SHOWING ONE'S TRUE COLORS: LEADER MACHIAVELLIANISM, RULES AND INSTRUMENTAL CLIMATE, AND

ABUSIVE SUPERVISION

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Abstract

Machiavellian (Mach) leaders' tendency to engage in hostile, abusive behavior is destructive for followers and organizations. Yet, previous studies suggest that Machs do not always show negative leader behaviors such as abusive supervision. Drawing on trait activation theory, we propose that the manifestation of Mach trait-relevant behavior depends upon contextual cues from the psychological work climate. Specifically, we argue that a low rules climate or a high instrumental climate offer relevant cues for Mach trait expression. We find support for our hypotheses in two studies of 219 and 183 leader-follower dyads. Both for a low rules climate and a high instrumental climate, leader Machiavellianism is positively related to leader abusive supervision, which, in turn, is negatively related to subordinate OCB and positively related to subordinate emotional exhaustion. However, when rules climate is high or instrumental climate is low, Mach behavior is not expressed, and thus there is no indirect effect of leader Machiavellianism on follower OCB and emotional exhaustion through leader abusive supervision. Thus, our study shows that the psychological work climate is critical for the expression of leader Machiavellianism in abusive behavior and the related negative consequences to occur.

KEYWORDS: leader Machiavellianism; Trait Activation; abusive supervision; OCB; emotional exhaustion

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Machiavellianism, the dispositional tendency to manipulate and exploit others in order to maximize personal gain (Christie & Geis, 1970), has often been linked to harmful behaviors in the workplace and negative forms of leadership (e.g., Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Drory & Gluskinos 1980; Kiazad et al., 2010). Machiavellianism (along with psychopathy and narcissism) is part of the "Dark Triad", a cluster of related but distinct socially aversive traits (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Machiavellians (Machs) are opportunistic and reduce the social capital of a group (e.g., Gunnthorsdottir, McCabe, & Smith, 2002). They are strongly goal driven, focus on what is in their own best interest, and do not shy back from using unethical, counterproductive, and intimidating (leader) behavior to achieve their goals (e.g., Baughman, Dearing, Giammarco, & Vernon, 2012; O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012). Several studies found a positive relationship between leader Machiavellianism and abusive supervision, which is described as a sustained display of mistreatment (Kiazad et al., 2010; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016) and is detrimental to the behavior and wellbeing of subordinates (for a review see Mackey, Frieder, Brees, & Martinko, 2017; Tepper, 2007).

However, Machiavellians do not *always* engage in these 'dark' behaviors (Christie & Geis, 1970; Greenbaum, Hill, Mawritz, & Quade, 2017). Preliminary evidence suggests that Mach leaders sometimes do not show or suppress their adverse behavior (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). Other research also indicates that while they have a tendency to exploit others, Machs can successfully follow social norms, act in a friendly matter, and cooperate or contribute to the organization if this is in their best interest (Belschak, Den Hartog, & Kalshoven, 2015; Wilson, Near, & Miller, 1996). Thus, Machiavellianism in leaders does not

have to be visible in their behavior per se, rather its expression in abusive supervision, along with its adverse effects for followers, may depend on the context (Czibor & Bereczkei, 2012).

Although the person by situation interplay is viewed as central to understanding (leader) behavior (Li, Barrick, Zimmerman, & Chiaburu, 2014; Mischel, 1979), research to date has focused largely on (negative) main effects of Machiavellianism (Deluga, 2001; Drory & Gluskinos, 1980; Kiazad, et al., 2010). Little is known about the conditions that can reduce or facilitate the expression of trait Machiavellianism in terms of leaders showing more or less abusive supervision. Yet, from a theoretical perspective, this is important as earlier research has provided first indications that Machiavellian supervisors are not always more abusive than non-Machiavellian leaders (e.g., Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). From a practical perspective, understanding the conditions that prompt or deter Machs from showing abusive supervision can help organizations take preventative measures to manage Mach leaders and reduce the negative effects such leaders can have.

