’ performance as did a small monetary bonus, with even some advantages in application (Bareket-Bojmel et al., 2017). However, the dark side of power is its potential for exploitation, which can lead to negative consequences for individuals and organizations.

The present chapter focuses on abuse of power by managers, described here as abusive supervision. In Salton Meyer et al.’s (2018) review on abusive supervision, they portray this phenomenon as the degree to which subordinates experience supervisors engaging in a sustained display of hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviours (Tepper, 2000). It includes supervisors’ behaviours, such as rudeness, public ridiculing, angry outbursts, social isolation, scapegoating and humiliating subordinates, taking credit for subordinates’ work, and blaming subordinates to avoid their own embarrassment. Tepper (2000) adds that abusive supervision is assessed subjectively by subordinates; therefore, a manager can be viewed differently by several of his or her direct workers. Abusive supervision reflects a repeated behavioural pattern; thus, a single occurrence of the behaviours described above does not constitute abusive supervision. Abusive leadership refers not only to willful hostility but also to behaviours that reflect indifference (Tepper, 2000). Additionally, Yagil (2006) reports that abusive supervision may not be seen as deviant if it is in line an organization’s policies or norms. In a meta-analysis and empirical review on abusive supervision, Mackey et al. (2017) cite abundant research in recent years, which suggests that abusive supervision is an organizational phenomenon of both applied and academic significance.

**Prevalence*****.*** A review of the existing data on abusive supervision globally places the percentage of abused employees at approximately 10% (Tepper et al., 2017). Salton Meyer et al. (2018) further report that its cost to U.S. corporations (including absenteeism, healthcare costs, and lost productivity) have been assessed at $23.8 billion annually. In the future, this kind of behaviour may become illegal, and employers could be held liable (Tepper, 2007). Therefore, abusive supervision is a major social problem that requires further investigation.

**Antecedents, Moderators, and Mediators***.* Investigating the antecedents of abusive supervision is important because it supports the development of knowledge that can effectively minimize this negative managerial behaviour in organizations. Antecedents associated with abusive supervision are said to operate within the following psychological mechanisms: supervisors’ social learning (e.g., from more senior managers, a family history of hostility), their sense of identity threat (due to subordinates’ negative conduct, intimidating conduct from their superiors, or personal sensitivity) as well as their diminished self-regulation (relating, among other things, to workload, challenging subordinates) (Tepper et al., 2017).

Salton Meyer (2016) reviewed research that highlighted the following supervisor antecedents of abusive supervision: their perceptions of injustice (Rafferty et al., 2010), their sense of procedural injustice (i.e., the view that one’s organization has made distribution decisions via unjust decision-making procedures) (Tepper et al., 2006), their detection of contract breach, as well as their hostile attribution bias (i.e., the dispositional tendency to cast hostile intention onto others’ behaviour) (Tepper, 2007).

Additionally, supervisors who themselves faced interactional injustice (i.e., unfavourable interpersonal treatment) were more abusive toward their subordinates. Supervisors’ authoritarianism (i.e., the extent to which dominance and control are viewed as accepted forms of leadership) moderated the relationship between supervisors’ interactional injustice and abusive supervision. The relationship was stronger when supervisors had a higher degree of authoritarianism (Tepper, 2007).

Further investigations of characteristics among supervisors that could predispose them to abusive behaviours found that those with a history of family discouragement were more inclined to abusive behaviours (Kiewitz et al., 2012), particularly for those who reported low self-control. Supervisors sensing high degrees of stress were found more prone to mistreat their subordinates; physical exercise helped to decrease these inclinations (Burton et al., 2012). Those who mentioned high degrees of conflict with their colleagues were seen as more abusive by their subordinates, mainly by subordinates with whom a low-quality leader–member exchange (LMX) relationship was shared (Harris et al., 2011). Supervisors who cited ‘deep-level dissimilarity’ with subordinates (i.e., the view that the supervisor and subordinate disagree on central values and attitudes) were more likely to engage in conflicts with the latter (Tepper et al., 2011).

