Abusive supervision and emotional labour on a daily basis: The role of employee mindfulness

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationships between abusive supervision, subordinates' work engagement and their emotional labour on a daily basis. Based on an experience sampling study of 95 frontline hospitality employees over 10 working days, the results revealed the complex consequences of abusive supervision on subordinates in the hospitality industry. The results showed that daily abusive supervision was positively related to employees' daily surface acting through their daily work engagement, but it was not significantly related to daily deep acting. In addition, subordinates' mindfulness moderated the relationship between daily abusive supervision and subordinates' daily work engagement. These findings reveal employees' daily responses to abusive supervision and can help tourism and hospitality managers develop relevant training programmes and policies to reduce the negative impact of abusive supervision and thus protect employee well-being.

1. Introduction

Abusive supervision, defined as "subordinates' perception of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178), has received increasing attention from scholars since 2000. Hundreds of studies have investigated the negative impact of abusive supervision over the last two decades (e.g., De Hoogh et al., 2021; Lyubykh et al., 2022). Many scholars have examined the relationships between abusive supervision and subordinates' work engagement (e.g., Lyu et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2020) and between abusive supervision and employees' emotional labour (e.g., Carlson et al., 2012; Wu & Hu, 2013). However, little research has been conducted on the consequences of abusive supervision over time, especially in the context of tourism and hospitality. Barnes et al. (2015) suggested that researchers should take into account real-time abuse to accurately describe abusive supervision. Given the dynamic nature of emotions and behaviours (Cranford et al., 2006; Diestel et al., 2015; Shi et al., 2021), daily fluctuations in the consequences should be highlighted in research on abusive supervision. Moreover, in the hospitality industry, abusive supervision has been recognised more likely to happen and more complex due to the hierarchical labour structure and the complex cultural background (Yu, Xu, Li, & Shi, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the

short-term consequences of abusive supervision in the hospitality industry.

Both work engagement and emotional labour fluctuate over time. Work engagement is defined as a motivational state of well-being at work (Schaufeli et al., 2006), characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption; thus, it can be considered a work-related state of mind (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008), which can fluctuate in the short term (Mooneyham et al., 2016). Similarly, emotional labour—how employees manage their expressions and feelings to fulfil the emotional requirements of their jobs—can fluctuate (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Based on conservation of resources (COR) theory—a theory explaining internal mechanisms of motivational stress—abusive supervision has been identified as negatively related to employees' work engagement (Lyu et al., 2016), positively related to surface acting, and negatively related to deep acting (Wu & Hu, 2013). However, the time effect of the relationships between these concepts has not been investigated, given that prior studies have used a cross-sectional design. Therefore, daily work engagement and emotional labour merit further attention.

Exploring the daily fluctuations in emotional labour and work engagement among tourism and hospitality employees is particularly important. Especially for customer-facing workers, work engagement and emotional labour influence service performance (Biron & van

Veldhoven, 2012; Jang et al., 2020; Wang & Xie, 2020). Interactions between guest-facing employees and customers usually last only a few minutes or even seconds. Although employees may show their negative attitudes only briefly, customers may perceive this experience as an overall service failure (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002). Therefore, it is important to investigate fluctuations in the emotional labour of tourism and hospitality employees. Identifying fluctuations in surface acting and deep acting can benefit not only their well-being but also their overall service performance, which may improve customer satisfaction (Huang & Dai, 2010). Moreover, in the tourism and hospitality industry, abusive supervision is a complex phenomenon that is highly likely to occur (Yu, Xu, Li, & Shi, 2020). Therefore, investigating the relationships between daily abusive supervision, subordinates' daily work engagement, and their daily emotional labour is valuable for both theory and practice. Furthermore, mindfulness has been considered an effective buffer of negative feelings (Goldin & Gross, 2010) and has been found to ease subordinates' attitudes towards a supervisor's abusive behaviour (Walsh & Arnold, 2020). In this research, mindfulness was taken into account as the boundary condition in the relationship between daily abusive supervision and daily work engagement.

In this study, we used the experience sampling method (ESM) to assess the daily status and specific thoughts of frontline employees. Unlike the cross-sectional method, the ESM is an intensive longitudinal sampling method that takes repeated measurements of the same participant. The ESM focuses on evaluating variables that can fluctuate over a short period of time (Beal, 2015; Hektner et al., 2007; Vogelsmeier et al., 2019). In a cross-sectional research design, questions are developed to assess participants from a stable and general perspective (Shi et al., 2021). Therefore, their fluctuated emotions and reactions may be ignored. Using ESM, we measured employees' daily responses to abusive supervision. In summary, this study aims to investigate the relationship between daily abusive supervision and subordinates' daily emotional labour through the psychological mechanism of work engagement, accounting for the moderating effect of mindfulness.

2. Literature review

In this section, we will first review the relationship between abusive supervision, work engagement, and emotional labour based on the COR theory considering the time fluctuation. In the emotional labour section, we will introduce and review both surface acting and deep acting traditionally towards customers, as well as their supervisors. Finally, we will include the moderation effect of trait mindfulness on the relationship between daily abusive supervision and daily work engagement.

