



Supervisor undermining and submissive behavior: Shame resilience theory perspective



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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the underlying mechanism between supervisor undermining and employee submissive behavior by proposing and testing a serial mediation moderation model. We suggest shame and self-criticism as an explanatory mechanism between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior, and employee resilience as a coping mechanism between feelings of shame and self-criticism. We employed Shame Resilience Theory to explain the proposed model that states how supervisor undermining triggers shame among victim subordinates, which turns into self-criticism and ultimately manifests as submissive behaviors. We tested our proposed model on 251 responses from service sector employees in a time-lagged (four intervals) design. We examined different alternative models to test the serial mediation model. The results proved that supervisor undermining leads to employee submissive behavior and shame, and self-criticism serially mediates this relationship. The moderation hypothesis was also proved. Limitations and future research directions along with theoretical and practical implications are given at the end.

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1. Introduction

Leadership research has been focusing more on its dark side owing to the increase in organizational scandals in the last decade (Brandebo & Alvinus, 2019; Neves & Schyns, 2018; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Wu, Peng, & Estay, 2018). Researchers are attempting to identify various forms of the dark side of leadership to understand their dysfunctional outcomes (Fatima, Majeed, & Shah, 2018; Nauman, Fatima, & Haq, 2018). We intend to contribute to this line of research by focusing on supervisor undermining, which has received comparatively little attention (Abas & Otto, 2016). Having its roots in social exclusion literature, and more specifically the dark side of leadership, supervisor undermining is the intended behavior of a leader that hinders employees' ability to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success, and favorable reputations (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002). Supervisor undermining behaviors include (a) putting subordinates down when they question work procedures, (b) belittling them or their ideas, (c) talking down to

them, (d) undermining their efforts to be successful, and (e) making them feel incompetent (Duffy et al., 2002).

Research in this domain identified its dysfunctional impact on work outcomes; for example, turnover intentions, stress and counterproductive work behaviors, as well as reduced job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and health and well-being of employees (Duffy, Ganster, Shaw, Johnson, & Pagon, 2006; Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Rubenstein, & Song, 2013; Nahum-Shani, Henderson, Lim, & Vinokur, 2014). However, extant research has ignored the fact that sometimes workplace mistreatments like supervisor undermining leave employees helpless to the extent that they find it safer to become submissive in their behavior. Submissive behavior is mostly associated with the perceptions of inferior social rank or status and can be regarded as a form of social defense in the context of others who are more powerful or of a higher rank in some way (Akin, 2009). This behavior shows employees' weakest position in terms of powerlessness and vulnerability as compared to other withdrawal behaviors like turnover intentions, deviant, and counter work behaviors. In submissive behavior, employees let others ridicule and criticize them without defending themselves (Gupta & Mishra, 2016), which is quite different from retaliatory behaviors and prohibitive voice. Researchers believe that people use either

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approach or avoidance framework as the coping mechanism after experiencing stress (Moos, Brennan, Fondacaro, & Moos, 1990; Roth & Cohen, 1986). Relevant literature suggests that approach coping behavior is more suitable when employees have better control, whereas avoidance coping behavior is the preferable option for those employees who lack control (Roth & Cohen, 1986). Previous research evidenced that the victims of workplace mistreatment such as workplace bullying and supervisor undermining lack power and control, but majority of studies suggested approach coping behavior (Nielson & Einarsen, 2012; Ferris, Zinko, Brouer, Buckley, & Harvey, 2007; Greenbaum, Mawritz, & Piccolo, 2015), which seems unrealistic. On the other hand, research on the avoidance approach is still rare. Hence, the current study aims to fill this gap by taking submissive behavior, which is an avoidance coping behavior, as an outcome of supervisor undermining. The reason we believe that supervisor undermining promotes employee submissive behavior mainly is the difference of power between the perpetrator and the victim. As employees are less powerful than their supervisor, there are higher chances that they will display avoidance coping behaviors (Roth & Cohen, 1986), and submissive behavior is one of them. Employee submissive behavior is more like accepting the failure, which is extremely painful for the employees (Ongen, 2006), but it helps in stress reduction (Roth & Cohen, 1986). Employees who show submissive behavior fail to fight for their rights and feel difficult to say “no” to the people who are in higher power status (Cardak, İskender, & Koc, 2010). In other words, submissive behavior is an avoidance approach used by employees to minimize the negative consequences of being a victim of supervisor undermining. Despite the nature of its severity and its serious consequences, there is a scarcity of research on submissive behavior, particularly in the organizational settings, which is yet another research gap. The current study aims to get a better understanding of this behavior by testing its antecedents.

We further suggest that the relationship between supervisor undermining and the submissive behavior of followers is not at all that simple, but there is a unique and unexplored underlying mechanism that explains how employees react in their feelings and emotions in terms of shame and make self-judgments in the form of self-criticism to finally become submissive in their behaviors. Although a very few underlying mechanisms have been investigated, for example, self-esteem and creativity, between supervisor undermining and job performance (Eissa, Chinchanchokchai, & Wyland, 2017), many questions remain uninvestigated about its specific impact on emotions and judgment-making.

The emotion of shame is a severely painful experience of negative self-evaluation believing that one is flawed, insufficient, unwanted, useless and inferior and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging, involving inward and distressing self-scrutiny (Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney, Stuewig, & Martinez, 2014). Researchers believe that shame is an outcome of adverse interpersonal events (such as supervisor undermining) in which an individual gives global negative attributes to himself/herself following a failure to reach up to the expectations (Tracy & Robins, 2006; Wang, Pan, & Zhang, 2019). There is a scarcity of evidence on the reasons for this negative emotion or its consequences (Murphy & Kiffin-Petersen, 2017). Shame can be such a depressive, painful and humiliating emotion whereby victims believe that they are flawed and therefore do not deserve to have a sense of belonging and acceptance by others and, moreover, that they are responsible for their flaws (Chrdileli & Kasser, 2018; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney & Fischer, 1995). Shame may give rise to other negative emotions like self-criticism (Lazarus & Shahar, 2018), which is defined as a negative view of the self in comparison with others in which the individuals attack, blame, and criticize themselves for their failures (Blatt, 2008). Self-critic individuals are very hard on

themselves because of the feelings of inferiority and worthlessness in comparison to others (Kaurin, Schofelder, & Wessa, 2018). The focus at this level is on the unfavorable comparison of the self with others, who are seen as superior and as hostile or critical; consequently, there is discomfort in being evaluated or exposed to others (Thompson & Zuroff, 2004). It gives a feeling of harsh and negative self-judgment and self-evaluation that is the foundation for this construct of self-criticism (Lueke & Skeel, 2017). This emotional reaction in the form of self-criticism may result in submissive behavior (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Shame and self-criticism have been studied in the past; however, to the best of our knowledge, no research has identified the serial mediation of shame and self-criticism between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior.