Here, we draw on trait activation theory to better understand the conditions under which Mach trait expression is reduced or facilitated and when Machiavellianism in leaders may potentially have more or less adverse effects on followers. According to trait activation theory (e.g., Tett & Guterman, 2000), personality traits are likely to manifest in specific behaviors only when situational cues for the expression of trait-relevant behavior are present (i.e., cues that are thematically connected to the trait). We suggest that Machs' dark tendencies are especially activated by situational cues that enable or align with Machs' exploitative nature. Several studies have emphasized that Machiavellians need 'wiggle room' (autonomy, unconstrained choice of behavior) in order to be successful and have argued that such freedom stimulates Machiavellians to exploit others and to make use of immoral means to achieve their goals (e.g., Bagozzi et al., 2013; Shultz, 1993).

In addition, although only very few studies are available, one trait activation study found that the use of unethical practices by others stimulates Mach employees to increasingly show unethical behavior (Greenbaum et al., 2017). We suggest that ethical work climate plays a critical role in determining the conditions that prompt Machs to or deter them from showing abusive supervision. Ethical climate includes a set of prescriptive climates which form a subset of psychological work climates and are concerned with the perception of what constitutes morally right behavior in the organization (Victor & Cullen, 1987, 1988). Ethical climates provide signals of expected and accepted ethical behavior in the workplace (Cullen, Parboteeah, & Victor 2003). We argue that unethical work climates that signal that the use of unethical practices for goal achievement is acceptable (or even appropriate) and that allow for autonomy and improvisation in terms of the means that can be used for goal achievement may activate the Machiavellian trait, leading to more opportunistic and destructive behavior by those high on Machiavellianism.

More specifically, consistent with trait activation theory, we argue that an unethical psychological work climate, where conforming to company policies and regulations is of little consideration, that is a low *rules* climate (Victor & Cullen, 1988), favors Mach behaviors. Such a climate of little emphasis on rules provides ample opportunities for hierarchical mistreatment to maximize self-interest. Second, an instrumental climate where members are willing and able to disregard morality and take advantage of others to achieve their own ends (Victor & Cullen, 1988) serves similarly as a cue for Mach trait expression. In such unethical psychological work climates, Mach leaders are able and even encouraged to use all means available to achieve selfish goals and show abusive supervision as acting in self-centered and harsh ways is accepted behavior that does not run counter to the norm.

When leader Machiavellianism is expressed in abusive supervision, this is also likely to affect subordinates' behavior and wellbeing. Abusive supervision is a resource-consuming

factor (Harris, Kacmar, & Zivnuska, 2007; Kacmar, Whitman, & Harris, 2013) that may reduce subordinates' ability to engage in positive behaviors, including OCB (i.e., discretionary actions that benefit the organization and its representatives; Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002; Hobfoll, 1988; Organ, 1988; Tepper, 2007). A lack of resources is also key to experiencing chronic work strain, which may cumulate in emotional exhaustion. Thus, we expect that when employees perceive their leaders' behavior as abusive they will show less OCB (e.g., Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Grojean, Resick, Dickson, & Smith, 2004) and report more emotional exhaustion (Harvey, Stoner, Hochwater, & Kacmar, 2007; Tepper, 2007). In a high rules climate and a low instrumental climate where Mach trait expression is less likely, Mach leaders will show less abusive supervision, and subordinates' OCB and exhaustion should be less affected. Our theoretical model is summarized in Figure 1. We present two studies using 219 and 183 leader-follower dyads. The first study tests whether rules climate moderates the relationship between Machiavellianism and abusive supervision, the second study tests our full model.

Our contribution to the literature is threefold. First, studies on Machiavellianism often investigate the direct negative effects of Machs on others, yet mostly fail to identify which contextual characteristics might elicit or reduce the expression of trait Machiavellianism in negative behavior. Our study addresses this by identifying when Machiavellianism is expressed in abusive supervision and has negative effects. Next, we contribute to the trait activation literature by examining the role of psychological work climate in relation to the expression of Machiavellianism. We focus on work contexts characterized by autonomy that creates 'wiggle room' and an ends-justify-the-means attitude as cues for triggering the Mach trait in leaders. The results may inform organizations about how to protect themselves against the potentially destructive influence of Mach supervisors. Finally, we contribute to the

psychological work climate literature and to personality and context interaction theory by showing that climate as a contextual variable interacts with a personality trait to predict relevant behaviors and outcomes in the workplace.