2.1. Abusive supervision and daily work engagement

According to the COR theory, abusive supervision negatively influences subordinates' work engagement (Lyu et al., 2016). COR is a theory of motivational stress related to the interpretation of internal mechanisms (Hobfoll, 1989). Psychological stress occurs in three types of cases: wasted resources, actual net loss of resources, and lack of resources after consumption. Resources can be seen as things that people value, especially states, objects, and conditions (Halbesleben et al., 2014). COR theory postulates that the loss of resources puts pressure on individuals. In the workplace, employees invest resources to fulfil their job requirements, expect positive results as a reward, and attempt to protect these resources (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). In the process of work engagement, employees must consume resources to engage in their jobs. As abusive supervision is considered a stressor, leading to a lack of psychological resources (Carlson et al., 2012), employees will not be able to engage in their work.

Work engagement has been shown to fluctuate over time. For instance, Bakker (2014) noted that work engagement fluctuated daily and that these daily fluctuations were influenced in part by negative experiences at work. Studies have shown that within-person variance

accounts for more than one third of the total variance in work engagement (Sonnentag et al., 2010; Xanthopoulou et al., 2012). Regarding leadership, a number of studies have shown that effective leaders empower subordinates to view their work in a positive light (Amabile et al., 2004; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Geertshuis et al., 2015). For example, effective leaders engage employees, assist them to understand that their work is meaningful and valuable, and encourage them to attach their identity to their work (Bono & Judge, 2003; Grant, 2012). Therefore, a supervisor's behaviour can influence their subordinates' feelings about their job, especially when the leader is fair and trustworthy, and creates psychological safety among subordinates (Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008). However, negative leadership (e.g., abusive supervision) has been shown to affect work engagement. For instance, Lyu et al. (2016) concluded that abusive supervision was negatively related to service employees' customer-oriented organisational citizenship behaviour by undermining their work engagement. Barnes et al. (2015) found that daily abusive supervision negatively affected daily unit-level work engagement. Therefore, building on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 1. Daily abusive supervision is negatively related to subordinates' daily work engagement.

2.2. Abusive supervision, daily work engagement and daily emotional labour

Acknowledging employees' emotions in the workplace lays the foundation for understanding the fundamental nature of emotional labour research. The dramaturgical perspective of emotional labour defines employees as actors who must respond to organisational demands and their work contexts as the stage (Dahling & Perez, 2010). It proposes two methods for employees to manage their emotional expressions: surface acting and deep acting (Hochschild, 2012). Surface acting is defined as employees' adjustment of their emotional expressions to match the requirements of their organisation, and deep acting refers to their adjustment and the consistency of their real emotions to express the emotions expected by their organisation (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). In the hospitality context, for example, surface acting can be considered the adjustment of employees' emotional expressions, such as smile when serving customers, and deep acting can be the adjustment of their real emotions, such as being happy to help from the bottom of their hearts and behaving naturally consistent with real emotions (Lee & Madera, 2019).

Regarding work engagement and emotional labour, Lu et al. (2014) showed that authentic emotional expressions were positively associated with job engagement; however, pretending to feel an emotion was negatively related to job engagement. Yoo and Arnold (2014) found that work engagement was negatively related to employees' surface acting and positively related to their deep acting. According to COR theory, engaged employees have sufficient energy and resources, which will diminish their surface acting (Lee & Ok, 2014). In other words, when frontline employees are engaged at work, they have enough energy to serve customers, so they do not need to fake their emotional expressions (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Both work engagement and emotional labour can be considered dynamic procedures; however, no studies have examined their relationship on a daily basis. As such, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 2. Subordinates' daily work engagement is (a) negatively related to their daily surface acting towards customers and (b) positively related to their daily deep acting towards customers.

It has been found that the leadership style of supervisors is related to subordinates' emotional labour. For example, Liu et al. (2011) showed that transactional leadership was negatively (positively) related to team innovativeness when employees' levels of emotional labour were high (low). Regarding abusive supervision, Carlson et al. (2012) found that

surface acting and burnout mediated the relationship between abusive supervision and work-to-family or family-to-work conflicts. Based on COR theory, abusive supervision deprives employees' energy and resources that support their deep acting behaviour (Wu & Hu, 2013). However, none of the studies investigating the relationship between abusive supervision and subordinates' emotional labour have considered the effect of time on this relationship. Given that emotions and behaviours can easily change from time to time, in this study we apply ESM to capture employees' daily emotional labour and investigate the daily impact of abusive supervision on emotional labour in the tourism and hospitality industry. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 3. Daily abusive supervision is (a) positively related to subordinates' daily surface acting towards customers and (b) negatively related to subordinates' daily deep acting towards customers.

Consistent with COR theory, abusive supervision, as a driver of insufficient resources, tends to lead to employees withholding work engagement, which further influences their engagement in emotional labour. As less engaged employees have inadequate energy and psychological resources, they tend to show higher levels of surface acting and lower levels of deep acting. Thus, daily work engagement could act as the underlying psychological mechanism linking daily abusive supervision and emotional labour strategies. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4. Subordinates' daily work engagement mediates the relationship between daily abusive supervision and (a) subordinates' daily surface acting towards customers and the relationship between daily abusive supervision and (b) subordinates' daily deep acting towards customers.

When employees experience abusive supervision, their emotional labour is affected. This fluctuation is embodied not only in their emotional labour towards customers but also in their emotional labour towards other people, such as coworkers, supervisors, and family members (Ozcelik, 2013). Subordinates may engage in deviant behaviour towards their supervisor when they experience abusive supervision (Liu et al., 2010; Park et al., 2019). Hoobler and Brass (2006) confirmed that abused subordinates engaged in family undermining as a form of displaced aggression because they feared retaliation if they became aggressive towards their abusive supervisor. We argue that subordinates' emotional labour towards their supervisor forms part of their work requirements, especially in a high power distance country such as China, where employees are more likely to obey the power imbalance and perform accordingly. Thus, subordinates are expected to show kindness and respect to their supervisor. In this study, we propose to examine subordinates' emotional labour towards their supervisor as well to further understand the relationship between abusive supervision and emotional labour. Therefore, Hypotheses 5–7 has been proposed as follows.

