

**Vicarious Abusive Supervision Among Restaurant Frontline Employees:
The Role of Employee Industry Tenure**

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Abstract

Vicarious abusive supervision (VAS) has recently garnered the attention of hospitality researchers. VAS is prevalent in hospitality work settings characterised by long production chains and open operating environments. Based on conservation of resources theory, this study examines how VAS influences hospitality employees' work behaviours (i.e., supervisor-directed deviance, silence, and helping behaviour) via affective rumination, with the moderating role of industry tenure as an individual contingency on the relationship between VAS and affective rumination. The data were gathered from 233 restaurant frontline employees and their supervisors in Turkey. We tested the proposed model using partial least squares method through SmartPLS 3. The results reveal that VAS triggers affective rumination, which in turn is positively related to supervisor-directed deviance and silence, and negatively related to helping behaviour. Moreover, industry tenure, as a buffer resource, significantly moderates the relationship between VAS and affective rumination. To reduce the occurrence of VAS and mitigate its negative effects, managers should establish a work environment that embraces understanding and respect, pay attention to how they communicate with employees, implement appropriate interventions when VAS occurs, and conduct stress management training and improve employees' emotion regulation skills in ways that correspond to the employees' industry experience. This study advances research on VAS by offering insight into how VAS impacts employees' work behaviours via the underlying mechanism of affective rumination through a COR lens. The findings also shed light on the salient buffering effect of industry tenure as an individual contingency.

Keywords

Vicarious abusive supervision, affective rumination, supervisor–employee relationship

Introduction

Abusive supervision, a form of workplace mistreatment perpetrated by supervisors, is a salient problem plaguing hospitality organizations that has detrimental consequences for subordinates (Hershcovis *et al.*, 2020; Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2022). Existing literature considers the impact of abusive supervision on negative job attitudes (emotional exhaustion, Wheeler *et al.*, 2013; lower-quality leadership–member exchange, Lian *et al.*, 2012) and negative behavioural outcomes (reduced job performance, Xu *et al.*, 2012; higher turnover intentions, Aquino and Thau, 2009).

Recent research on abusive supervision has posited that the effects of abusive supervision are not confined to the focal victims but in fact extend to employees who witness the abusive supervision, a phenomenon referred to as vicarious abusive supervision (VAS; Harris *et al.*, 2013). Cases of VAS in internationally iconic companies have also been reported (Lashinsky, 2011). While existing research has widely revealed the prevalence of abusive supervision in the hospitality industry, we further explain from three perspectives why VAS is particularly relevant in hospitality settings. First, the long service production chain of hospitality products necessitates close collaboration and coordination among coworkers (Wang *et al.*, 2021), which leaves employees liable to witnessing the interactions between supervisors and subordinates, including scenes that involve abusive supervision. Second, as hospitality service delivery is often operated in an open space where customers, employees, and supervisors are producing and consuming simultaneously (Pizam and Shani, 2009), hospitality employees can easily access firsthand information about interpersonal relationships of all kinds, making it easy to vicariously experience abusive supervision in their daily grind. Third, Yu *et al.* (2022)'s qualitative research on VAS revealed that hospitality industry demands a heavy workload for both supervisors and employees during working hours. Such demanding work setting leads supervisors to become prickly more often, which enables almost every subordinate to experience VAS more or less (Yu *et al.*, 2022). Taken together, we consider that the long service chain, open service environment and heavy workload render it highly likely to occur VAS among

hospitality employees. Nevertheless, limited research has explored VAS in the hospitality context (for the only exception, see Yu *et al.*, 2022).

To address this important research gap, the current study draws on conservation of resources (COR) theory in analysing VAS as a salient job stressor that generates psychological strain and emotional load (Thompson *et al.*, 2022). We posit that as a stressor, VAS elicits employees' repetitive and passive mental processing of incidents, ultimately producing negative thoughts and feelings (Duffy *et al.*, 2002): namely, affective rumination. VAS threatens or causes a loss of cognitive and emotional resources (Hobfoll, 2001). Given this, we propose that affective rumination is a cognitive outcome of the resource depletion caused by VAS, which is accompanied by stimulus repertoire and physiological activation due to cognitive load and psychological stress. In addition, drawing upon COR theory (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2001), individuals' reactions to resource depletion caused by stressors are contingent on individual characteristics (Priesemuth, 2013). Accordingly, we explore a boundary condition of the relationship between VAS and affective rumination, with employee industry tenure serving as an individual factor to buffer the impact of VAS on affective rumination. When affective rumination is activated, employees perceive the rumination as a detrimental process of consciousness and cognition, and require emotion regulation strategy that powerfully guides them in their attentional control (Besharat *et al.*, 2013). Longer-tenured employees with extended professional experiences generally have accumulated more emotion regulation skills (Thornton and Herndon, 2016), thus rendering them more capable and resourced to buffer against the adverse impact of VAS on affective rumination. Therefore, it is plausible to expect that industry tenure serves as an individual contingency altering the impact of VAS on affective rumination.