Study 1 Theory

The conceptualization of Machiavellianism derives from Machiavelli's famous work "The Prince" (1513/1998), in which he argues that, rather than always being ethically good, political leaders can (and also should) use deceit and immoral behavior if needed to maintain power and to reach goals (Machiavelli, 1513/1998). In this work, Machiavelli also advocated many positive behaviors that we would still agree with today (Galie & Bopst, 2006) including showing consideration for peoples' needs as well as sharing successes and responsibilities to gain the respect and goodwill of the people. It is however particularly Machiavelli's advice about using deceitful and cunning strategies that is captured in the Machiavellian personality orientation as developed by Christie and Geis (1970). A Mach personality refers to relatively stable interpersonal strategies that advocate self-interest, deception, and manipulation (Christie & Geis,1970; Jones & Paulhus, 2009). Machs show a lack of empathy and care for others, use other people as objects, have a low concern for conventional morality, and view others as weak, untrustworthy, and cowardly. As such, Machiavellianism is defined as "a strategy of social conduct that involves manipulating others for personal gain, often against the other's self-interest" (Wilson et al., 1996, p. 295).

Research has linked Machiavellianism to the use of exploitative tactics (Hegarty & Sims, 1979; Vecchio & Sussmann, 1991), successful lying and deception (Geis & Moon, 1981; Williams, Nathanson, & Paulhus, 2010), a lack of empathy (e.g., Barnett & Thompson, 1985), and unethical and counterproductive work behaviors (e.g., Dahling, Kuyumcu, & Librizzi, 2012; O'Boyle et al., 2012). Thus, Machiavellianism is generally considered a socially aversive 'dark side' personality trait (e.g., Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009). While

multiple studies have been conducted on Mach employees, relatively few studies have investigated the behaviors and effects of Mach leaders (see Belschak, Muhammad, & Den Hartog, 2018; Dahling, Whitaker, & Levy, 2009).

However, Machs are motivated to control others, are domineering in social settings, and have been found to easily take on leadership roles (Bochner, Di Salvo, & Jonas, 1975; Okanes & Stinson, 1974). Machiavellians' mistrust in human nature, lack of conventional morality, opportunism, and lack of genuine concern, make it likely for these leaders to engage in harmful interpersonal acts towards subordinates (e.g., Gunnthorsdottir et al., 2002; Wilson et al., 1996). They may lie and cheat and engage in social undermining to promote their own welfare. Subordinates often rate Mach leaders as uncaring (Dahling et al., 2009; Drory & Gluskinos, 1980) and sometimes as hostile and aggressive (Kiazad et al., 2010; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). Also, several studies found a positive relationship between leader Machiavellianism and abusive supervision (Kiazad et al., 2010; Tepper, 2000; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). Abusive supervision is defined as "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178), such as ridiculing or being rude to subordinates and putting them down in front of others. Thus, we expect leaders high on Machiavellianism are more likely to behave in ways their subordinates find abusive.

Hypothesis 1: Leader Machiavellianism is positively related to abusive supervision.

Leader Machiavellianism and Psychological Work Climate

While most research illustrates the dark side of Mach leaders, those high in Mach do not always engage in dark behaviors (Christie & Geis, 1970). Machiavelli (1513/1998) advocated using manipulative, harsh, and deceitful behaviors, but only if necessary. Indeed, evidence indicates that Mach leaders disregard moral standards only when it is convenient

and when engaging in such behavior is expected to result in personal gain (Dahling et al., 2009; Kessler et al., 2010). Studies show that Machs are particularly sensitive and responsive to the social context (Bagozzi et al., 2013; Bereczkei & Czibor, 2014; Czibor & Bereczkei, 2012; Drory & Gluskinos, 1980). While their natural tendency is to exploit others if the situation allows for it, research does suggest that Machs may even be able to feign altruism and show ethical leader behaviors when this is in their best interest (Bereczkei, Birkas, & Kerekes, 2010; Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). This implies that Mach trait expression likely depends strongly on the situation (Czibor & Bereczkei, 2012; Greenbaum et al., 2017).