Hypothesis 5. Subordinates' daily work engagement is (a) negatively related to their daily surface acting towards their supervisor and (b) positively related to their daily deep acting towards their supervisor.

Hypothesis 6. Daily abusive supervision is (a) positively related to subordinates' daily surface acting towards their supervisor and (b) negatively related to subordinates' daily deep acting towards their supervisor.

Hypothesis 7. Subordinates' daily work engagement mediates the relationship between daily abusive supervision and (a) subordinates' daily surface acting towards their supervisor and the relationship between daily abusive supervision and (b) subordinates' daily deep acting towards their supervisor.

2.3. Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a psychological concept that comes from Buddhism (Olendzki, 2005). Recent studies have defined mindfulness as the process of paying attention to the current situation, including internal stimuli (thoughts and physical sensations) and external stimuli (physical environment and social environment), and observing these stimuli without evaluation, judgement or assigning any meaning to them (Bartlett et al., 2019; Glomb et al., 2011; Reb, Allen, & Vogus, 2020). Mindfulness-based therapy has been found can reduce pain (Carmody & Baer, 2008; Ljótsson et al., 2010) and increase overall physical health with different health issues (Baer, 2003; Grossman, 2008). In addition to a therapeutic approach, mindfulness can also be considered a baseline characteristic (i.e., an individual's trait or personality). From a trait perspective, mindfulness can be considered a stable individual trait whereby an individual tends to be in a state of mindful awareness (Brown et al., 2007; Glomb et al., 2011). Regarding the relationship between mindfulness and leadership, Reb et al. (2014) found that supervisors' trait mindfulness was positively related to employee well-being. In addition, supervisors' trait mindfulness is relevant to their leadership style; it has been shown to be positively related to transformational leadership and negatively related to destructive leadership (Lange, Bormann, & Rowold, 2018). From the perspective of subordinates, mindfulness has been linked to secondary self-regulatory processes (Glomb et al., 2011), which can optimise the regulatory process related to work-related emotions (Long & Christian, 2015). Mindfulness has been shown to reduce negative feelings, such as stress, anxiety, and depression (Goldin & Gross, 2010; Morone et al., 2008), which have been confirmed to be related to abusive supervision (Harvey et al., 2007; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). For example, Zheng and Liu (2017) showed that mindfulness mitigated the impact of abusive supervision on employees' creative performance. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect mindfulness to weaken the negative impact of abusive supervision on subordinates' work engagement.

However, mindfulness has been identified as leading to employee isolation or even as potentially counterproductive in affecting their reactions towards abusive supervision (e.g., Walsh & Arnold, 2020). For example, according to social information processing approach (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), a subordinate's trait mindfulness leads to more sensitive responses to the information received from abusive supervision and further intensifies the relationship between abusive supervision and employee well-being (Walsh & Arnold, 2020). Furthermore, research has shown that employees with a high level of mindfulness are more likely to view their abusive supervisor as unfair (Breslin, Zack, & McMain, 2002). Once employees regard their supervisor's behaviour as fair or unfair, they behave accordingly based on their judgement (Lind, 2001). When employees consider their supervisors unfair, they tend to withhold beneficial work behaviours such as work engagement (Thau et al., 2009). In other words, employees high in trait mindfulness are more likely to view their abusive supervisor as unfair and will reduce their work engagement more when faced with abusive supervision than other employees.

Taken together, mindfulness can be reasonably considered a moderator of the relationship between daily abusive supervision and daily work engagement, thus weakening or strengthening this relationship. We leave the direction of the moderating effects open to this hypothesis. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 8. Subordinates' mindfulness moderates the influence of daily abusive supervision on employees' daily work engagement.

In summary, based on COR theory and taking account of time fluctuations, we propose daily abusive supervision has positive (negative) impacts on subordinates' daily surface acting (deep acting) towards both customer and supervisor via daily work engagement. In addition, the personal trait level mindfulness moderates how daily abusive supervision influences daily work engagement. The hypothesised multilevel

model of this study is presented in Fig. 1.

3. Methods

3.1. Participants and data collection procedures

To ensure a comprehensive examination of emotional labour, the participants recruited for this study were frontline employees in guest-facing positions from luxury hotels in Chinese cities. Frontline employees have close interactions with customers during their daily work, leading to emotional labour to fulfil emotional expectations from the organisation (Lee & Ok, 2014). In addition, emotional labour towards their supervisors is also included in this study, as the participants interact with their supervisors on a daily basis. Moreover, given luxury hotels' high service quality requirements, emotional labour tends to be more demanding compared to other categories of hotels (Lam et al., 2022) and supervisors' evaluations are expected to be more rigorous than in other hotels. The participants were selected based on all of the following criteria: (a) working in a luxury hotel in China; (b) interacting with customers on a daily basis during work; (c) interacting daily with their supervisor during work; and (d) having 10 continuous working days over a two-week period.