Furthermore, we draw on COR theory to identify three behavioural outcomes that range in terms of the degree of resource retention and consumption in response to VAS, via the mediating role of affective rumination: supervisor-directed deviance, silence and helping behaviour. Supervisor-directed deviance involves employees' violating behaviours towards their supervisors, causing disruption in the workplace (Bennett and

Robinson, 2000). Employees who experience VAS perceive threatened, leading to affective rumination that can distract them from work, ultimately depleting their cognitive, emotional and self-regulation resources (Cropley and Zijlstra, 2011). Supervisor-directed deviance requires employees to spend significant resources engaging in negative behaviours, which makes it challenging to regulate their behaviours (Baumeister and Heatherton, 1996). In addition, employees may sacrifice some of their resources to engage in deviant behaviour to retain more resources in the future (Priesemuth, 2013). Thus, employees are likely to conduct supervisor-directed deviance accompanied by the most resource consumption. Helping behaviour is regarded as a pro-social behaviour that requires employees to share their personal resources with others (Bolino *et al.*, 2012). Employees consuming resources to perform helping behaviours can access other valued resources of “personal accomplishment”, converting some of their resource input into recognition, fame and attention resources (Javed *et al.*, 2019). However, as helping behaviour necessitates a loss of resources, employees are likely to conserve their resources by avoiding helping behaviour in order to meet job demands (Koopman *et al.*, 2016). Silence is not inherently positive or negative, but rather a neutral behavioural outcome. Silence in the workplace can be seen as an adaptive method of preserving resources and preventing resource consumption (Morrison, 2011). Taken together, supervisor-directed deviance, helping behaviour and silence represent three possible consequences of employee behaviour in response to VAS, varying from high to low levels of resource consumption, respectively. Specifically, employees under the influence of VAS via affective rumination are apt to engage in more supervisor-directed deviance, more silence, and less helping behaviour.

Given this information, the research question addressed in the current study is: how does VAS influence employees’ work behaviours (i.e., supervisor-directed deviance, silence, and helping behaviour) via affective rumination, contingent on employees’ industry tenure? Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model. The objectives of this study are twofold:

1. to examine the impacts of VAS on employees' work behaviours (supervisor-directed deviance, silence, and helping behaviour) via the underlying mechanism of affective rumination; and
2. to test hospitality industry tenure as an individual contingency altering the relationship between VAS and affective rumination.

Our research makes three key contributions to the literature on VAS in the hospitality context. First, existing literature has examined the impact of VAS on employees via emotional pathways such as anger and fear (e.g., Thompson *et al.*, 2022). However, there is no investigation of the linkage between VAS and employees' cognitions. As such, this study draws on COR theory to examine how VAS triggers affective rumination via development of burdensome cognitions, which are accompanied by the loss of or threat to emotional and cognitive resources. Thus, we refill the research gap by first examining the relationship between VAS and employees' cognitions. Second, by delving into the role of industry tenure as an individual contingency, this study advances our understanding of the conditions under which VAS influences employees' affective rumination, thereby revealing the significance of personal characteristics in coping with the threat to resources evoked by VAS. Third, this study extends the behavioural outcomes of VAS and unpacks the link between VAS and work behaviours (i.e., supervisor-directed deviance, silence, and helping behaviour) via affective rumination. We respond to the call of Yu *et al.* (2022) for further investigation of employee behavioural reactions to VAS. Finally, previous studies' inconsistent results highlight the importance of examining boundary conditions to better understand the various behavioural outcomes of employees when experiencing VAS, thereby yielding a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Vicarious abusive supervision

VAS is defined as “the observation or awareness of abusive supervision that is not experienced directly” (Harris *et al.*, 2013, p. 40). Because the hospitality industry features intensive collaboration and workplace openness, cases of abusive supervision

do not typically occur privately (Folger, 2001); in fact, employees are likely to witness supervisors' abusive behaviour (Mitchell *et al.*, 2015). Previous studies have drawn on justice theory or social exchange theory to examine employees' attitudinal and behavioural reactions to VAS, including increased job frustration (Harris *et al.*, 2013), decreased task performance (Porath and Erez, 2009) and pro-social behaviours (Priesemuth and Schminke, 2019).

Drawing upon COR theory, we propose considering VAS as a salient job stressor for several reasons. Abusive supervision is widely recognized as a job-related stressor, imposing excessive demands on an individual's resources. First, it requires employees' time and effort to navigate the work environment and manage interpersonal relationships with supervisors. Second, employees deplete resources to cope with the stress, anxiety, or depression resulting from abuse. As such, VAS, a vicarious experience of abusive supervision, would induce similar psychological processes including negative perception and judgement, thereby considering VAS a stressor (Thompson *et al.*, 2022). VAS elicits adaptive responses that threaten or increase the actual drain on individuals' emotional and cognitive resources. On the one hand, negative psychological states generated by VAS are accompanied by a depletion of emotional resources (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2001). On the other hand, VAS triggers cognitive activity as employees attempt to assess potential threats (Baumeister *et al.*, 2001). Employees may perceive the potential for future abuse, leading to uncertainty (Mitchell *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, the dual threats posed by VAS make it a prominent job stressor for employees that burdens resources and necessitates efforts to cope with its negative effects, whether out of sympathy for the abused or out of fear of their own workplace environment.