Furthermore, ‘Machiavellian’ supervisors (those who tend to manipulate and take advantage of others to boost their own interests, are inclined to resist social influence, and show a lack of emotion in their personal relationships) were considered by subordinates as more abusive than non-Machiavellian supervisors. This effect was larger among subordinates with low organization-based self-esteem (Kiazad et al., 2010). Furthermore, subordinates of more emotionally intelligent managers perceived lower rates of abusive supervision than subordinates of less emotionally intelligent managers (Xiaqi et al., 2012).

Subordinate attributes shown to be antecedents of abusive supervision include subordinates’ high negative affectivity (i.e., a dispositional tendency to experience negative thoughts and emotions) (Tepper et al., 2006). Further research of subordinates’ personality attributes and abilities as moderators between abusive supervision and its outcomes demonstrated that subordinates with high levels of narcissism were most likely to respond aggressively when viewing their supervisor's behaviour as abusive (Burton & Hoobler, 2011). Retaliatory behaviours were more widespread among subordinates with external loci of control than among those with internal loci (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2012; Wei & Si, 2013). In a study of bank employees in Taiwan, emotionally intelligent subordinates responded less negatively to perceived abuse than others, reporting lower levels of emotional labour burden (Hu, 2012).

In a study that investigated the moderating effect of a central cultural value, power distance (described earlier in this chapter), findings showed that a high power distance orientation strengthened the association between abusive supervision and subordinate interpersonal deviance. This could be because subordinates were more prone to regard abusive supervisors as role models, thereby imitating some of their abusive behaviours. Moreover, high power distance orientation subordinates were less expected to view abusive supervision as interpersonally unjust compared to those with lower levels of power distance (Lian et al., 2012). In a related study, findings showed that employees’ power distance orientation moderated the relationships of abusive supervision with employee psychological health and job satisfaction, such that the negative relationships were weaker for employees with higher power distance orientation (Lin et al., 2013).

A small number of studies have focused on antecedents of abusive supervision at the organizational level. Findings of research conducted in manufacturing organizations in China revealed that emotional exhaustion mediated the links between abusive supervision and some aspects of contextual performance (i.e., interpersonal facilitation and job dedication). Work unit structure moderated these relationships so that the associations were stronger in mechanistic (i.e., centralized structures with mostly top-down communication) than in organic (i.e., less centralized and more collaborative) work unit structures (Aryee et al., 2008).

An additional study examined a trickle-down model of abusive supervision across three hierarchical levels (i.e., managers, supervisors, and employees). Results showed that abusive manager behaviour was positively associated with abusive supervisor behaviour, which, in turn, was positively linked to work group interpersonal deviance. Additionally, hostile climate (i.e., endless bitter, hostile, and distrustful feelings inside the work group, where members feel jealousy, distrust, and aggressiveness towards each other) moderated the relationship between abusive supervisor conduct and work group interpersonal deviance so that the association was stronger when hostile climate was higher (Mawritz et al., 2012; Salton Meyer, 2016).

**Consequences.** Abusive supervision can be regarded as an interpersonal stressor, which leads to negative stress reactions in subordinates (such as poor mental health and job dissatisfaction) (Lin et al., 2013)*.* Victims describe a reduced sense of well-being and quality of work life that can extend to their personal lives, negatively impact work attitudes, and reduce job satisfaction and commitment (Schat et al., 2006). Below is a review of abusive supervision outcomes, including the areas job satisfaction, well-being, burnout, and two types of withdrawal behaviours: absenteeism and intentions to quit (Salton Meyer, 2016).

**Diminished JobSatisfaction***.* Research reveals negative links between subordinates’ reports of abusive supervision and job satisfaction (Bowling & Michel, 2011; Breaux et al., 2008; Haggard et al., 2011; Hobman et al., 2009; Kernan et al., 2011; Lin et al., 2013; Tepper, 2007). The association between negative work-related attitudes and abusive supervision was stronger among those who had less job mobility (Tepper, 2000).