To facilitate data collection, permission was requested from the hotels involved to facilitate access to their frontline staff. The director of the human resources department of each hotel relayed our request for potential participants. Interested employees contacted us directly and their information was protected in line with the Data Protection Act (2018). The participants were given the opportunity to ask questions before data collection. They were made fully aware of their right to withdraw at any time without having to provide any justification before signing the consent form. After signing the consent forms, the participants sent their work schedules to the researcher to receive a link to the daily electronic questionnaire according to their specific work shifts via their mobile phone.

The data were collected in two stages. First, before the main ESM study, the participants' demographic information (age, gender, years of experience, and job position) and their mindfulness as a Level 2 (person level) moderator were collected. Next, during the ESM data collection process, the participants were asked to complete a self-report questionnaire concerning daily abusive supervision, daily work engagement, and daily emotional labour over a period of 10 working days. The repeated measurements (day-level data) are nested within person. Therefore, in this theoretical model, Level 1 refers to the day level measurement, which describes the within-person variance; Level 2 refers to the person level, which describes the between-person variance. This method made it possible to evaluate their daily perceived abusive supervision, daily work engagement, and daily emotional labour. The

interval-contingent protocol of the ESM was applied, indicating that the participants completed the survey at a specific time or at specified intervals (Bolger & Laurenceau, 2013). Unlike signal-contingent protocols and event-contingent protocols, the interval-contingent protocol is suitable for topics related to employees' daily fluctuations (Yu, Xu, Li, & Shi, 2020). To minimise the potential memory loss or bias in reporting reactions or feelings of specific events by recalling their memories, each participant's survey completion status was checked within an hour of completion to ensure they have completed the questionnaire in time and did not leave it to a few days later.

3.2. Measurement

3.2.1. Person-level measurement

Mindfulness was measured with the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale with 15 items (Brown & Ryan, 2003). The participants were asked to complete this scale before completing the daily self-report questionnaire. A sample item is "I find myself listening to someone with one ear and doing something else at the same time" ($1 = almost\ never$ to $6 = almost\ always$). Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$.

3.2.2. Day-level measurement

All of the scales used to repeatedly measure the test variables were shortened in previous studies, and the three main variables—abusive supervision, emotional labour, and work engagement—have well-established measurement scales for ESM research (Barnes et al., 2015; Scott & Barnes, 2011; Tims et al., 2011). All the scales were reliable and valid based on the results of the test statistics.

For daily abusive supervision, the participants were asked to report their experiences with daily abusive supervision. To this end, the five-item abusive supervision scale developed by Barnes et al. (2015) was used. The participants used a 7-point response scale ($1 = never$ to $7 = always$) with the stem statement "How often did your supervisor use the following behaviours with you today?" A sample item is "My supervisor tells me that I'm incompetent."

Daily work engagement was measured with the nine-item version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2006; Tims et al., 2011). Following Schaufeli et al. (2006)'s suggestion and Tims et al. (2011)'s previous measurement, we used the total nine-item score as an indicator of work engagement rather than considered it as a second order construct. The participants used a 7-point response scale ($1 = totally\ disagree$ to $7 = totally\ agree$). A sample item is "At work, I felt bursting with energy today."

For subordinates' daily emotional labour, the participants were asked to report how often they engaged in emotional labour, using a five-item scale to measure daily surface acting towards their customers and their supervisors respectively and a three-item scale to measure
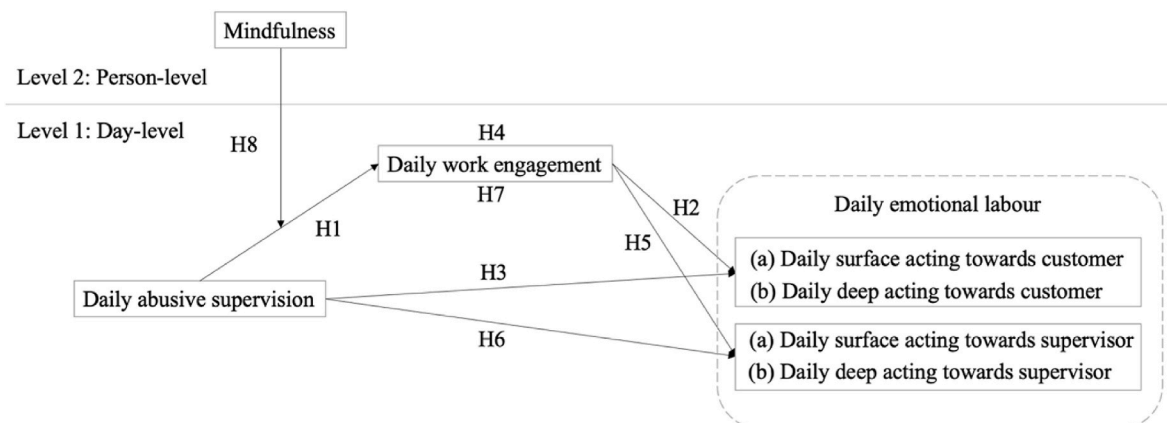

Fig. 1. Hypothesised multilevel model.

deep acting towards their customers and their supervisors respectively (Chi & Grandey, 2019; Scott & Barnes, 2011). The participants used a 7-point response scale (1 = *never* to 7 = *always*). A sample item is "How frequently did you hide your true feelings about a situation today?"

The scales included in the questionnaire were translated into Chinese before formal data collection. As all the authors are bilingual in both English and Chinese, the translation process followed the forward translation and back translation process by the first two authors (Brislin; 1986). When a discrepancy in meaning was found in the back translation, the third author joined in for the translation and final check (Brislin, 1986; Jones et al., 2001).