Affective Rumination

Defined as "a cognitive state characterized by the appearance of intrusive, pervasive, recurrent thoughts, which are mostly negative in affective terms" (Pravettoni *et al.*, 2007, p. 1937), affective rumination involves a repetitively passive focus on

incidents and evokes tension and distress (Nolen-Hoeksema *et al.*, 2008). Affective rumination is a cognitive state that emerges in response to stressors and that exacerbates and prolongs problem-related cognitions in challenging situations (Höge *et al.*, 2015). Drawing on COR theory, this study suggests that VAS intensifies employees' affective rumination by acting as a stressor that places additional demands on employees' cognitive and emotional resources. First, VAS leads to cognitive processes in which employees reflect on potential threats. With this increased cognitive load, employees become ensnared in affective rumination and their cognitive resources are diminished. Second, existing research has found that stressors trigger negative psychological states, leading to symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, and fatigue (Rousseau *et al.*, 2008). All these symptoms are manifestations of the loss of emotional resources (Restubog *et al.*, 2011). Thus, VAS leads employees to experience a threat to or a loss of their cognitive and emotional resources. Psychological strain and cognitive load enable employees to induce affective rumination in seeking out strategies to preserve resources through reflection. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. VAS is positively related to employees' affective rumination.

Industry Tenure as Individual Contingency

Given that an employee's response to resource loss is contingent on individual characteristics that dictate their emotion regulation capability (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2001), industry tenure as a boundary condition may influence how an employee maintains their resources and copes with the threat of resource loss. Industry tenure lays the groundwork for individuals' capacity to obtain pertinent job-specific resources in a given industry (Ng and Feldman, 2011), which provides a holistic picture of an employee's overall accumulation of emotional regulation skills within an industry (Wang *et al.*, 2021).

We draw upon COR theory to argue that the industry tenure serves as a resource that employees can use to buffer their negative reactions to VAS. COR theory views resources are divided into four types: conditions, personal characteristics, object

resources, and energies (Hobfoll, 2001). These resources can be replaced by other resources to offset net loss (Hobfoll, 1989). First, industry tenure and work experience are considered as the conditions resources to manage stress in the workplace (Hobfoll, 1989). Time spent in an industry allows employees to learn more about the industry's procedures and power structures (Karatepe and Karatepe, 2009). Thus, longer-tenured employees can draw on relevant resources to manage complicated issues and overcome obstacles (Ng and Feldman, 2011). Such employees can better cope with VAS as a stressor, particularly in terms of proficiently preserving their resources and reducing losses and threats (Bradley, 2007). Second, personal characteristics resources such as emotion regulation skills function as stress-relieving resources (Wang *et al.*, 2021). As affective rumination is an emotion-related cognition, individual differences in emotion regulation can alter the intensity of employees' affective rumination on VAS (Gross, 2015). Thornton and Herndon (2016) posited that newer police officers with less experience had more trouble regulating their emotions than longer-tenured officers. As this suggests, employees with longer industry tenure possess the capacity to strategically allocate and convert their resources into other more highly prized resources (Hobfoll, 1989). They are competent in selectively emphasizing the positive aspects of their experiences and making efforts to match their emotion regulation to stressful circumstances (Tsorbatzoudis *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, this study hypothesizes that employees may benefit from heightened resources of longer industry tenure and be able to buffer the adverse effects of VAS on affective rumination:

H2. The relationship between VAS and affective rumination is moderated by employee tenure in the hospitality industry. In particular, the positive relationship is weaker when employee tenure is longer.

Supervisor-directed Deviance

Supervisor-directed deviance refers to the voluntary violation of an organisation's normative expectations, including ethical standards and regulations, by employees directed towards their supervisors (Bennett and Robinson, 2000). Employees

purposefully engage in deviance when they perceive that their coworkers are being harmed by supervisors' malicious behaviour (Rudolph *et al.*, 2004). VAS acts as an external stressor that puts pressure on employees, causing them to sink into affective rumination. Employees experiencing VAS become distracted and dwell on negative thoughts, which is a conscious and cognitive process of affective rumination that threatens the employees' resources (Cropley and Zijlstra, 2011) and leaves employees with insufficient self-regulatory resources (Baumeister and Heatherton, 1996). Thus, employees are unable to effectively restrain emotional release and retaliation, leading to a common behaviour of supervisor-directed deviance (Restubog *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, despite the significant risk and threat, employees may conduct supervisor-directed deviance to correct the abusive supervisory behaviour, avoid potential abuse towards themselves, and ultimately safeguard their future resources (Priesemuth, 2013). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3a. Employee affective rumination mediates the relationship between VAS and supervisor-directed deviance.