Therefore, we have tried to suggest an alternate mechanism by proposing serial mediation sequencing from shame to self-criticism between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior.

Employing the Shame Resilience Theory (SRT) (Brown, 2006), we propose that when a supervisor undermines his/her subordinates, the latter feel shame in terms of feeling small, worthless, and powerless, and hence, they make negative self-evaluations in the form of self-criticism and ultimately indulge in avoidance, feel isolated, and hence show submissive behavior. We also suggest that resilience provides a coping mechanism to deal with the development of negative self-judgment, that is, self-criticism due to the feeling of shame. Employee resilience is referred to as an employee's ability to fight back after facing a stressful event or to remain psychologically robust in hostile environments (de Terte, Stephens, & Huddleston, 2014).

This study aims to contribute in several ways. First, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study to link supervisor undermining to the submissive behavior of subordinates through a serial mediation process comprising shame and self-criticism. Second, it provides a coping mechanism through resilience, which helps to fight back against the emotions of shame and self-criticism and ultimately hinders the submissive behaviors while working with an undermining supervisor. Finally, the study employs SRT (Brown, 2006) as an overarching theory to explain the whole serial mediation and moderation process that gives plausible theoretical reasoning, which would be considered as a contribution to extending SRT in dark leadership research (Kim, 2017).

2. Theory and hypothesis development

2.1. Shame Resilience Theory (SRT)

We employed Brown's SRT (Brown, 2006), which proposes that the participants' primary concerns with regard to shame involve the feelings of a) being trapped, which is a painful experience in which individuals feel that others have a lot of unrealistic expectations from them, but they do not have much options to reach up to the expectations, b) being powerless, a feeling that the individuals are defenseless and helpless owing to lack of choices that can help them to change their current situation, and c) being isolated, referred to as a terrifying realization that “one is locked out of the possibility of human connection.” The complicated weaving of these concepts makes shame so powerful, complex, detrimental, and often difficult to overcome (Kiffin-Petersen, 2018). The central premise of SRT is to understand the cause of shame and to examine the strategies that can be used to avoid feeling trapped, powerless, or isolated (Hernandez & Mendoza, 2011).

SRT (Brown, 2006) states that the feeling of shame is due to any of the external factors that make people feel powerless, trapped, and isolated. The experience of these three feelings leads to a wide array of negative consequences, and if the individual fails to

understand what is happening to him/her, then he ends up becoming silent or avoidant (Brown, 2006; Hahn, 2000; Hauser, 2016; Rizvi, Brown, Bohus, & Linehan, 2011). However, if the individual manages to have a better understanding of shame and its causes, then he/she develops shame resilience (Dayal, Weaver, & Domene, 2015; Hernandez & Mendoza, 2011). Different individuals get this realization at different times; some people are lucky enough to understand shame at a very early stage, whereas others get its understanding after facing severe negative consequences (Brown, 2006; Rogers & Ebbeck, 2016).

Applying SRT (Brown, 2006) to our proposed model, it is argued that supervisor undermining triggers a feeling of shame among victims; they feel shame because of the mistreatment of their supervisor (Lewis, 2004). This can include rejection of their ideas or belittlement of target employees by comparing them with others and declaring them incompetent (Felblinger, 2008). Once victims feel the emotion of shame, they feel worthless, powerless, and responsible for the weaknesses identified by their supervisors (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2012). The perils of shame manifest in the form of self-criticism, and ultimately, these victim subordinates indulge in avoidance and a passive mode in terms of submissive behaviors (Gilbert et al., 2010; Harman & Lee, 2010). SRT also suggests a coping mechanism in the form of resilience, which helps to fight back against the shame by making people powerful and connected, and this may help them avoid negative self-evaluation, that is, self-criticism, and avoid indulging in submissive behavior (Brown, 2006; Gilbert et al., 2010; Hernandez & Mendoza, 2011).

Briefly, supervisor undermining is an external factor that acts as a cause of shame, and shame, in turn, leads to negative consequences in the form of self-criticism, which ultimately results in avoidant behavior, which is employee submissive behavior. However, people who use their attribute of resilience to get control of the situation after facing shame are less likely to show negative consequences (see Fig. 1).

2.2. Supervisor undermining and employee submissive behavior

Supervisor undermining is an expression of unfavorable and intentional treatment toward any specific employee with a certain aim of preventing that individual from achieving his/her goals (Frazier & Bowler, 2015). Supervisor undermining is expressed in the form of certain feelings such as anger or dislike (Joseph et al., 2011), but the outcomes associated with these feelings generate various negative repercussions (Duffy, Scott, Shaw, Tepper, & Aquino, 2012).

There are three key assumptions evident in the definition of

social undermining. First, concerning incivility, where the intent is ambiguous, and this particular construct assumes intent on the part of the perpetrator. Second, and most notably, this construct is associated with interference with the relationships at work. It is assumed in this construct that the act of undermining a victim includes the attitudes and behaviors of the third parties (e.g., supervisors and coworkers) toward the victim. Third, social undermining assumes particular outcomes within the definition, that is, it should interfere with social relationships, hinder victims' reputations, and diminish their work-related success (Hershcovis, 2011). In other words, supervisor undermining is a conscious effort to destroy the relationships of the target and to affect his/her career and work outcomes (Frazier & Bowler, 2015).

Organizational behavior researchers agree on the notion that supervisor undermining leads to detrimental consequences (Greenbaum et al., 2015). The current study has taken employee submissive behavior as an outcome to supervisor undermining. Supervisor undermining involves actions aimed to keep employees from achieving their goals (Eissa, Wyland, & Gupta, 2018), as employees are not in a position to take a strong step against their supervisor; hence, they start showing submissive behavior as a way to avoid any further problem. The literature on submissive behavior suggests that this behavior is mostly displayed when the individual lacks power and believes that he is not able to fight back (Bademli, Lok, & Kilic, 2018).