**Burnout***.* Abusive supervision was found positively related to burnout (Carlson et al., 2012) or to some of its components (Tepper, 2000; Yagil, 2006), such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduction in one’s sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1984).

**Psychological Well-Being and Distress***.* Employees who perceived they were victims of abusive supervision experienced damaging psychological consequences, including undesirable levels of depression, anxiety, detachment, emotional labour burden, and diminished psychological health and life satisfaction (Martinko et al., 2013).

**Withdrawal Behaviours: Absenteeism and Intentions to Quit**. A positive relationship was found between abusive supervision and withdrawal behaviours, including absenteeism and intentions to quit (Tepper, 2007).

***The Israeli Perspective***

**Prevalence*.*** Salton Meyer et al. (2018) reviewed research on abusive supervision in Israel, as described below. In a study of workplace bullying and abuse conducted by Peperman and Bar Zuri (2013), these behaviours were defined as verbal and emotional abuse that is perceived by employees themselves as harmful. When inflicted by managers, the behaviours measured were close to those defined as abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000). Overall, 36.9% of the respondents reported being abused by their supervisors, where the most common managerial abusive behaviours were not giving credit for work that required a lot of effort, breaking promises, and blaming subordinates to avoid embarrassment.

There was an association between subordinates evaluating their supervisor’s behaviours as abusive with non-Israeli-born subordinates. This could be explained by Israeli supervisors’ tendency to be more abusive toward subordinates of immigrant background, whom they perceived as highly different from themselves (Salton Meyer et al., 2018), in line with findings from international studies described earlier (Tepper et al., 2011). Another possible explanation could be related to the culturally accepted roughness in the conduct of Israelis, as mentioned previously. This kind of behaviour may be seen as conventional within Israeli society and even viewed as effective. However, immigrants might interpret it as too rude and even hostile, as foreigners often do (Gannon & Pillai, 2013). Additionally, subordinates’ perceptions of abusive supervision were found linked to longer work duration with supervisors. Thus, the longer the subordinates were subjected to this negative form of behaviour, the more they described it as such. This empirically confirms the definition of abusive supervision as a repeated pattern of behaviour, which persists unless either subordinate or supervisor terminate the relationship (Salton Meyer et al., 2018; Tepper, 2000).

Furthermore, Salton Meyer and Mikulincer (2016) report that Israeli men described being exposed to more abusive supervision than women, which differs from findings in the United States (Namie, 2010). Women’s lower reported rates of abusive supervision may be a consequence of enforcing the sexual harassment prevention law (possibly misperceived as relating only to women’s rights), which may indirectly decrease other forms of harassment, including abusive supervision. Religious employees reported higher rates of abusive supervision than did secular employees, which could be explained as abuse aimed at minorities. However, this was not the case with Arabs, who also comprise a minority. The reported rates of bullying by managers were higher in organizations with over 100 employees than in those which were smaller. Also, higher rates of bullying by direct supervisors were reported by subordinates of male managers than by those of female managers (Peperman & Bar Zuri, (2013, a result that has been replicated in the United States (Namie, 2010).

Yagil et al. (2011) found that Israeli subordinates used an assortment of problem-directed and emotion-directed methods for dealing with abusive supervision. However, they were inclined to evade direct communication, in contrast with Israelis’ cultural tendency for straightforward and open communication (Starr, 1991). These results could be explained by subordinates’ intensified feelings of threat of additional retribution by an abusive supervisor, which might radically change the characteristic cultural style of communication (Salton Meyer & Mikulincer, 2016).

The investigation of attachment styles as antecedents of abusive supervision in Israel, highlighted below, provides a psychological perspective on dyadic relationships between subordinates and their direct managers in organizations. This approach emphasizes the centrality of the attachment system in explaining the quality of interpersonal interactions in keeping with the disciplinary focus of psychology.