Silence

Silence refers to a collective phenomenon in which employees refuse to share their behavioural, cognitive, and emotional evaluations with those who have the power to change the organisational environment (Pinder and Harlos, 2001). As psychological safety is a key prerequisite for voicing, employees may proactively conceal their relevant thoughts, information, or opinions to safeguard themselves against external threats (Edmondson, 1999). Drawing upon COR theory, employees who are confronted with VAS first evaluate the threat of incidents and subsequently assess whether they have sufficient resources to handle the stressors (Wang *et al.*, 2022). In the process of affective rumination, employees are distracted from work and are preoccupied with thoughts of potential threats and risks associated with vocalizing their dissatisfaction and desire for changes to the current situation (Paull *et al.*, 2020). Silence can often prevent employees from the loss of more resources than gain (Huang *et al.*, 2019). To

preserve their limited resources and mitigate the discomfort resulting from affective rumination, employees tend to adopt avoidant coping strategies by distancing themselves from the stressor (Tepper *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, they make the trade-off and opt to remain silent in response to VAS. We thus hypothesize that when faced with resource deficits, employees experiencing VAS choose silence as a self-protection approach to mitigate the effects of stressors and cope with the resource drain of affective rumination. More formally:

H3b. Employee affective rumination mediates the relationship between VAS and silence.

Helping Behaviour

Helping behaviour refers to intentional and voluntary actions that are outside the purview of employees' job responsibilities to help others solve or prevent work-related problems (Bolino *et al.*, 2012). As a citizenship behaviour driven by positive social exchange and conducted with willingness, helping behaviour has been found to enhance organizational effectiveness and bolster relationships for interpersonal harmony (Cirella, 2016). However, helping behaviour involves an input of resources. Employees must expend energy and time on non-essential efforts, which undermines the employees' available resources and motivation to help coworkers (Koopman *et al.*, 2016).

Employees experiencing the VAS perceive resource-threatened and thus generate affective rumination. Nevertheless, affective rumination is not a strategy that can help employees to prevent resource depletion. Instead, affective rumination continues to deplete employees' resources, which corresponds to the "loss spiral" principle of COR theory, that is, the subsequent loss of resources produced by initial resource loss (Hobfoll, 1989). The present study argues that persistent threat motivates employees to conserve their limited resources. To avoid further resource loss, employees may become reluctant to engage in helping behaviour that requires additional effort and time to polish their ideas, wait for the right time and act in an appropriate manner (Hobfoll and Shirom, 2001; Ng and Feldman, 2011). Thus, we hypothesize that:

H3c. Employees' affective rumination mediates the relationship between VAS and helping behaviour.

Method

Participants and procedure

The data was collected from 233 restaurant frontline employees and their supervisors in Turkey. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2020), Turkey has become the sixth-ranked destination for worldwide arrivals. This study applied non-probability convenience sampling to provide a valid survey response, which has been used successfully in several research on VAS (e.g., Mitchell *et al.*, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2021). Employees were requested to rate their experiences of VAS, affective rumination, supervisor-directed deviance, and silence. To eliminate social desirability bias caused by self-reporting, direct supervisors were distributed supervisor survey to evaluate employees' helping behaviour in the workplace (Bolino *et al.*, 2006). Among the 233 valid respondents, 67.8% of the participants were male, and 27.5% of participants were from 21 to 25 years old. Concerning their tenure in the hospitality sector, 27.9% had accumulated more than 8 years. 35.6% of the respondents had a high school diploma.

Measures

Participants answered survey questions using a seven-point Likert scale for all constructs, with Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.86 to 0.91. VAS was assessed by five items adopted from prior research on VAS (Huang *et al.*, 2019). One sample item is "My manager puts my colleagues down in front of others." Affective rumination was measured by five items (Cropley *et al.*, 2012). One sample item is "Do you become tense when you think about work-related issues during your free time?". The ten-item measure by Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) was adopted to assess supervisor-directed deviance. One sample item is "I _____ (1 = never; 7 = always) made fun of my supervisor at work." Silence was measured with a five-item scale used by Van Dyne *et*

al. (2003). One sample item is “I avoid expressing ideas for improvements, due to self-protection.” A measure of ten items developed by Van Dyne and LePine (1998) was used to assess helping behaviour. One sample item is “This employee volunteers to do things for my organization.” In line with existing VAS research (e.g., Chen and Liu, 2019; Srivastava *et al.*, 2022), gender and level of education of employees were controlled. Gender differences have been empirically demonstrated in terms of emotion regulation, potentially shaping an individual’s tendency for affective rumination and subsequent behavioural reactions following the encounter with VAS (McRae *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, existing literature has acknowledged gender as an important factor that significantly influences one’s helping behaviour (Salminen and Glad, 1992). In addition, individuals with varying education levels employ distinct emotional regulation and coping strategies (Vitulić and Prosen, 2016), education level was thus controlled because of its potential influences on employees’ attitudes and behaviours facing VAS.

Data analysis

We adopted PLS-SEM, namely SmartPLS 3, for data analysis because PLS-SEM can deal with relatively small sample size better than CB-SEM (Hair *et al.*, 2011) and more importantly is able to include construct measured by a single item in the model, namely industry tenure (Cheah *et al.*, 2018). Given the sample size and the hypothesis of this current study, PLS-SEM is considered the optimal data analytic method. Specifically, descriptive analyses were performed to report the means, standard deviations, and variables’ inter-correlations. Then, following the two-step process for PLS-SEM as recommended by Henseler *et al.* (2009), the measurement model (i.e., outer model) was first examined to check the reliability and validity of all constructs, including Cronbach’s alpha values and average variance extracted (AVE). The structural model (inner model), using 5000 bootstrapping iterations, was then conducted to test our hypotheses, which allowed us to test the hypothesized model with advantages of high flexibility (Hair *et al.*, 2011). In addition, bootstrapped confidence

interval (CI) was used to estimate the conditional indirect effects according to previous research (Preacher *et al.*, 2007).