Displaying negative expression toward the employees is another way of undermining them (Frazier & Bowler, 2015). When employees continuously face negative behavior from their supervisors who constantly belittle them, then they start feeling that they lack the skills and abilities needed for carrying out the job's tasks efficiently (Sărbescu, Sulea, & Moza, 2017), which is one of the critical elements of submissive behavior. Supervisor undermining shatters the confidence of employees and makes them feel that they are not doing their job in the right manner (Eissa et al., 2017). This causes employees to show submissive behavior. Another reason for the supervisor undermining-employee submissiveness relation is the power gap between the supervisor and the employee. It is believed that submissive behavior is more prevalent in situations where there is a huge power gap between the two parties (Ongen, 2006). Supervisors are higher in rank than employees, which makes them powerful, and it is due to this power that employees prefer to show submissive behavior as a result of supervisor undermining. Some researchers also believe that people living in cultures that are high in power distance are more likely to show submissive behavior (Yıldırım, 2004). Pakistan is also termed as a high power-distance society (Hofstede, 1980). We believe that employee submissive

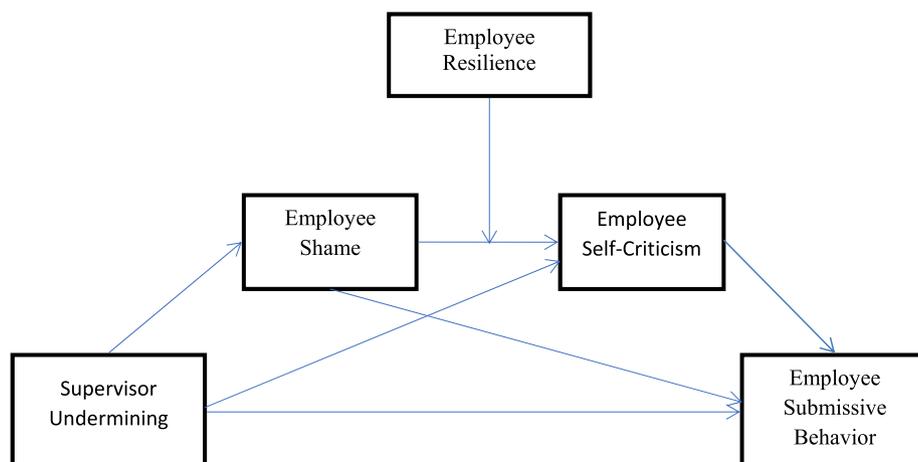


Fig. 1. Proposed theoretical framework.

behavior, because of its severity, is different from all other outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover, as the employees displaying it feels that there is nothing they can do to make the situation better and that they do not have power over the perpetrator to take a stand.

It is observed that employees who are mistreated in any capacity usually remain silent and try to negate, ignore, and lessen such experiences (Cortina et al., 2002). In other words, mistreatment activates submissiveness among the victims, as supervisor undermining is also a form of workplace mistreatment that damages the reputation of the victim; hence, it is safe to say that supervisor is undermining results in submissive behavior. By these arguments, we propose the following hypothesis.

H1. Supervisor undermining is positively associated with employee submissive behavior.

2.3. Mediating role of shame

2.3.1. Supervisor undermining and employee shame

According to researchers such as Bowling and Beehr (2006), interpersonal mistreatment is related to many undesirable work outcomes and reactions including job dissatisfaction, anxiety, decreased self-esteem, and depression (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Interpersonal mistreatment is a significant antecedent of various negative emotional responses (Feshbach, 1986). Extant research suggests that mistreatment should relate negatively to an individual's emotions (Gallus, Bunk, Matthews, Barnes-Farrell, & Magley, 2014). Shame is considered as a negative emotion in which the individual evaluates himself/herself as powerless, worthless, and inferior (Street & Arias, 2001; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). The prominent characteristics of supervisor undermining are putting subordinates down when they question work procedures and belittling them or their viewpoints; as a result, the subordinates feel shame among their colleagues. Moreover, the supervisor may also make them feel incompetent; hence, the subordinates feel shame due to a sense of inferiority when compared with their colleagues (Duffy et al., 2002).

The aim of SRT (Brown, 2006) is to identify the external or internal factors that may cause shame among people. We argue that supervisor undermining triggers negative emotions, for example, shame, which is a painful feeling and becomes more detrimental due to its intensity.

H2a. Supervisor undermining triggers a feeling of shame among victim subordinates.

2.3.2. Shame and submissive behavior

Shame is sometimes also referred to as a self-conscious emotion that is mostly experienced during interpersonal dealings and takes place when an individual fails to reach up to the expectations of others (Keltner, 1996). Shame is not limited to the negative evaluation of a certain behavior or event; in fact, it is the negative appraisal of the entire self (Teroni & Deonna, 2008). In short, shame is an outcome of adverse interpersonal events in which an individual gives negative attributes to himself/herself (Tracy & Robins, 2006). People experiencing shame are more likely to show avoidance behavior in the form of submissiveness and avoid aggressive behaviors (Schmader & Lickel, 2006). Shame motivates strong escape and inhibitory behavior (Schlagintweit, Thompson, Goldstein, & Stewart, 2017; see Tangney, 1995, for a review of studies). The fear of losing attractiveness (social status) and being seen as inferior and unattractive can activate submissive behaviors. Moreover, this is usually linked to feeling inferior and losing status

(Gilbert, Pehl, & Allan, 1994). The individuals who feel shame automatically start displaying submissive behavior as an escape, as they begin to think that they are inferior to others (Tangney, 1995). This implies that shame is an emotional reaction to supervisor undermining, and these individuals prefer to indulge in avoidance behavior. SRT (Brown, 2006) also proposes that after feeling shame, people feel disconnected and powerless and therefore try to avoid interactions with others. Shame gives rise to a sense of inferiority as compared to those around the victim, and therefore, avoiding or submissive behavior is evident.

H2b. Shame is positively related to submissive behavior.

2.3.3. Supervisor undermining, shame, and submissive behavior

Negative and unfavorable behavior carried out by the supervisor towards any individual is termed as supervisor undermining, which aims to prevent that specific individual from achieving his/her goals. Supervisor undermining is usually expressed in the form of certain feelings, such as anger or dislike (Joseph et al., 2011). This dislike is depicted in interactions when the supervisor makes him/her feel incompetent, inferior, and undesired. A large number of studies have proved that employees start displaying negative emotions and behaviors as a result of stressful interactions with their supervisor (Duffy et al., 2002; Duffy, Ganster, Shaw, Johnson, & Pagon, 2006a; Duffy, Shaw, Scott, & Tepper, 2006b). Shame is such a negative emotion that it is considered to be a severe painful feeling or experience whereby one believes that one is flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging. It, therefore, involves inward and distressing self-scrutiny (Brown, 2006; Gilbert, 1997, 2003; Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992).

Shame is a result of those interpersonal events that create threats to social life (Dickerson, Gruenewald, & Kemeny, 2004), for instance, the events where the target is rejected, criticized, judged, or criticized by others (Dickerson et al., 2004). A sufficient number of empirical studies have proved that victims of emotional or psychological abuse and maltreatment are more likely to experience shame, which leads to adverse outcomes (Orth, Robins, & Soto, 2010; Webb, Heisler, Call, Chickering, & Colburn, 2007). In one study conducted on women, state shame showed correlation with emotional/verbal abuse, dominance/isolation abuse, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Beck et al., 2011). In another study, the researchers used an experimental study design to prove that state shame acts as a mediator between psychological abuse recall and post-traumatic stress among college students (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005).