In line with this, personality and context interaction theories note that the predictive validity of traits or abilities on work outcomes heavily depends on contextual characteristics (Funder & Ozer, 1983; Kelley, 1991; Lewin, 1935). Trait activation theory (TAT) offers a basis for understanding the influence of the situation on the expression of personality traits in behavior (Haaland & Christiansen, 2002; Stemmler, 1997; Tett & Burnett, 2003). TAT emphasizes that personality traits guide the expression of behaviors, but situations enhance or reduce the impact of traits on these behaviors. Situations increase the influence of traits on behavior to the extent that they provide cues that are relevant for the expression of a specific trait (e.g., Tett & Burnett, 2003). The strength of the situation also plays an important role. Strong situations provide clear guidelines on how to behave, limit behavioral variation, and thus inhibit the expression of personality traits (Tett & Burnett, 2003). Thus, traits drive behavior in situations that offer trait relevant cues and have less impact on behavior when situations offer few relevant cues or when situational constraints restrict their expression.

As Machiavellianism as a trait is defined as engaging in manipulation for personal gain and making self-interested decisions (Christie & Geis, 1970) and Machs are also low on empathy (Bagozzi et al., 2013; Jones & Paulhus, 2009), we expect that subordinates may perceive leaders who are high on trait Machiavellianism as mistreating them and as acting

more abusively than leaders lower on this trait. However, in line with TAT we propose that certain situations are more trait relevant for the expression of Machiavellianism, and under those circumstances Mach leaders should be perceived to show more abusive supervision, whereas other situations may suppress expression of this trait in behavior. Thus, we argue that the expression of Machiavellianism in abusive supervision is moderated by the situation. In line with Machs' core characteristics of selfishness, opportunism, and distrust in others, situations that provide the opportunity to use all means to achieve personal goals and that reinforce a cynical, distrusting worldview are likely to activate the Mach trait.

One important situational variable that sends out strong signals to employees about what is acceptable and prioritized in an organization and hence has strong implications for trait activation is the psychological work climate, that is, employees' perceptions of the practices and (behavioral) routines used in the organization (Denison, 1996). For instance, O'Boyle and colleagues (2012) found that an ingroup-collectivistic climate moderated the link between employee narcissism and work behavior. As a climate high on ingroup collectivism emphasizes loyalty, cohesiveness, caring, and relatedness, which is in contrast to the ego-centric tendencies of narcissists, it inhibited the expression of narcissistic behaviors. Climate perceptions are shared among organizational members and form an indication of the normative systems guiding behavior (Grojean at al., 2004). To be thematically relevant for the Mach trait, a work climate needs to address the means organizational members are expected to use to achieve their ends (e.g., manipulation) and the target of these ends (pro-organizational versus pro-self) (see Dahling et al., 2012; Jones & Paulhus, 2009). Ethical climate forms a subset of these psychological work climates and concerns the perception of what constitutes morally right behavior in the organization (Victor & Cullen, 1987, 1988).

Leader Machiavellianism and Rules Climate

Based on the taxonomy by Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988), researchers conceptualized different types of ethical climates, ranging from selfish to principled ones, reflecting organizational procedures, policies and practices with moral consequences (e.g., Arnaud, 2010; Babin, Boles, & Robin, 2000; Schminke, Ambrose, & Neubaum, 2005). An instrumental climate is classified as representing the lowest level of ethical climate, where individuals look out for their own in terms of personal consequences and needs. A rules climate represents a high level of ethical climate, where conforming to company rules is the dominant consideration for ethical dilemmas (Leung, 2008). The majority of research has focused on the psychological climate level of ethical climates (i.e., an individual's perception of the psychological effect of the work environment on their own well-being) and has shown that various forms of ethical climate may have different influences on organizational outcomes (Martin & Cullen, 2006). In a high rules work climate, employees are expected to strictly follow the rules and procedures of their organization with little wiggle room for using other (unethical) means or behaviors (Victor & Cullen, 1988). We argue that this climate plays a key role in providing or withholding trait-relevant cues for trait expression, and suggest this climate as especially relevant for reducing Mach trait expression.