Results

Common-method bias

We initially referred to variance inflation factor (VIF) as a well-established method for detecting common-method bias in PLS-SEM (Kock and Lynn, 2012). Thereby, because VIF indexes for most of the items were lower than the cut-off of 3.3 (see Table I), we concluded that common-method bias was not an issue for our collected data. Also, since our data were collected from multiple sources, including both self-rated data from employees and data rated by managers, this lowered the threat of common-method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003).

Measurement model

We used SmartPLS to analyse both outer (measurement) model and inner (structural) model. In particular, except for item 5 of supervisor-directed deviance and items 8 and 9 of helping behaviour with factor loading below 0.50, all remaining items had factor loadings above 0.50 (Costello and Osborne, 2005; see Table I), we thus removed these three items from further analysis and retained all other items. We subsequently checked the reliability and validity of our measurement scales. Cronbach's alpha all surpassed the threshold of 0.70, and our scales were thus internally consistent (Nunnally, 1978). Average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeded the cut-off of 0.50 and composite reliability scores were all greater than 0.70, together indicating convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Moreover, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) ratios were all below 0.85 (Henseler *et al.*, 2015), showing adequate discriminant validity (see Table II).

Structural model

We performed bootstrapping with 5000 iterations on SmartPLS 3 (Hair *et al.*, 2011)

and the results showed that the relationship between VAS and affective rumination was statistically significant and positive ($\beta = 0.24, p = 0.000$), supporting H1. Also, industry tenure had a significant moderation effect on the relationship between VAS and affective rumination ($\beta = -0.14, p < 0.05$). An interaction plot was drawn to interpret better the moderation effect as seen in Figure 3. Thereby, when industry tenure is low, the linear regression slope becomes steeper. In contrast, when industry tenure is high, the slope of the linear regression becomes less salient. Thus, the positive relationship between VAS and affective rumination is weaker when employees' industry tenure is longer, lending support to H2. According to Zhao *et al.* (2010), the only condition for establishing mediation is the significant indirect effect. The indirect effect of VAS on supervisor-directed deviance through affective rumination was non-statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), H3a was therefore not supported. The indirect effect of VAS on silence through affective rumination was statistically significant with positive beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.07, p < 0.01$), H3b was thus supported. We can interpret that the VAS positively affects silence via enhancing affective rumination. Meanwhile, the indirect effect of VAS on helping behaviour through affective rumination was statistically significant with negative beta coefficient ($\beta = -0.06, p < 0.05$), H3c was therefore also supported. It can thus be induced that the VAS negatively affects silence via intensifying affective rumination (see Table III for full hypotheses reporting; see Figure 2 for structural model results). We also found a negative relationship between gender and supervisor-directed deviance ($\beta = -0.134, p < 0.05$). Because gender was dummy-coded with 1 as male and 2 as female, this implies that supervisor-directed deviance was more salient among male employees as compared to female counterparts.

Discussion and conclusion

Discussion

With the emerging evidence of detrimental roles played by VAS on employee emotions and morality, there is a dearth of VAS research that explores employee cognitive activity like affective rumination or boundary conditions. In addition, only

one study on VAS in the hospitality industry draws upon deonance theory and attribution theory to explore the consequences of VAS (Yu *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, to address these major gaps and extend the existing research on the impact of VAS on hospitality employees, our study draws on COR theory to formulate and test our hypotheses and yields several key findings. First, the current study reveals that VAS results in a threat to or loss of resources that is detrimental to employees, leading to intensified affective rumination that in turn produces more silence and less helping behaviour. This finding is consistent with certain existing literature that suggests employees' negative experiences and responses to stressors (e.g., Yu *et al.*, 2022). Affective rumination has been identified as a negative cognitive state derived from stressful stimuli and resource threats such as those experienced during VAS.

Previous research has also suggested a significant link between VAS and supervisor-directed deviance (Chen and Liu, 2019). Employees develop the motivation to retaliate when perceiving coworkers as being treated in an undignified manner. Lacking resources to regulate their impulsive behaviour, employees engage in supervisor-directed deviance for the purpose of building a healthy and ethical working environment. Interestingly, the results of our study do not support this claim, and we attempt to interpret this result in a cultural context. We collected data in Turkey, where the culture is characterised by high power distance and high collectivism. This cultural context may influence the patterns and types of employee behaviours and facilitate employee acceptance of the prevalent and unequal power distribution within organisations: that is, by only implicitly expressing dissatisfaction in favour of maintaining a superficial harmony (Asim *et al.*, 2023; Vogel *et al.*, 2015). When faced with VAS, subordinates are inclined to avoid confrontation by remaining silent and reducing helping behaviour. Because supervisor-directed deviance as a typical form of confrontational outburst is frowned upon in Turkey, VAS may fail to significantly impact supervisor-directed deviance via affective rumination.