We argue that supervisor undermining develops this negative emotion of shame and the toxicity of this shame manifests as avoiding behavior, that is, submissive behavior. This argument is in line with SRT (Brown, 2006), which posits that employees do not speak out about their feelings of shame, preferring instead to indulge in submissive behaviors. This is a passive behavior because the individual feels too shy to share his/her viewpoints (Gilbert, 2000). Those individuals who feel shame may ultimately end up displaying submissive behavior (Gilbert et al., 1994). On the basis of the above arguments and literature, we propose a mediating role of shame between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior.

H3. Shame mediates between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior.

2.4. Mediating role of self-criticism

2.4.1. Supervisor undermining and self-criticism

Self-criticism is a negative self-judgment where an individual

experiences a negative feeling about himself/herself (Johnson et al., 2018). It has two dimensions: internalized and comparative self-criticism. In internalized self-criticism, the individual compares himself/herself with his/her values and standards, whereas with comparative self-criticism, they criticize themselves rather than others (Thompson & Zuroff, 2004). We argue that supervisor undermining includes behaviors such as belittling and ridiculing the target subordinates to make them feel inferior among all their peers. The victim subordinates make their comparisons with their colleagues and feel inferior. This feeling pushes them into comparative self-criticism, which is a negative judgment about the self as compared to others.

Psychologists and academic researchers are of the view that those individuals who remain exposed to negative behaviors such as supervisor undermining are more prone to self-criticism (Lassri, Luyten, Fonagy, & Shahar, 2018). To cope with the negative behavior directed toward them, they become their abusers (Luyten, Fonagy, Lemma, & Target, 2012). Therefore, we propose a positive relationship between supervisor undermining and self-criticism.

H4a. Supervisor undermining is positively related to self-criticism.

2.4.2. Self-criticism and submissive behavior

Self-criticism is often referred to as a punishing behavior toward the self in which the individual evaluates himself/herself strictly. It is believed that those employees who are involved in self-criticism have a feeling of unworthiness (Ongen, 2006; Powers, Zuroff, & Topciu, 2004). This excessive criticism results in adverse outcomes including, but not limited to, lower self-worth (Lassri et al., 2018). Self-critical individuals, despite harsh self-evaluation, are more likely to show negative behaviors. A large number of studies have linked self-criticism to failure (Power, Milyavskaya, & Koestner, 2012; Whelton & Greenberg, 2005). It has also been found that individuals who are involved in self-criticism are more likely to perform poorly than those who are not self-critical (Lueke & Skeel, 2017). Individuals who consider themselves inferior are more inclined to show submissive behavior as a way of controlling their expressed behavior and staying self-focused (Gilbert, Cheung, Grandfield, Campey, & Irons, 2003). We argue that individuals who indulge in self-criticism compare themselves with others and their feeling of unworthiness places them in a lower status; therefore, they prefer to indulge in submissive behaviors.

H4b. Self-criticism is positively related to submissive behavior

2.5. Supervisor undermining, self-criticism, and submissive behavior

As mentioned above, supervisor undermining behaviors make the target subordinates feel worthless and incompetent among others (Duffy et al., 2002). We argue that the victim employees start comparing themselves with their peers who have not been targeted, and they self-criticize by making a negative judgment about themselves. They feel that they are faulty, incompetent, and worthless (Lassri et al., 2018) in comparison, and they, therefore, become passive and indulge in submissive behaviors. They stop themselves from voicing their ideas, opinions, and arguments to their supervisor and peers. Therefore, we suggest a mediating role of self-criticism.

H5. Employee self-criticism mediates the relationship between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior.

2.6. Serial mediation of shame and self-criticism

The emotions of shame and self-criticism come under the notion of self-concept in which the individual is indulged in the negative evaluation of the self (Gilbert & Procter, 2006). The emotion of shame and self-criticism can be related due to important reasons. The first reason is the degree of self-directed hostility, self-loathing, and contempt, which leads to self-criticism (Gilbert, 2000; Whelton & Greenberg, 2005; Zuroff, Santor, & Mongrain, 2005). The second reason is the relative inability to generate feelings of self-directed warmth, reassurance, soothing, and self-liking (Gilbert, 2000; Gilbert, Clarke, Hempel, Miles, & Irons, 2004; Linehan, 1993; Neff, 2003; Whelton & Greenberg, 2005). However, both of them are different from each other. Shame is the global evaluation of the self to be small, flawed, and unwanted (Tangney & Dearing, 2002), whereas self-criticism is a “disrupted self-identity” in which the individual feels inferior to others (Campos, Besser, & Blatt, 2013). In other words, shame is an internal global evaluation of the self that does not involve comparison to others, whereas self-criticism is a feeling that one lacks the skills and abilities compared to others. Some studies have suggested that shame eventually leads to self-criticism, which refers to the unfavorable and severe evaluation of the self, such that the individual criticizes himself/herself for his/her weaknesses.

According to the existing body of knowledge, shame is a negative emotion that not only reduces the personal motivation (Sabini, Garvey, & Hall, 2001; Thompson, Sharp, & Alexander, 2008; Turner & Waugh, 2007) but also leaves a negative impact on the interpersonal relationships (Covert, Tangney, Maddux, & Heleno, 2003). According to one study, those individuals who experience shame in any given situation are prone to display motivational and behavioral avoidance in the future while facing similar situations (Graham & Weiner, 2012).

People facing shame experience negative emotions, which involve, but not limited to, feeling defective, insufficient, unwanted, powerless, useless, and inferior (Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney & Fischer, 1995). Shame, being a negative emotion, is responsible for several adverse outcomes that affect not only interpersonal relationship but also adaptive functioning (Luyten, Fontaine, & Corveleyn, 2002).

Feelings of shame, which accompany worthlessness, powerlessness, inferiority, etc. (Street & Arias, 2001; Tangney & Dearing, 2002), lead to the rejection of the self as individuals start to feel threatened about their social situation, which is when they indulge in self-criticism. As a result of this, they start to blame themselves for their failures (Campos et al., 2013).

Based on SRT (Brown, 2006; Hauser, 2016), we argue that an attack on the self may manifest in a more literal manner through self-harming behaviors. Therefore, the feeling of shame becomes detrimental to the self and gives rise to self-criticism. From the above argument, the current study proposes the following relationship:

H6. Employee shame is positively associated with employee self-criticism

The central premise of SRT involves examining the strategies that people use to avoid feeling trapped, powerless, or isolated. In accordance with SRT, supervisor undermining is one of the critical reasons for victims feeling shame. Furthermore, an attack on the self may manifest in a more literal manner through self-harming behaviors (e.g., cutting, burning; Hahn, 2001), whereas avoidance is the final primary reaction to feeling shame (Hauser, 2016).