As noted above, Machs are especially sensitive to having some latitude, autonomy, or ambiguity in the context as this enables them to use more means to achieve their selfish goals (Belschak et al., 2015; Christie & Geis, 1970). In a climate where conforming to company policies and rules is of little consideration, that is a low rules climate (Victor & Cullen, 1988), Mach trait expression should be more likely and possible. Cutting corners, bending the rules in one's own favor, and mistreating followers to achieve one's goals is easier and less norm breaking in a climate that does not provide a strong emphasis on following rules and complying with regulations. We expect high Machs to capitalize on the increased latitude for

misbehavior in low rules climates. Thus, in a low rules climate, Machs are more likely to exploit others and show self-serving behavior, and subordinates are then more likely to perceive Mach leaders as showing abusive supervision. We therefore expect an enhancing effect of a low psychological rules climate on the positive relationship between leader Machiavellianism and subordinates' perception of leaders' abusive supervision.

In contrast, in a high rules climate, workers and managers alike are expected to strictly adhere to regulations, policies, and procedures, and are monitored on their compliance, which restricts the availability of exploitative tactics. In such a climate, it is not as easy and also not in Machs' best interest to openly work outside or bend the rules and deceive and exploit others to achieve their goals as doing so runs counter to accepted norms and will likely be punished. Consequently, an organization characterized by a strong rules climate would not only fail to cue or elicit Mach expression, but might reduce or even inhibit trait expression. Mach leaders will be less inclined to express their exploitative nature and engage in harmful acts towards subordinates, and the relationship between leader Machiavellianism and perceptions of abusive supervision is thus likely to be weakened. In sum, we propose that rules climate has a "weakening effect" (Gardner et al., 2017), such that the relation between leader Machiavellianism and abusive supervision is stronger when rules climate is lower and weaker when rules climate is higher. We predict the following interaction:

Hypothesis 2: Psychological rules climate mitigates the positive relationship between leader Machiavellianism and abusive supervision such that the relationship becomes weaker when rules climate is high rather than low.

Study 1 Methods

Sample and Procedure

To test our first two hypotheses, we conducted a multi-source study. Respondents were approached through business school graduate student contacts and, if they agreed to participate, an email invitation with a link to an online survey was sent to them and their leader. In total, 476 leader-subordinate dyads (both working at least 24 hours per week) were contacted at a wide range of firms located in the Netherlands in industries including retailing, insurance, accounting, education, manufacturing, banking, and food services. Confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participation were stressed, and anonymity was guaranteed. The dyads were matched with codes without identifying information. Respondents were able to contact researchers for questions. Leaders rated their own (Mach) personality and followers rated the psychological climate of the work environment (cf. Kessler, 2019) and their perception of abusive supervision. The study was carried out in accordance with the university ethical standards and was approved by the faculty research ethics board. We received responses from 281 focal employees (59% response rate), and 271 supervisors (57% response rate). Only completely filled-out questionnaires with matching employee-manager evaluations were included in the analyses. This led to a sample of 219 unique complete leader - subordinate dyads (i.e., no two employees had the same leader), an overall response rate at the dyad level of 46%. Respondents worked in various occupations and jobs. Leaders were on average 42.33 years old ($SD = 11.66$) and had worked for the organization for 9.6 years ($SD = 8.98$), 53.3% of the leaders and 41.1% of the subordinates were male. Average subordinate age was 33.88 years old ($SD = 12.18$) and average tenure was 5.81 years ($SD = 7.83$).

Measures

All measures had a 7-point response scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Leader Machiavellianism was measured using a short 8-item version of the Mach-IV scale of Christie and Geis (1970). This is the most widely used instrument for measuring Machiavellianism (e.g., Deluga 2001; Paulhus & Williams, 2002), and a shortened 8-item version of this scale has shown good reliability and concurrent validity (e.g., Belschak et al., 2015, 2018; Rauthmann, 2013). A sample item is "It is hard to get ahead without cutting corners here and there." Cronbach's alpha was .83.