3.3. Analytical procedure

Due to the nested data structure of ESM, multilevel linear modelling was used to investigate the relationships between daily abusive supervision, daily work engagement, daily surface acting, daily deep acting; and the moderating effects of mindfulness. Data analysis was conducted using R Studio. The nlme and lme4 packages were used to test the random coefficient model (Bates et al., 2015; Pinheiro et al., 2022), and the *mlma* package was used to test the multilevel mediating effects (Yu & Li, 2020). All data were restructured into long dataset before the data analysis (Yu, Xu, Li, & Shi, 2020). Before the main multilevel linear testing, multilevel confirmatory factor analysis was conducted first (Brown, 2015; Brown & Moore, 2012). Following the multilevel centring strategy, before performing the random coefficient analysis, the Level-1 predictors were group-mean centred and the Level-2 variable was grand-mean centred (Luke, 2004; Paccagnella, 2006).

4. Results

More than 500 employees were approached at the initial stage. Due to the sensitive topic, only 200 employees gave their consent to participate in the survey. Finally, we received 95 valid continuous responses, with a response rate of 19%. For the sample size, traditional multilevel studies suggested at least 50 samples in Level 2 (Yu, Xu, Li, & Shi, 2020). Gabriel et al. (2019) suggested that ESM studies aim for at least 83 participants for Level 2, and at least 835 observations for Level 1. In this study, we have 95 participants (Level 2), and 931 observations (Level 1). The 95 participants came from six different hotels in two cities located in Northeast China. Of the 95 participants, 77.89% (74 participants) were between 21 and 30 years old, 37.89% (36 participants) were men, and 53.68% (51 participants) had less than 1 year of work experience. As the participants were frontline employees in customer-facing positions in

Table 1
Demographics of participants.

Demographic Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	59	62.11%
Male	36	37.89%
Age		
20 or below 20	15	15.79%
21–30	74	77.89%
31–40	5	5.26%
41 and above	1	1.05%
Working years		
1 year or below	51	53.68%
1-2 years	21	22.11%
3-5 years	13	13.68%
6 years or above	10	10.53%
Positions		
Managers	10	10.53%
Employees	68	71.58%
Interns	17	17.89%
Locations		
Shenyang	59	62.11%
Dalian	36	37.89%

luxury hotels, most were young and short of working experience. The demographic information is presented in Table 1.

The ESM design itself can minimise the noncongeneric perspective common method variance due to the repeated data collection process (Beal, 2015; Richardson et al., 2009). The confirmatory factor analysis has been done to minimise the congeneric perspective common method variance (Richardson et al., 2009). Due to the longitudinal and multilevel data structure, we conducted multilevel confirmatory factor analysis. The model fit indices suggest that daily abusive supervision, daily work engagement, daily surface acting, daily deep acting and mindfulness fit the data reasonably well given the relatively small (but adequate) sample in this study (CFI = 0.86, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR [within] = 0.09, SRMR [between] = 0.07). The descriptive statistics and correlations of the study variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 3 summarises the direct effects of daily abusive supervision, daily work engagement, daily surface acting, and daily deep acting. The fixed effect coefficients for each multilevel linear regression model are included in Table 3. First, we ran the null model to test the differences between units (within-person variance). After confirming the within-person variance, the random coefficient model was applied to analyse the data. Abusive supervision was negatively related to work engagement ($\gamma = -0.06$, $p < 0.05$), supporting Hypothesis 1. After examining the relationship between abusive supervision and work engagement, the predictors of emotional labour towards both supervisors and customers were examined (Hypotheses 2, 3, 5, and 6). Fully supporting Hypothesis 2 and 5, subordinates' daily work engagement was negatively related to their surface acting towards both customers ($\gamma = -0.14$, $p < 0.01$) and supervisors ($\gamma = -0.16$, $p < 0.01$) and positively related to their deep acting towards both customers ($\gamma = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$) and supervisors ($\gamma = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$). Partially supporting Hypothesis 3 and 6, abusive supervision was positively related to subordinates' surface acting towards customers ($\gamma = 0.08$, $p < 0.01$) and supervisors ($\gamma = 0.05$, $p < 0.05$) but was not significantly related to their daily deep acting towards customers ($\gamma = 0.09$, n. s.) and supervisors ($\gamma = 0.02$, n. s.). Therefore, the results supported Hypotheses 1, 2a, 2 b, 3a, 5a, 5 b, and 6a.

We further tested the mediating effects of daily work engagement on the relationships between daily abusive supervision, daily surface acting, and daily deep acting (Hypothesis 4 and 7). The results are presented in Model 6 and Model 7. As shown in Model 4 and Model 5, abusive supervision did not have a significant relationship with daily deep acting towards both customers and supervisors. Therefore, we further tested Hypotheses 4a and 7a only: the mediating effect of daily work engagement on the relationship between daily abusive supervision and subordinates' daily surface acting. As shown in Table 3, the results confirmed the mediating effects of daily work engagement on the above relationship. As stated by Baron and Kenny (1986), perfect mediation (i. e., full mediation) holds if the independent variable X (i.e., abusive supervision) has no significant effect on the dependent variable Y (i.e., emotional labour) when the mediator is controlled. From our empirical results, the effect of the daily abusive supervision on daily surface acting towards customer (Model 6) is non-significant when the mediator is introduced ($\gamma = 0.03$, n. s.), indicating a full mediation model. After testing in *mlma* package, the indirect effect is significant with 95% confidence interval (CI) [0.02, 0.01]. For surface acting towards supervisors, Model 7 shows when including both daily abusive supervision and daily work engagement in the model, the daily abusive supervision becomes non-significant ($\gamma = 0.03$, n. s.), which indicates a full mediation model. After testing in *mlma* package, the indirect effect is significant with 95% confidence interval (CI) [0.03, 0.01]. Thus, Hypotheses 4a and 7a were supported.