In line with SRT, it is argued that supervisor undermining triggers a feeling of shame among victims. They feel trapped when this dysfunctional emotion of shame is activated. They feel shame due to the mistreatment by their supervisor, which can include rejection of their ideas and belittling target employees by comparing

them with others and declaring them incompetent (Duffy et al., 2002). Once victims feel the emotion of shame, they feel worthless and responsible for the weaknesses identified by their supervisors. This feeling of shame develops into a sense of powerlessness, and the victims become involved in self-harming emotions and attitudes in the form of self-criticism. At the end of this process, they indulge in avoidance and become passive, displaying submissive behaviors.

H7. Employee shame and self-criticism mediates the relationship between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior.

2.7. Moderating role of employee resilience

Employee resilience is referred to as an employee's ability to fight back after facing a stressful event or to remain psychologically strong in hostile environments (de Terte et al., 2014). Employee resilience is often termed as the potential to bounce back. Going further, some researchers use phrases such as emotion regulation and impulse control to explain this construct (Windle, 2011). Existing literature on resilience supports the notions that resilient employees are more likely to remain prepared for unwanted events and are also able to minimize the negative impact of stressful events on themselves (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008). A careful review of the existing literature indicates that employee resilience is a valuable psychological resource that enables people to display positive behaviors (Shin, Taylor, & Seo, 2012; Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

Not all individuals behave similarly in a given situation. Personality dispositions predict emotional reactions to affective events (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Those employees who are high in resilience may not show self-criticism even after facing shame. However, employees with low resilience have a high tendency to display self-criticism after facing shame (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Resilience is an individual's ability to get back to normal after being confronted by an adverse situation. According to researchers, it also refers to the tendency to fight back with more resources and effort after facing a setback (Linnenluecke, 2017). Those individuals who are high in resilience continue to grow after facing challenging situations (Amir & Standen, 2012, pp. 1–17). Resilience is also sometimes referred to as an upward spiral effect in which a person bounces back with more strength after facing negative events such as supervisor undermining.

High critics have more critical content in their self than control, which therefore manifests into less assertiveness and more submissiveness and sadness (Whelton & Greenberg, 2005). When people feel shame and possess low resilience, they lose even remaining control over themselves and indulge in self-criticism. SRT also suggests a coping mechanism whereby resilience helps individuals to fight back against shame by making them powerful and connected, which may help them avoid negative self-evaluation, that is, self-criticism, and avoid indulging in submissive behavior (Brown, 2006; Hauser, 2016).

H8. Employee resilience moderates the relationship between employee shame and employee self-criticism such that employees high in resilience show less self-criticism after shame than employees who are low in resilience.

3. Methods

3.1. Method and sample demography

The current study is based on a time-lagged design in which

responses were collected from employees of twin cities (Rawalpindi, Islamabad) of Pakistan working in the service sector organizations particularly banks, telecom organizations, and universities. According to Hofstede (1980), Pakistan is high in collectivism and power distance. Research on submissive behavior indicates that this phenomenon is more prevalent in countries having high power–distance orientation. This makes Pakistan a suitable population for conducting this study.

The researchers approached a contact person from each organization for helping them in distributing and collecting the questionnaires to those employees who agreed to provide information on a volunteer basis. The respondents were briefed about the nature of the study, and they were informed that their confidentiality would be maintained. This study was conducted after getting approval from the relevant research ethics board, and the researchers took consent from the organizations before gathering data. Respondents were also told that their responses would be kept anonymous to ensure confidentiality.

The questionnaires were kept in the English language, as it is the official language of Pakistan, and the majority of the citizens can read and speak in English. Past studies conducted in Pakistan also collected data in the English language without facing any issue (Fatima et al., 2018).

As the researchers required collecting data from every respondent at four different times, a unique ID was developed for all the respondents. The ID was created by asking the respondents to enter the first alphabet of their first and last name along with their date of birth. This was done to maintain confidentiality and match the responses of all the respondents at all four intervals. We ensured that each respondent had been working under the supervision of his/her current supervisor for at least six months.

Responses to supervisor undermining and employee resilience were taken at time 1, while state shame was reported at time 2. Employee self-criticism was tapped at time 3, and employee submissive behavior was reported at time 4. A gap of at least two weeks was maintained during each time wave. This method was used to avoid common method bias, as all the items were self-reported. Previous studies have shown that collecting data at different time intervals resolves the reverse causality issues (Lehman-Willenbrock, Grohmann, & Kauffeld, 2013; Maynard, Luciano, D'Innocenzo, Mathieu, & Dean, 2014). Keeping in view the rule of 5, we distributed 600 questionnaires at time 1, out of which 423 were returned. These 423 respondents were approached after 2 weeks at time 2 for collecting data on shame. We received 374 fully complete questionnaires at the end of time 2. At time 3, only 315 employees filled the questionnaires, and at the last time wave, we received only 274 responses. Finally, we had 251 complete matched responses on which analysis was done.

Among the respondents in the final sample of 251 responses, 78.5% were male; 78.9% of them were working in private organizations, while 9.6% were working in government organizations; 62.5% of the respondents were line managers, and 31.5% were middle managers; and 64.1% of the respondents had a bachelor degree. The total experience of the respondents with their present supervisor ranged from 6 months to 10 years, and their total working experience ranged from 6 months to 20 years. We compared the initial sample of 423 with a final sample of 251 respondents, but we could not find any significant differences in the two samples in terms of demographic details. The maximum difference by percentage was found in gender, which was still not large enough to show (in the first response, it was 76.2%, and in the final sample, it was 78.5%), which still shows significantly more male participants than females.

Table 1
Model fit indices for CFAs.

Model Test	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	NFI	GFI	TLI	RMR	RMSEA
For T1									
1 factor (SU and ER Combined)	395.0	121	3.26	.87	.83	.87	.82	.18	.09
2 factors (SU and ER)	229.2	127	1.80	.95	.90	.91	.93	.08	.05
IV and M1									
1 factor (SU and Shame Combined)	352.8	100	3.52	.89	.86	.86	.83	.16	.10
2 factors (SU and Shame)	200.0	110	1.80	.96	.92	.92	.94	.08	.05
IV and M2									
1 factor (SU and SC Combined)	515.0	221	2.33	.89	.83	.84	.86	.12	.07
2 factors (SU and SC)	353.4	230	1.53	.95	.88	.90	.94	.07	.04
IV, M1 and M2									
1 factor (SU, Shame, and SC Combined)	757.6	319	2.37	.87	.81	.82	.83	.13	.07
3 factors (SU, Shame, and SC)	526.3	350	1.50	.95	.90	.90	.93	.08	.04
All Variables									
1 factor (SU, Shame, SC, SB, and ER Combined)	1979	1126	1.75	.86	.74	.76	.84	.13	.05
5 factors (SU, Shame, SC, SB, and ER)	1480	1117	1.32	.94	.90	.90	.93	.08	.03

N = 251, Best model fits are given in bold.