Finally, this study revealed that the sociodemographic variable of industry tenure buffered the effect of VAS on affective rumination. Consistent with our predictions, we

indicate that employees with greater tenure exhibited a reduced adverse impact from VAS. These results are in line with COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) in that the respondents who had more conditional and personal characteristics resources were less threatened by external stressors. Longer-tenured employees with accumulated experience ensure that fewer resources are consumed (Karatepe and Karatepe, 2009). Moreover, employees with longer tenure expose to a wider range of stressors in the workplace, and are able to take advantage of greater personal characteristics resources to facilitate self-regulation (Wang *et al.*, 2021). The current study suggests that in general, experiences of VAS are positively related to affective rumination, but industry tenure buffers employees' adverse responses to VAS.

Theoretical implications

Despite the characteristics of the hospitality industry that contribute to the prevalence of VAS, only one study (Yu *et al.*, 2022) examined the VAS in the hospitality context in adopting qualitative approach. Therefore, the first theoretical contribution of this study is to advance the literature on VAS and unpack the related behavioural outcomes within the hospitality industry. Existing research has linked VAS to some negative outcomes; however, the relationship between VAS and other work-related behaviours and their underlying mechanisms remains unclear. The complexity of the impact of VAS on employees is manifested in the broad spectrum of inconsistent responses that have been identified. Most literature posits that VAS leads to employees' negative emotional and behavioural responses, such as exclusionary feelings, avoidance, and gossip. However, situational attribution contributes to a sense of contentment when employees perceive their supervisors as committing abusive behaviours to improve victims' performance or correct errors (Yu *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, we respond to the call of Yu *et al.* (2022) for further investigation of employee behavioural reactions to VAS. As stated by Huang *et al.* (2019), while considering counter-work behaviours and deviant organizational behaviours, the self-protective motivations of employees based on the premise of self-interest cannot be

ignored. Supervisor-directed deviance and helping behaviour are considered explicit behaviours that put employees at risk and render them vulnerable to retaliation, while silence is an implicit behaviour that protects employees' interests and security. Furthermore, existing research on VAS mainly emphasizes justice theory (Tepper, 2000) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) to explain the mechanisms underlying employee behavioural outcomes. Drawing on COR theory, the current study proposed a framework to provide insight into employees' resource draining and subsequent responses to VAS. In particular, we identified affective rumination as a direct behavioural outcome, and silence and helping behaviour as indirect behavioural ones via affective rumination after experiencing VAS.

Second, based on COR theory, this study extended the scholarly understanding of the mechanisms by which VAS impacts employees' work-related behaviours via affective rumination. Existing research links VAS to negative outcomes through deontic reactions like the sense of justice and morality (Priesemuth and Schminke, 2019) and emotional reactions such as anger (Mitchell *et al.*, 2015). We considered that employees experiencing VAS become more attentive to stressors related to resource threats, and they use cognitive and emotional resources to reprocess these external stimuli (namely, affective rumination). Resource depletion affects employees' behavioural responses as employees intend to select strategies that allow them to retain more resources, a finding that provides insight into the literature on VAS from a resource conservation perspective.

Last, existing literature on VAS recognizes the need to understand how sociodemographic factors influence employees' affective rumination. Literature has posited that cultural background (Yu *et al.*, 2022) and sense of justice (Priesemuth and Schminke, 2019) are boundary conditions of the impact of VAS on employees. Drawing upon COR theory, the present study extends the research on VAS to identify industry tenure as a contingent condition that moderates the relationship between VAS and employee affective rumination. We posited that industry tenure represents the level of professional skills in the hospitality industry. Linking industry tenure to work

experience with the benefit of individual conditions and personal characteristic resources revealed the tendency of resource accumulation which is improved by longer industry tenure to help employees better cope with stressors. In this research, industry tenure as a buffer resource can mitigate the adverse effects of VAS on employees. The effectiveness of improving employees' strategies may increase as employees' industry tenure increases, enhancing scholars' understanding of VAS via the consideration of individual characteristics.

Practical implications

This study provides useful managerial implications for practitioners in the hospitality industry. First, organisations should regularly conduct leadership training, in which filming videos is a good way of supplementing instruction. Specifically, for industries that involve frequent interpersonal interactions, organisations should conduct communication training and emotional regulation training for leaders to improve their skills and sensitivity in interpersonal interactions (Pearson *et al.*, 2000), including using politer language, listening to employee suggestions, treating employees as equals, and avoiding bossing employees around (Harris *et al.*, 2013).

Second, organisations' inaction towards managers' misconduct may be perceived by employees as the organisation's condoning of abusive managers. Therefore, organisations can also prevent abusive supervision by putting in place effective policies and procedures. For example, organisations can reduce the likelihood of abusive supervision by screening candidates of supervisor positions for traits through questionnaire surveys and excluding those with a propensity for abusive supervision. As for performance management, leaders should be monitored by regular performance appraisals to promptly identify abusive supervision and reduce or even eliminate negative leadership (Chen and Liu, 2019). If abusive supervisors continue their misconducts, organisations may consider taking more direct and serious actions such as termination.