After testing the relationships between daily abusive supervision, daily work engagement, and daily emotional labour, the Level-2 moderator (mindfulness) was tested. Model 8 and Fig. 2 present the results with mindfulness as a moderator. Model 8 shows that the influence of mindfulness on daily work engagement is significant ($\gamma = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$), and the interaction terms of daily abusive supervision and

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and correlations.

	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Between-person level										
1. Abusive supervision	1.76	0.78	1						
2. Work engagement	4.73	0.83	−0.31***	1					
3. Surface acting (customer)	3.57	0.66	0.4***	−0.6***	1				
4. Deep acting (customer)	4.55	0.81	−0.28***	0.72***	−0.72***	1			
5. Surface acting (supervisor)	3.26	0.85	0.53***	−0.68***	0.86***	−0.7***	1		
6. Deep acting (supervisor)	4.51	0.75	−0.29***	0.69***	−0.7***	0.94***	−0.75***	1	
7. Mindfulness	4.39	0.06	−0.32***	0.54***	−0.34***	0.29***	−0.44***	0.34***	1
Within-person level										
1. Abusive supervision	1.76	0.51	1						
2. Work engagement	4.73	0.44	−0.03	1					
3. Surface acting (customer)	3.57	0.3	0.06*	−0.16***	1				
4. Deep acting (customer)	4.55	0.55	0.15***	0.3***	−0.16***	1			
5. Surface acting (supervisor)	3.26	0.33	0.04	−0.19***	0.4***	−0.21***	1		
6. Deep acting (supervisor)	4.51	0.59	0.1***	0.26***	−0.21***	0.5***	−0.21***	1	

Note. Level 1 (day level) N = 931; Level 2 (person level) N = 95.
*p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001.

Table 3
Summary of multilevel estimation results.

Variable	Work Engagement	Surface Acting		Deep Acting		Mediation		Work Engagement
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Fixed effects								
Intercept	4.74 (0.09) ***	3.52 (0.08) ***	3.31 (0.10) ***	4.59 (0.09) ***	4.53 (0.09) ***	3.52 (0.08) ***	3.31 (0.10) ***	4.74 (0.08) ***
Daily abusive supervision	−0.06 (0.05) *	0.08 (0.03) **	0.05 (0.03) *	0.09 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)	0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	−0.05 (0.05)
Daily work engagement		−0.14 (0.04) **	−0.16 (0.05) **	0.29 (0.06) ***	0.24 (0.05) ***	−0.14 (0.04) ***	−0.15 (0.05) **	
Mindfulness								0.64 (0.10) ***
Daily abusive supervision * Mindfulness								−0.03 (0.05) *
Random effects								
Residual variance at level 1	0.41	0.29	0.32	0.50	0.55	0.26	0.27	0.41
		0.26	0.27	0.46	0.52			
Residual variance at level 2	0.83	0.66	0.84	0.81	0.74	0.66	0.84	0.58
Variance linear slope (das)	0.06	0.06	0.01	0.08	0.07	0.01	0.01	0.06
Variance linear slope (dwe)		0.05	0.09	0.12	0.08	0.05	0.09	

Note. *p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001.
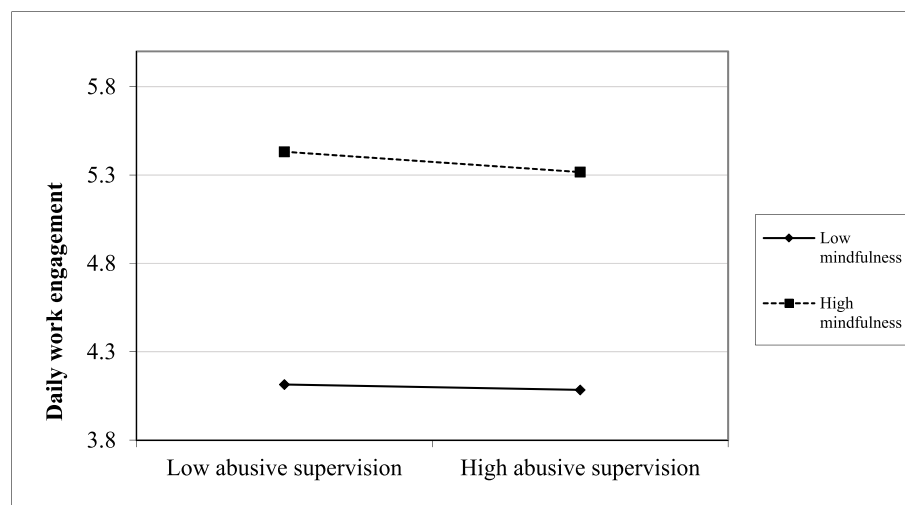
Fig. 2. Moderating effect of mindfulness on abusive supervision—work engagement relationship.

mindfulness are significant ($\gamma = -0.03$, $p < 0.05$). The results showed that mindfulness strengthened the negative relationship between daily abusive supervision and daily work engagement. In addition, with the same level of perceived abusive supervision, a high level of mindfulness (one standard deviation above the mean) was associated with a high level of work engagement. This indicated that although the subordinates

with high mindfulness were more sensitive to abusive supervision, their daily work engagement remained higher than that of the employees with low mindfulness. Fig. 2 depicts the pattern of the cross-level interaction. Therefore, Hypothesis 8 was supported.