T1 = time 1; M1 = Mediator 1; M2 = Mediator 2 SU=Supervisor Undermining; SB = Submissive Behavior; SC = Self-Criticism; ER = Employee Resilience.

3.2. Measures

Supervisor undermining: Supervisor undermining was measured by using a 13-item scale taken from Duffy et al. (2002). The sample item was “How often has your supervisor intentionally undermined your effort to be successful on the job?” All the items were measured on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = never to 6 = every day. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient of this scale was 0.89.

Employee resilience: Employee resilience was measured by using a 6-item scale developed by Smith et al. (2008). The sample item was “I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times.” The alpha reliability for this item was 0.78. All the items were anchored on a 5-point Likert scale.

Self-criticism: A 12-item measure of comparative self-criticism was used. This scale was developed by Thompson and Zuroff (2004). The sample item was “I am usually uncomfortable in social situations where I do not know what to expect.” Its reliability was 0.86 in the current study. All the items were tapped on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Shame: The State Shame and Guilt Scale (SSGS) developed by Marschall, Sanftner, and Tangney (1994) is frequently used for measuring state shame, guilt, and pride. The current study has used 5-item state shame subscale from the SSGS. The sample item was “I feel humiliated, disgraced.” The reliability coefficient for this scale was 0.85, and the items were tapped on a 5-point Likert scale.

Submissive behavior: The scale of submissive behavior consisted of 16 items, and it was taken from Allan and Gilbert (1997). The sample item was “I let others criticize me or put me down without defending myself.” The alpha reliability coefficient for this scale was 0.87, and it was also tapped on a 5-point Likert scale.

We analyzed the convergent and discriminant validity of all the study measures using confirmatory factor analyses in AMOS. We compared two- and multi-factor models with a single-factor model. The results show that the model fit indices for the 2-factor, 3-factor, and 5-factor models are better than their one-factor forced models with CFI = 0.94, NFI = 0.90, GFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.93, RMR = 0.08, RMSEA = 0.03, $\chi^2 = 1480$, df = 1117, and $\chi^2/df = 1.45$, as shown in Table 1.

3.3. Control variables

To examine the control variables, we used a one-way ANOVA test. The results indicated that organizational type was significantly related to self-criticism ($F = 3.35$, $p = 0.03$) and submissive

behavior ($F = 5.46$, $p = 0.00$). The age of the respondents was significantly related to shame ($F = 1.82$, $p = 0.01$), self-criticism ($F = 1.77$, $p = 0.01$), and submissive behavior ($F = 2.13$, $p = 0.00$). All these variables were controlled while conducting further analysis.

3.4. Descriptive statistics

Table 2 presents the values for mean, standard deviation, average variance extracted (AVE), and reliability. AVE for some variables is less than 0.5 but greater than 0.4. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), AVE values greater than 0.4 are acceptable. Correlation results indicate that supervisor undermining has a significant positive relationship with shame ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$), self-criticism ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$), and submissive behavior ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$). Shame is positively related to self-criticism ($r = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$), and self-criticism is positively related to submissive behavior ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$). However, employee resilience is not significantly related to other variables. Researchers believe that it is not essential for the moderator to have a significant relationship with the variables under study (Sauer & Dick, 1993; Sharma, Durand, & Gur-Arie, 1981).

4. Results

We followed the two-step approach of Anderson and Gerbing (1991) to analyze the data and hypotheses, employing structural equation modeling (SEM). In the first step, we had a good model fit for a 5-factor model that allowed for analyzing the proposed path model. We analyzed the hypothesized serial mediation model and

Table 2
Descriptive statistics, Average Variance Extracted, Correlation, and Reliabilities.

	Mean	SD	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
1. SU	3.88	.77	.40	(.89)				
2. Shame	3.27	1.00	.54	.18**	(.85)			
3. SC	3.40	.74	.45	.39**	.27**	(.86)		
4. SB	3.18	.75	.40	.35**	.38**	.39**	(.87)	
5. ER	2.20	.87	.40	-.07	-.10	-.02	-.12	(.78)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

N = 251.

SU=Supervisor Undermining; SB = Submissive Behavior; SC = Self Criticism; ER = Employee Resilience.

Cronbach Alpha Reliabilities are given in bold in parentheses.

Table 3
Comparison of alternative structural models.

Model Test	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	NFI	GFI	TLI	RMR	RMSEA
1 Hypothesized Model: Direct and indirect paths (Shame and SC) from SU to SB	1414	970	1.45	0.92	.81	.81	.91	.22	.04
2 Alternative Model 1: Indirect paths from SU to SB through Shame and SC	1498.8	974	1.53	.91	.78	.80	.89	.27	.04
3 Alternative Model 2: Direct path from SU to SB	523.9	319	1.64	.94	.87	.87	.92	.10	.05
4 Alternative Model 3: Parallel mediation of shame and SC between SU and SB	1684.4	963	1.74	.87	.75	.78	.86	.11	.05
5 Alternative Model 4: Direct path from SU to Shame, SC and SB	1741.3	965	1.80	0.86	0.74	0.77	.85	.13	0.05
6 Alternative Model 5: Direct path from SU, Shame and SC to SB	1692.7	923	1.83	.86	.75	.78	.85	.16	0.05

N = 251 SU=Supervisor Undermining; SB = Submissive Behavior; SC = Self-Criticism; ER = Employee Resilience Model fit indices for the hypothesized model are given in bold.

got good model-fit results. To address the reverse causality between the two mediators, we conducted some manipulation checks in model testing. We compared the model fit indices of the hypothesized framework with alternative models. Alternative model 1 shows the model fit indices for a direct relation between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior. Alternative model 2 shows the model fit indices for the only indirect path from supervisor undermining to submissive behavior. Alternative model 3 checked the parallel mediation of shame and self-criticism between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior. Alternative model 4 considered supervisor undermining as an independent variable, and shame, self-criticism, and submissive behavior as dependent variables. Finally, alternative model 5 considered supervisor undermining, shame, and self-criticism as independent variables and submissive behavior as a dependent variable. The model fit indices are better for the hypothesized model with CFI = 0.92, NFI = 0.90, GFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.91, RMR = 0.08, RMSEA = 0.04, $\chi^2 = 1414$, df = 970, and $\chi^2/df = 1.45$ than for all the alternative models, as shown in Table 3.