Salton Meyer and Mikulincer (2016) report that abusive supervision can be regarded as a particularly aggressive case of supervisor-subordinate interpersonal interaction, which is shaped by the way both parties perceive, evaluate, experience, and react to each other. On this basis, attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982) was explored as a conceptual framework for understanding abusive supervision in a study in Israel. This theory focuses on individual variations in representations of others, a sense of interpersonal trust and emotional security, and their effects on interpersonal behaviour and relationship quality. Attachment theory is considered highly relevant in explaining individual differences in hostility, aggression, and the use of power in relationships. Research findings indicated that the higher the subordinates' attachment anxiety (as shown by constant attempts to acquire support and care and feelings of uncertainty that these will be provided, thus giving rise to emotions of anger and despair), the higher the frequency of reported abusive supervision and its consequences of higher burnout and lower well-being (Salton Meyer & Mikulincer, 2016). These results were explained as anxious individuals' chronic worries about relationship partners that were possibly transferred to their relationship with their supervisor. Consequently, their excessive expectations for attention, care, and support from a manager, who was often preoccupied with managing multiple subordinates and many tasks, may have caused relational friction and dissatisfaction, negative emotions towards the direct manager, and possible conflicts with him or her. This relational mismatch may have been interpreted by anxious subordinates as an abusive relationship., Alternatively, they may have become victims of abusive supervision by frustrated and stressed supervisors, who could not understand and effectively react to anxious subordinates’ desire for support. In any case, negative consequences for subordinates, both emotionally and mentally, were an outcome of this adverse dyadic workplace relationship.

Additional research findings focused on antecedents of abusive supervision at the organizational level. These indicated that the higher the subordinate’s experience of a caring organizational ethical climate (in which individuals perceive that decisions, policies and strategies are based on a concern for the well-being of members of the organization as well as society at large), the lower their perceptions of abusive supervision. Findings regarding the supervisors showed that the higher their perceptions of an instrumental organizational ethical climate (that promotes ethical decision-making from a self-serving perspective, in the interest of the individual, his or her immediate group, and/or organization, yet potentially harming others), the higher the subordinates’ perceptions of abusive supervision (Salton Meyer & Mikulincer, 2016). These results are probably related to the highest ratings of unethical behaviours in instrumental ethical climates compared to other climates (Johnson, 2012). It is likely that when supervisors recognized an instrumental ethical climate, they behaved accordingly, in a more self-centred and less ethical way in their interactions with subordinates, thus aligning with subordinates’ experience of higher rates of abusive supervision.

**Consequences.** Yagil et al. (2011) found that Israeli subordinates drew on variety of problem-directed and emotion-directed methods in dealing with abusive supervision. However, they were inclined to evade direct communication, in contrast with Israelis’ cultural tendency for straightforward and open communication (Starr, 1991). These results could be explained by subordinates’ intensified feelings of threat of additional retribution by an abusive supervisor, which might radically change the characteristic cultural style of communication (Salton Meyer & Mikulincer, 2016).

Peperman and Bar Zuri's (2013) research on workplace bullying and abuse in Israel (as described earlier to illustrate how these behaviours, when inflicted by managers, were similar to abusive supervision) revealed that 50.8% of subjects described these abusive behaviours as a meaningful annoyance in their everyday work life; 43.9% said that they were a serious workplace problem; 48.2% indicated that the mistreatment they experienced at work harmed their quality of life; and 51.6% agreed that these behaviours impaired their work motivation. In a study in Israel, 2.7% of respondents reported that, following abuse in the workplace, they did not come to work. Meanwhile, 3.6% reported leaving the workplace altogether under such circumstances (Peperman & Bar Zuri, 2013).

Findings from Yagil’s (2006) study, carried out in Israeli organizations across a variety of sectors, revealed that supervisors’ abusive behaviours were positively related to subordinates’ burnout and their use of forceful upward influence tactics (e.g., threatening the supervisor and ceasing to cooperate with him/her) (Salton Meyer et al., 2018).

1. The research was partially funded by the late Professor Arie Shirom Foundation for Research. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)