5. Discussion

This research verified the relationship between daily abusive supervision, daily work engagement, and daily surface acting, and the moderation effect of trait mindfulness. This study is the first to identify the differences in stability between daily surface acting and daily deep acting in subordinates' reactions to daily abusive supervision. The results of this study confirmed that daily abusive supervision was negatively related to subordinates' daily work engagement and positively related to their daily surface acting towards supervisors. Regarding daily deep acting, the effect of daily abusive supervision was not found to be significant. In fact, ignoring the short-time evaluation, many empirical studies have verified that abusive supervision is negatively related to subordinates' deep acting (e.g., Wu & Hu, 2013). On the basis of this result, it can be argued that deep acting is more stable than surface acting. More intuitively, the influence of abusive supervision on deep acting requires more time to emerge than is the case for surface acting. Previous studies have discussed the differences between surface acting and deep acting. For instance, Shuler and Sypher (2000) found that both surface acting and deep acting could reduce sadness, but deep acting could activate stronger physiological responses. Xanthopoulou et al. (2018) found that unlike daily deep acting, daily surface acting required more recovery at the end of a working day. In addition, Huang et al. (2015) indicated that the effect of daily deep acting (not surface acting) on momentary job satisfaction and daily customer conflict handling is mediated by emotional exhaustion. However, the difference in stability between deep acting and surface acting has not been discussed in the literature.

Furthermore, the results showed that mindfulness does not always buffer against the negative impact of abusive supervision. This research found that although mindfulness can strengthen the negative relationship between daily abusive supervision and daily work engagement, with the same level of abusive supervision among subordinates, a high level of mindfulness was associated with a high level of work engagement. In other words, subordinates with a high level of trait mindfulness were indeed more sensitive to abusive supervision, which is in line with social information processing approach, although a high level of trait mindfulness is positively associated with a high level of daily work engagement. Therefore, this research therefore provides new empirical evidence that mindfulness does not always buffer against the negative impact of abusive supervision.

Theoretical contributions

This research has several important theoretical implications. First, this study is among the first to investigate the daily effect of abusive supervision on employees' emotional labour. Although studies have investigated the daily impact of abusive supervision on work engagement (Barnes et al., 2015) and supervisors' recovery levels (Qin et al., 2017), the daily effect of abusive supervision on emotional labour has been overlooked. This study contributes to the literature on the impact of abusive supervision on subordinates' daily emotional labour by investigating the psychological mechanism of work engagement based on COR theory.

Regarding the different effects of abusive supervision on subordinates' daily surface acting and daily deep acting revealed in this study, new insights into the differences between surface acting and deep acting are provided, which can be considered empirical evidence of the dramaturgical perspective of emotional labour (Dahling & Perez, 2010). These findings provide a new perspective for further exploring emotional labour. By investigating the timing differences in the effects

of abusive supervision on surface acing and deep acting, more relationships and research topics in the field of organisational behaviour can be explored, such as, how to enhance employees' deep acting more efficiently at different times. In addition, this study is the first to examine the impact of abusive supervision on subordinates' daily emotional labour towards both customers and supervisors. As our results showed that abusive supervision increased subordinates' surface acting towards both customers and supervisors, we propose that abused subordinates consume more energy for surface acting than has been recognised previously, which will intensify the negative impact of abusive supervision, based on COR theory.

Mindfulness has been shown to be positively related to work engagement in earlier empirical research (Leroy et al., 2013). This study broadens the understanding of the moderating effect of mindfulness on the relationship between abusive supervision and work engagement and we found that mindfulness strengthened the negative relationship between daily abusive supervision and daily work engagement. The possible reasons behind this are (a) the relationship in this study refers to a more 'instant' reaction (daily relationship); (b) following the social information processing approach, mindfulness may lead to more sensitive responses to the information received from abusive supervision and further intensify the relationship between abusive supervision and employee work engagement.

Moreover, this study is among the first to apply ESM to identify the daily effect of abusive supervision in the tourism and hospitality industry. Owing to the service-oriented nature of the tourism and hospitality industry, frontline employees deal with customers on a daily basis. Although most interactions between employees and customers last only a few minutes, employees' short-term negative performance may still be perceived as a service failure by customers. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the reasons for the fluctuations in frontline employees' emotional labour. Applying ESM, this study argues that deep acting is more stable than surface acting when influenced by abusive supervision. Understanding the linkage between daily abusive supervision and daily emotional labour through ESM contributes to both employee well-being and customer satisfaction in the tourism and hospitality industry. This study illustrates the applicability and usefulness of ESM for tourism and hospitality research. We hope that in the future it will encourage more researchers to apply this method to investigate other important topics in tourism and hospitality management.

Practical implications

By acknowledging the daily effects of abusive supervision, practitioners can avoid more negative impacts on subordinates' well-being. This study reveals that abusive supervision has a 'real-time' negative impact on employees' daily work engagement and daily surface acting. To avoid and weaken the negative impact of abusive supervision, practitioners should help prevent its occurrence in the future, including practices such as related training, regular checks on leaders' ethical behaviours, and committing to building an ethical climate. In addition, as deep acting cannot be influenced by abusive supervision 'immediately', establishing timely intervention methods is critical. For example, managers can establish a channel for instant reporting and a quick follow-up procedure. Through a quick reaction, the negative influences of abusive supervision can be mitigated.