Table 4 shows the bootstrap results for direct and indirect effects. Interestingly, the direct relationship between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior was very strong ($\beta = 0.64$, $P < 0.001$) in the absence of any mediator, but it was minimized in the presence of the two mediators, namely, shame and self-criticism ($\beta = 0.34$, $P < 0.001$). This shows that there exists a significant direct and an indirect relationship between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior. According to the results, supervisor undermining is significantly related to shame ($\beta = 0.29$, $P < 0.001$), shame has a significant relationship with self-criticism ($\beta = 0.22$, $P < 0.001$), and self-criticism shows a positive relationship with submissive behavior ($\beta = 0.36$, $P < 0.001$). The results also indicate a significant relationship from supervisor undermining to self-criticism ($\beta = 0.31$, $P < 0.001$) and from shame to submissive behavior ($\beta = 0.19$, $P < 0.01$).

The analysis conducted for sequential or serial mediation was relatively different from that conducted for normal mediation. While conducting serial mediation, you have to calculate the indirect effect of X on Y through M1, X on Y through M2, and finally X on Y through both M1 and M2 (Hayes, 2013). We used a bootstrap confidence interval method to test the mediation hypothesis by using model 6 in Process Macro by Hayes. According to the bootstrap results at 95% confidence interval, shame significantly mediates the relationship between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior ($\beta = 0.04$), CI [0.01, 0.09], and self-criticism also significantly mediates the relationship between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior ($\beta = 0.07$), CI [0.02, 0.01]. Finally, shame and self-criticism mediate in serial/sequence between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior ($\beta = 0.01$), CI [0.01, 0.02], which supports our serial mediation hypothesis. For

further confirmation of the indirect effects, we conducted a Sobel test by using a Sobel test calculator. The results showed that shame mediates the relation between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior ($\beta = 0.04$; $Z = 2.85$; $P < 0.01$), self-criticism mediates the relationship between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior ($\beta = 0.02$; $Z = 3.26$; $P < 0.01$), and finally shame and self-criticism in serial mediate the relationship between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior ($\beta = 0.01$; $Z = 2.22$; $P < 0.05$), as depicted in Table 4 and Figs. 2 and 3.

To test the moderation hypothesis, we employed model 1 of Process Macro by Hayes. A bootstrap method was selected for this purpose with a confidence interval at 95%. Following the suggestions made by Aiken, West, and Reno (1991), shame and employee resilience were centered about the mean. According to the results, the interaction term of shame and employee resilience resulted in a significant incremental variance of 2% in self-criticism ($\Delta R^2 = 0.02$, $p < 0.01$). The slope test further revealed that at -1 standard deviation from the mean, the association between shame and self-criticism was stronger ($\beta = 0.34$), CI [0.22, 0.35], whereas at a high level of employee resilience, the relationship becomes weakest ($\beta = 0.10$) CI [-0.02, 0.22]. Hence, the moderation hypothesis is proved revealing that those employees who are low in resilience are more likely to opt for self-criticism as a result of shame, whereas employees who are more resilient fight back against shame and avoid self-criticism. The moderation results are provided in Table 5, and its graph is plotted in Fig. 4.

We conducted further analysis for robustness and examined conditional indirect effect through serial mediation model. The results were quite promising to support the theory and indicated that at -1 standard deviation from the mean of moderator, conditional indirect effect was stronger ($\beta = 0.013$), CI [0.003, 0.029],

Table 4
Bootstrap results for direct and indirect effects.

Path	Estimate	SE
SU→SB (Main effect)	.64***	0.11
SU→Shame	.29***	0.08
Shame→SC	.22***	0.06
SC→SB	.36***	0.10
SU→SB (Indirect effect)	.34***	0.09

Paths	Indirect Effects Using Model 6 of PROCESS (Bias-Corrected Confidence Interval method)				Indirect Effects using Sobel			
	Effect	SE	LL	UL	Effect	SE	Z	p
H4 SU→Shame→SB	0.04	0.01	0.01	0.09	0.04	0.01	2.85	0.01
H5 SU→SC→SB	0.07	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.07	0.02	3.26	0.01
H6 SU→SH→SC→SB	0.01	0.05	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01	2.22	0.01

N = 251 SU=Supervisor Undermining; SB = Submissive Behavior; SC = Self-Criticism; SH = Shame Bootstrap sample size = 2,500. LL = lower limit; CI = confidence interval; UL = upper limit.



Fig. 2. Direct effect between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior.

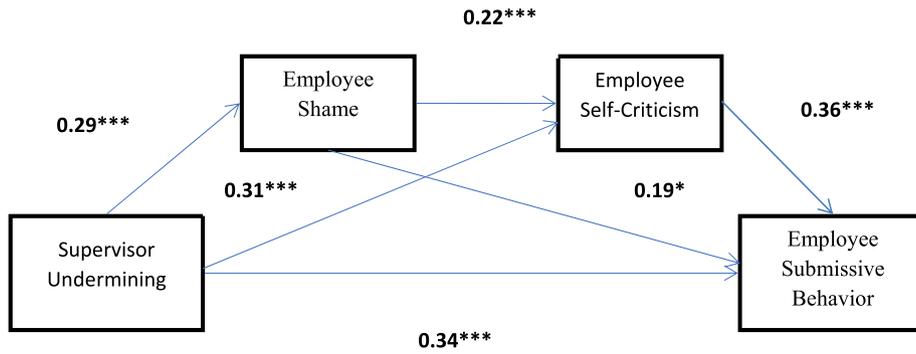


Fig. 3. Results of serial mediation model.

whereas at a +1 standard deviation level of employee resilience, the relationship became insignificant ($\beta = 0.004$) CI [-0.005, 0.019]. Therefore, in the low condition of shame resilience, the significant conditional indirect effect shows that employees low in resilience indulge into avoidance mechanism, that is, shame, self-criticism, and submissive behavior.

5. Discussion

Supervisor undermining has been considered to be a prominent form of workplace mistreatment for several years with a large number of organizational behavior researchers endeavoring to

argue that it has several adverse effects on employees' attitudes and behaviors (Abas & Otto, 2016; Duffy et al., 2002). This study has attempted to extend the range of the negative outcomes of supervisor undermining by proposing submissive behavior, which has rarely been studied in work settings. The empirical results also supported the notion that victims of supervisor undermining opt for avoidance in their behaviors and remain passive. These results are in accordance with those of previous research that has identified the negative consequences of supervisor undermining (Frazier & Bowler, 2015; Salin & Hoel, 2013).

Although few researchers have examined the mediating mechanism that exists between supervisor undermining and

Table 5
Moderation analysis.