Third, recognizing the potential labour force represented by longer-tenured

employees can yield significant benefits for hospitality organizations. The prevailing trend in the hospitality industry favours a younger workforce, leading to an overrepresentation of shorter-tenured workers (Lucas, 1993). However, it is crucial to recruit and retain the longer-tenured employees in the hospitality organizations. Longer-tenured employees bring valuable experience, maturity, and knowledge to the organization. They possess emotion regulation skills and are better equipped to respond to diverse stressors (Ananth and DeMicco, 1991). Hospitality managers should challenge the common stereotypes associated with longer-tenured employees, such as perceiving them as slow, inflexible, and resistant to change (Furunes and Mykletun, 2005). By dispelling stereotypes and investing in leadership strategies that cater to the strengths of the senior workforce, the potential of longer-tenured employees can be fully harnessed due to their accumulated experience (Magd, 2003). Moreover, human resource managers should also concentrate on attracting and retaining longer-tenured employees through educational opportunities, retraining initiatives, and alternative work arrangements (Furunes and Mykletun, 2005). By doing so, organizations can benefit from the valuable contributions of longer-tenured employees and enhance overall business performance.

Lastly, organisations can develop stress management training for their employees, which would benefit both the employees' well-being and customer service. Stress management entails training employees in emotion regulation skills that help to improve mood and reduce the stress of emotional labour (Hülshager *et al.*, 2013). Organisations should regularly hold scenario-based training work sessions for employees to benefit in improving their emotion regulation skills. Skilled employees have greater control over stressful situations and thus adopt positive coping strategies. In addition, stress mitigation programmes and social activities would allow employees to relieve stress and develop a balanced work-life culture (Vo-Thanh *et al.*, 2022).

Limitations and future research directions

Some limitations warrant consideration for future research. First, the participants

in this study were from Turkey, a country that is characterised by a collectivist culture and high power distance. While this is a very representative and relevant sample for our study of VAS, existing research suggests that from a sociocultural perspective, high power distance and high collectivism weaken the impact of VAS on subordinates (Lin *et al.*, 2013). Individuals in Eastern countries typically take a subtle, euphemistic approach to express their emotions and behaviours (Elfenbein and Ambady, 2003). Thus, it would be valuable for future studies to select employees from cultural backgrounds (i.e., Western countries) with low power distance and low collectivism, where employees are likely to express themselves and act more directly, resulting in different work attitudes and behavioural outcomes.

Second, the current research identified industry tenure as a contingent condition; however, some other factors relating to our model might be considered. For instance, Zheng and Liu (2017) revealed that mindfulness buffers the negative impact of abusive supervision on employee self-efficacy at work, and in turn, influences creative performance. Research also suggests that mindfulness training leads to reductions in the ruminative thinking associated with depression (Deyo *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, future research could consider controlling for mindfulness when examining the impact of VAS on affective rumination. Furthermore, Chen and Liu (2019) revealed that leader–member exchange weakens the relationship between VAS and supervisor-directed attribution. Therefore, future research could also consider controlling for interpersonal relationships between employees and coworkers when examining VAS.

In addition, we focused on employees' demographic background as control variables, because gender and education level are widely identified as the control variables in existing literature on affective rumination and work-related behaviours (e.g., Querstret *et al.*, 2016). However, other personal character traits may also be considered as control variables when studying rumination. For example, depression proneness is defined as the “tendency to experience relatively frequent, long-lasting, and severe depressions” (Zemore *et al.*, 1990, p. 255). Rumination has been found to be associated with the individual's maintenance of depression and the severity of

depression (Capobianco *et al.*, 2018). As such, future research could consider depression proneness as a control variable when examining employees' affective rumination and subsequent behaviours.

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Table I. Factor loadings and VIF values

Construct	Item	Factor loading	VIF
Vicarious abusive supervision	VAS1	0.543	1.274
	VAS2	0.875	2.595
	VAS3	0.904	2.924
	VAS4	0.875	2.702
	VAS5	0.818	2.126
Affective rumination	R1	0.714	1.693
	R2	0.846	2.561
	R3	0.864	2.284
	R4	0.724	1.711
	R5	0.847	2.551
Silence	S1	0.850	2.395
	S2	0.897	3.716
	S3	0.853	2.757
	S4	0.893	3.288
	S5	0.754	2.176
Supervisor-directed deviance	SDD1	0.585	1.591
	SDD2	0.763	2.292
	SDD3	0.553	1.636
	SDD4	0.874	2.961
	SDD5	0.413	1.245
	SDD6	0.699	2.096
	SDD7	0.770	1.961
	SDD8	0.597	1.651
	SDD9	0.728	1.605
	SDD10	0.846	3.271
Helping behaviour	MNG1	0.765	1.967

MNG2	0.725	3.303
MNG3	0.787	2.495
MNG4	0.752	3.036
MNG5	0.823	2.474
MNG6	0.757	3.604
MNG7	0.694	2.393
MNG8	0.490	1.902
MNG9	0.466	1.971
MNG10	0.572	1.304