Furthermore, co-worker support (Xu et al., 2018) and organisational support (Li et al., 2016) have been shown to effectively reduce the negative impact of abusive supervision. Combined with the instant reaction channel, these types of support allow victims to receive support on time, which could reduce or even eliminate the potential negative effects of abusive supervision. Therefore, the organisation should pay attention to building a helpful working environment, which will lead to on-time help from co-workers. It can fill the gap especially when the organisation needs time to react.

Moreover, a better working environment also contributes to

regulating the supervisor's behaviours. Aggressive norms (Restubog et al., 2011) and work-related stress (Meloury & Signal, 2014) have been identified as antecedents of abusive supervision in the tourism and hospitality industry. Working in the service industry, hotel employees often experience a high level of work-related stress, which involves dealing with their supervisors and customers on a daily basis (O'Neill & Davis, 2011). A healthy working environment can both support the victim and mitigate abusive supervision. Besides the working environment, organisations should develop various events to raise awareness of abusive supervision among employees. With awareness of the negative impact of abusive supervision, supervisors can regulate their behaviours spontaneously, and subordinates can learn to face abusive supervision and protect themselves from it.

In addition, training programmes and treatments could be developed. Training programmes have been shown to effectively alleviate abusive supervision, thereby improving subordinates' psychological well-being (Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2018). As shown in this study, a subordinate with high trait mindfulness has a higher level of work engagement than other subordinates. In addition to trait mindfulness, mindfulness-related programmes have been found to effectively reduce negative emotions. For instance, mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), a standard, rigorous group training course, is designed to relieve stress (Grossman, 2010; Grossman et al., 2004). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) is another mindfulness-related psychotherapy, developed by Teasdale et al. (1991), that combines cognitive therapy with MBSR to solve the problem of the recurrence of long-term depression. Studies have shown that MBCT can detect negative thoughts that may lead to a relapse of depression at an early stage, thereby preventing recurrence (Kuyken et al., 2010). Besides MBSR and MBCT, dialectical behaviour therapy has been widely used, as it can help people cope with life stress and learn to accept themselves (Lynch et al., 2006). These training programmes have been shown to effectively reduce stress and negative emotions (Lazar, 2005). Making mindfulness training programmes accessible to employees can increase their work engagement and protect their well-being.

Limitations and future directions

This study has some limitations. First, although we applied ESM to investigate the relationship between daily abusive supervision and subordinates' daily emotional labour, we did not manipulate the variable or use a random assignment technique. Instead of manipulating mindfulness (Hülsheger et al., 2013), we used a scale to measure it. As discussed earlier, instead of being a trait, people can be trained to develop mindfulness. In the future, researchers could design mindfulness interventions to further investigate this topic.

In addition, the data were collected only from Chinese hotels. Abusive supervision has been verified to be closely related to cultural differences (Hon & Lu, 2016; Xu et al., 2018; Yen & Teng, 2013), but the conclusions drawn in this study do not consider the effect of culture. Future research could further examine whether cultural differences influence subordinates' daily work engagement and daily emotional labour in response to daily abusive supervision. In Western culture, the relationships in this study may be found differently.

Moreover, the sample in this study is skewed towards younger employees (77.89% of the participants aged 21–30 years old) with not much work experience (53.68% of the participants had 1 year or less work experience). Although the sample reflects the frontline position's feature to some degree, future research should focus on the more balanced distribution of participants' demographics. Using a sample of a more balanced distribution of workers can capture a more comprehensive picture of the relationship between daily abusive supervision and daily emotional labour.

Finally, this study focused on the hotel industry only. Future research can collect data in other sectors (e.g., restaurants and theme parks) to determine whether the relationships examined here also exist in other contexts. Moreover, the special emotional regulation requirements of customer-facing employees in the service industry may have influenced the results for emotional labour, and future research could expand the research context beyond the service industry.

6. Conclusion

Based on an ESM study of tracking 95 frontline hospitality employees over 10 working days, this study confirms the daily impact of abusive supervision. The result shows that daily abusive supervision positively influences employees' daily surface acting towards customers and supervisors via their daily work engagement, but is not significantly related to daily deep acting. Moreover, subordinates' trait mindfulness strengthens the negative leadership between daily abusive supervision and daily work engagement. These findings not only reveal employees' daily responses to abusive supervision, but also help practitioners in the tourism and hospitality industry to develop relevant channels and policies to reduce the negative impact of abusive supervision and protect employees' well-being.

Credit author statement

Yitong Yu: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft; Shi (Tracy) Xu: Writing – review & editing; Supervision; Gang Li: Writing – review & editing; Supervision.

Impact statement

This research entitled "*Abusive supervision and emotional labour on a daily basis: The role of employee mindfulness*" is among the first attempts in understanding instant effects of abusive supervision on employees' emotional labour in the hospitality and tourism context. Based on an experience sampling study of 95 frontline hospitality employees over 10 working days, this research reveals that daily abusive supervision was positively related to employees' daily surface acting through their daily work engagement, but was not significantly related to daily deep acting. Moreover, subordinates' mindfulness moderated the relationship between daily abusive supervision and subordinates' daily work engagement. The findings imply that practitioners can establish various rules, policies and trainings to weaken the negative impact of abusive supervision. In addition, making mindfulness training programmes accessible to employees can help increase their work engagement and further protect their well-being.

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Declaration of competing interest

None.

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