Abusive supervision was measured using the shortened 5-item version of Tepper's (2000) Abusive Supervision scale (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). This shortened scale has acceptable reliability and validity (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Thau & Mitchell, 2010), and well represents the content of abusive supervision (Tepper et al., 2009). A sample item of the scale is "My supervisor ridicules me." Cronbach's alpha was .87.

Rules climate was measured as a psychological climate (cf. Kessler, 2019) with the 4-item scale from the Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ: Victor & Cullen, 1988; see also Schminke et al., 2005; Dark & Rix, 2015). A sample item of the scale is "It is very important to follow strictly the company's procedures here." Cronbach's alpha was .80.

Control variables. Men tend to score higher on Machiavellianism than women (Wilson et al., 1996), and the negative effects of Machiavellianism may increase over time (Zettler & Solga, 2013), thus we checked whether we needed to control for gender and tenure, but retained them only if they had an impact to conserve statistical power (e.g., Becker, 2005). Leader tenure did not significantly alter the variables, interaction, or relationships (effect size, its significance level, and direction remained the same); however, leader gender did affect the overall significance of the model, the interaction and the percentage of variance explained in abusive supervision. Thus we report the results with leader gender, but not tenure, as a control.

Measurement Model

To verify whether leader Machiavellianism, abusive supervision and rules climate captured distinct constructs, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Model fit was assessed with a combination of incremental (CFI) and absolute (SRMR, RMSEA) fit indices (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1988). The tested model yielded adequate fit, $\chi 2$ (116, $N = 219$) = 300.27, $p = .000$; CFI = .87; RMSEA = .08; SRMR = .06. Two of our three fit indices met standard criteria (RMSEA, SRMR), whereas one falls somewhat short (CFI: .87 vs. .90). However, recently, researchers cautioned about using specific cutoff standards and recommended reporting several indices rather than relying on a single criterion (West, Taylor, & Wu, 2012; Williams, O'Boyle, & Yu, 2020). Our model was satisfactory for two indices and within range on the third. The three-factor solution corresponding to the three scales had a better fit than a two-factor solution (Machiavellianism combined with abusive supervision), $\chi 2$ two-factor model (118, $N = 219$) = 673.99, $p = .000$, CFI = .62, RMSEA= .15, SRMR= .13, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 373.72$, $p = .000$, or single factor solution, $\chi 2$ one-factor model (119, $N = 219$) = 926.26, $p = .000$, CFI = .44, RMSEA = .18, SRMR = .16, $\Delta \chi^2(3) = 625.99$, $p = .000$. These results support the proposed measurement model.

Study 1 Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 1. To test our hypotheses, we used path analysis in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). We centered our predictors before producing interaction terms to reduce multicollinearity between interaction terms and original variables (Iacobucci, Schneider, Popovich, & Bakamitsos, 2017). A path model in which abusive supervision is related to leader Machiavellianism, to rules climate, and their interaction was just identified (Hu & Bentler, 1999), $\chi 2$ (0, $N = 219$) = 00, $p = .000$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .00; SRMR = .00. In line with Hypothesis 1, leader Machiavellianism was significantly related to abusive supervision ($b = .26$, $p = .000$). Leader gender ($b = .20$, p

= .110) and rules climate (b = -.01, p = .908) were not related to abusive supervision. In addition, we found a significant interaction of leader Machiavellianism with rules climate on abusive supervision (b = -.10, p = .048). In Figure 2 we specify the nature of the interaction effect. We differentiate between high and low levels of rules climate, respectively one standard deviation above and below the mean of the moderator (Aiken & West, 1991). We find that leader Machiavellianism is positively related to leader Mach behavior when rules climate is low (b = .37, p = .000), and this relationship becomes non-significant when rules climate is high (b = .16, p = .057). Thus, as predicted, when rules climate is low, leader Machiavellianism is positively related to abusive supervision. However, the positive relationship between leader Machiavellianism and abusive supervision becomes nonsignificant for high values of rules climate. Gardner et al. (2017) describe this type of interaction as a "mitigating" effect, that is, the conditional relationship between leader Mach and abusive supervision becomes less strong as the value of rules climate increases. Our Hypothesis 2 thus receives support.