Table II. Reliability and validity results

	M	SD	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	α	CR	AVE
Vicarious abusive supervision (X1)	1.82	1.06	0.81	0.30	0.06	0.30	0.08	0.25	0.87	0.91	0.66
Helping behaviour (X2)	6.02	1.09	-0.27	0.74	0.16	0.29	0.17	0.39	0.88	0.91	0.55
Industry tenure (X3)	4.13	1.61	-0.02	0.16	n/a	0.03	0.05	0.06	n/a	n/a	1
Affective rumination (X4)	2.77	1.53	0.24	-0.26	-0.03	0.80	0.30	0.16	0.86	0.90	0.64
Silence (X5)	2.21	1.52	0.06	-0.16	0.03	0.27	0.85	0.16	0.91	0.93	0.72
Supervisor-directed deviance (X6)	1.29	0.62	0.22	-0.37	0.02	0.13	0.12	0.72	0.89	0.91	0.52

Note: M = mean, SD = standard deviation, α = Cronbach alpha, AVE = average variance extracted, CR = composite reliability, diagonal is square root of AVE, below diagonal is inter-correlations, above the diagonal is HTMTs, n/a: not available

Table III. Hypotheses testing

Path	Estimated effect	95% CI		Decision
		Lower CI	Upper CI	
H1: Vicarious abusive supervision → Affective rumination	0.24*	0.110	0.371	Accepted
H2: Vicarious abusive supervision + Industry tenure → Affective rumination	-0.14*	-0.287	-0.017	Accepted
H3a: Vicarious abusive supervision → Affective rumination → Supervisor-directed deviance	0.04	-0.007	0.087	Rejected
H3b: Vicarious abusive supervision → Affective rumination → Silence	0.07*	0.026	0.119	Accepted
H3c: Vicarious abusive supervision → Affective rumination → Helping behaviour	-0.07*	-0.134	-0.024	Accepted

*Note: * $p < 0.05$*

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

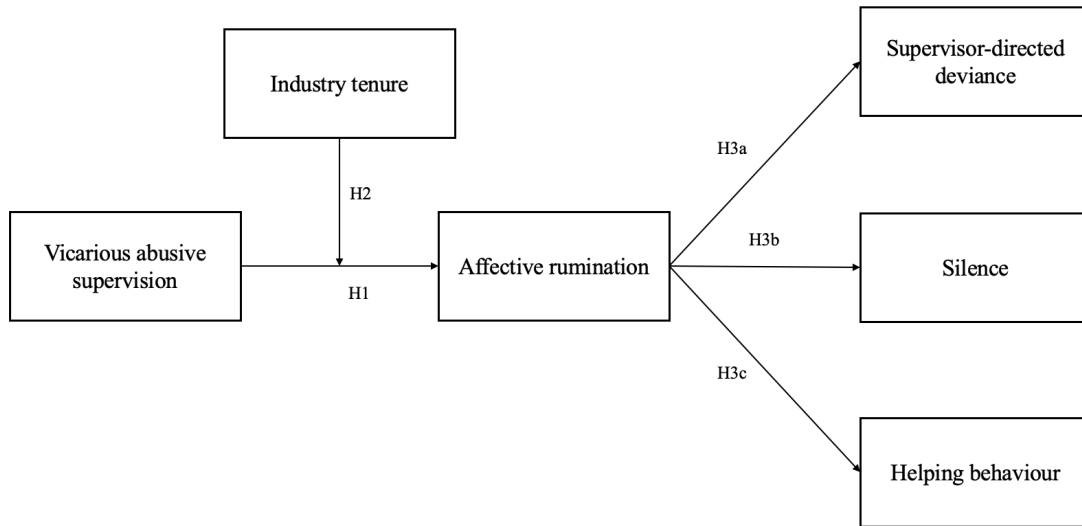
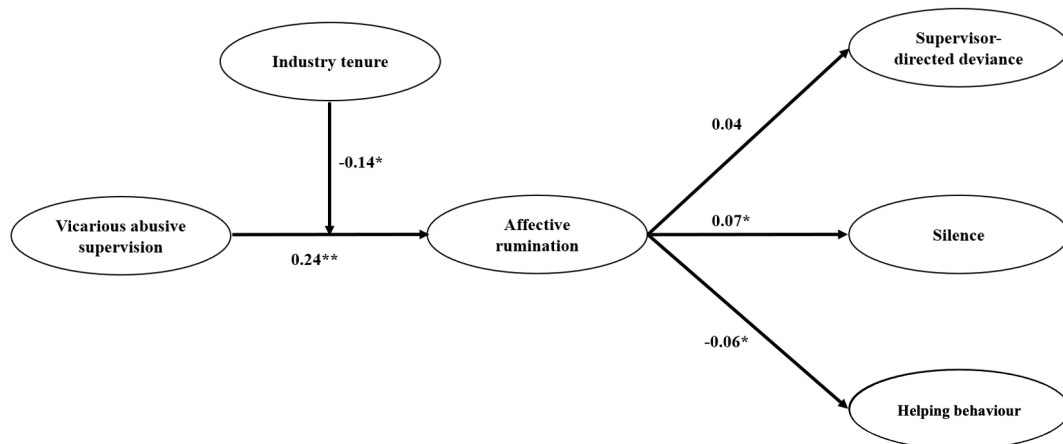


Figure 2. Structural model



Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; gender and education were controlled in this model

Figure 3. Moderation plot