Moderator: Employee Resilience, DV: Self-Criticism					
	β	SE	LLCI	ULCI	
Constant	3.75***	.26	3.24	4.27	
ER	.027	.05	-.12	.07	
Shame	.22***	.04	.13	.31	
Shame x ER	-.13**	.05	-.23	-.03	
ΔR^2 due to Interaction	.02**				
F	7.48				
Conditional Effects of Moderator between Shame and Self-Criticism (Slope Test)					
Moderator:	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	
ER					
-.87	.34***	.06	.22	.35	
.00	.22***	.04	.13	.42	
+.87	.10	.06	-.02	.22	
Conditional Indirect Effect for Serial Mediation Model					
Moderator	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	
ER					
-.87	.013	.006	.003	.029	
.00	.009	.005	.001	.021	
+.87	.004	.006	-.005	.019	

N = 251. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported.

SU=Supervisor Undermining; SC = Self Criticism; ER = Employee Resilience Bootstrap sample size = 2,500, 99% Confidence Interval, LL = Lower limit, UP = Upper limit, CI = Confidence Interval.

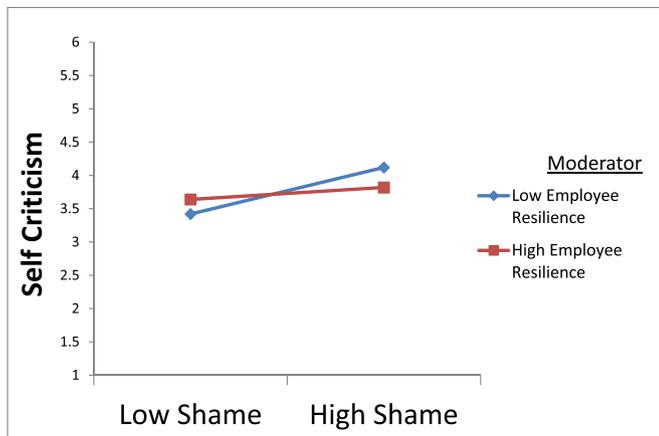


Fig. 4. Moderating role of employee resilience between shame and self-criticism.

negative outcomes (Greenbaum et al., 2015), little is known about the mechanisms, particularly the emotions through which employees show negative behaviors (Eissa et al., 2017). We have tried to integrate supervisor undermining and shame literature by proposing that supervisor undermining raises feelings of shame among employees, which causes self-criticism and, in turn, submissive behavior. We have also suggested the moderating role of employee resilience, whereby employees avoid indulging in self-criticism after feeling shame. Previously, the Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), the Transactional Theory of Stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1986), and the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 2001) have all been employed to analyze workplace mistreatment and negative work outcomes. We employed SRT (Brown, 2006) to explain our proposed serial mediation model. SRT is still in the developmental stages, and it has been studied in both women and men (Van, 2008), in childhood sexual abuse (Bryan & Albakry, 2015), and in examining shame in exercise classes (Rogers & Ebbeck, 2016). Recent research in this field has emphasized the use of SRT to understand the roles of shame and resilience in different settings (Kim, 2017). We contribute to the development and testing of SRT in work settings while linking supervisor undermining to submissive behavior.

SRT (Brown, 2006) proposes that participants' main concerns relating to shame are the feelings of being trapped, powerless, and isolated. Our study has identified the same emotions when employees are victimized by supervisor undermining. In the first step of the mechanism proposed by SRT, supervisor undermining triggers a feeling of shame that involves a painful feeling of being humiliated. In the second step, the detrimental effects of shame on the self may manifest more intensely through self-harming behaviors and ultimately end up with avoidance (Brown, 2006; Hahn, 2000; Hauser, 2016; Rizvi et al., 2011). We analyzed the same mechanism in the form of self-criticism that further causes submissive behavior. The results are in line with those of previous studies showing that employees who face supervisor undermining are at risk of facing shame and self-criticism, both of which have proved to be detrimental to their mental well-being (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Luyten et al., 2012). The third step states the role of a personal or external factor that helps to cope with the shame and subsequent harming behaviors. Our results proved that employee resilience is a coping factor that enables individuals to fight back against feelings of shame and self-criticism. In this manner, we have validated SRT through our moderated serial mediation model with significant results in proposed directions.

To our expectations, the serial mediation was proved to confirm

that the supervisor undermining–outcome relation is of a complex nature. The results showed that supervisor undermining is not only directly related to submissive behavior but also indirectly related to it through shame and self-criticism. Interestingly, the beta coefficient for supervisor undermining–submissive behavior reduced to half after adding the mediators, providing strong support for serial mediation. Additionally, resilient employees are less likely to show self-criticism even if they face shame.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study contributes theoretically in many ways. It is among the pioneering studies that extend the theory by examining submissive behavior as an adverse effect of supervisor undermining in work settings. It helps to understand how employees adopt avoidance behavior after facing workplace victimization, particularly from their supervisor. The second contribution is the exploration of emotions and self-judgment as an underlying mechanism that exists between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior. The third contribution is that we have attempted to examine a coping mechanism in terms of employee resilience, which helps individuals to fight back against shame and self-criticism to reduce the detrimental effects of supervisor undermining. Our fourth contribution is to extend and test SRT (Brown, 2006; Hauser, 2016) by examining shame and self-criticism as an underlying process between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior.

5.2. Implications for managers

Supervisor undermining, even if used as a strategy to get work done, fails badly, as it can take employees to the depths of hopelessness, making them feel ashamed and self-critical, both of which cause them to lose their ability to give a viewpoint on anything. The ultimate result is submissive behavior, which is supposed to be the main hindrance to employees' productivity and performance. The main goal of managers is to utilize the hidden potential of employees rather than undermine it. The first and foremost implication of this study is that managers should adopt strict regulations against supervisor undermining. This study discovered an emotional perspective relating to supervisor undermining that validates its detrimental and toxic effect on victims' emotions, which, in turn, leads to self-harming and submissiveness. The second important implication relates to employees who score high in resilience. This is because no organization is perfect in terms of supervisor behavior, but employees can be trained to fight back in these situations.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

The current study is not without its limitations. First, the data were only taken from the service sector. Future researchers may wish to replicate this study in other industries as well. Second, this study is not longitudinal, which is a weakness, as a longitudinal research design is better at showing a change in the variables over time. Future researchers may test this model in longitudinal research design. Finally, the current study has taken shame and self-criticism as mediators between supervisor undermining and submissive behavior. Future researchers may also investigate the mediating role of other emotions. Moreover, we tested the moderating role of resilience between shame and self-criticism, but this moderating role may be examined in other links of the mediation model in future studies. Similarly, employee hardiness and emotion regulation can be taken as coping mechanisms.

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