Study 2 Theory

In Study 1 we found support for our hypothesis in terms of a mitigating effect where a high rules climate lessens the link between Machiavellianism and abusive supervision and a low rules climate forms an activator of the Machiavellianism trait and strengthens the link between leader Machiavellianism and (employee perceptions of) abusive supervision. In Study 2, we replicate and extend this finding by testing how leader Machiavellianism interacts with both rules and instrumental climates to predict abusive supervision. We also include subordinates' reactions to their supervisors' Mach trait expression in terms of OCB and emotional exhaustion in our model by testing whether abusive supervision acts as a

mediator of the relationships between leader Machiavellianism and these outcomes, thus proposing a moderated mediation model (see Figure 1 above).

In addition to a low rules climate, we propose that the expression of Machiavellianism is also likely in a high instrumental climate. This forms the lowest level of ethical climate (Leung, 2008), where members are used to taking advantage of others to achieve their own ends (Victor & Cullen, 1988). An instrumental climate serves as a cue for Mach trait expression, as in such a climate – similar to a low rules climate – employee behavior is not monitored and constrained. Moreover, it actively stimulates unethical behavior by signaling that the means are less important than the ends, being self-centered is the norm, and bending the rules in one's favor is accepted behavior that others also engage in. Therefore, there are ample cues in the context that the self-centeredness and manipulation and not caring about others' needs inherent in trait Machiavellianism are acceptable. We propose that such a climate will activate Machs' selfish, abusive, and goal-focused nature. In line with this, Greenbaum and colleagues (2017) found that abusive supervisor behavior forms a cue for employees that activated their Mach trait and encouraged them to demonstrate unethical work behavior. Greenbaum et al. (2017) refer mainly to the Mach characteristics of distrust in others and desire for control as relevant characteristics that are triggered in employees by a hierarchically higher abusive supervisor. Here, we argue that selfishness, freedom in the choice of behavior, a lack of managerial control, and a shared ends-justify-the-means mentality as situational cues trigger Mach leaders' strong goal focus and their tendency to use all means (including unethical ones) to achieve their goals.

As noted, Machs are sensitive to signals of the social context (e.g., Bereczkei 2015; Christie, & Geis, 1970), and we propose that they will feel comfortable in a high instrumental climate that fits their self-serving attitude. Earlier research has emphasized that Machs appreciate autonomy in their workplace as this gives them the opportunity to use all possible

means (including manipulation and exploitation) to achieve their goals (e.g., Belschak et al., 2015; Bolino & Turnley, 2003). In addition, in a highly instrumental climate, where self-serving attitudes are the norm and the signal is sent that unethical and exploitative behaviors are acceptable, Machs are likely more openly mistreating others and showing self-serving behavior, making these behaviors more visible for subordinates. Subordinates are therefore also more likely to perceive Mach leaders to engage in abusive supervision. Thus, we expect an accentuating effect of an instrumental climate on the positive relationship between leader trait Machiavellianism and perceived abusive supervision.

In contrast, in a low instrumental work climate, bending the rules in one's favor, being self-centered, and disregarding morality is not accepted behavior and is likely to be met with negative consequences and even sanctions. Machs are sensitive to cues about such consequences and about what kind of behavior is most instrumental to them as they are strongly focused on achieving their goals. Thus leader trait Machiavellianism in terms of manipulative and abusive behavior is less likely to be activated in this context (see also Wilson et al., 1996). Mach leaders will less easily engage in or openly show exploitative and deceiving behavior as this runs counter the norm and could be punished, and we thus expect the relationship between leader trait Machiavellianism and follower perceptions of abusive supervision to be weaker. In sum, we expect a strengthening interaction effect (Gardner et al., 2017) and propose that the relation between leader Mach and abusive supervision will become stronger as instrumental climate increases and weaker as instrumental climate decreases. Thus, we predict the following interaction:

Hypothesis 3: Instrumental climate accentuates the positive relationship between leader Machiavellianism and abusive supervision, such that the relationships becomes stronger as the instrumental climate increases.

Abusive Supervision, Follower OCB, and Follower Exhaustion

Abusive supervision constitutes a resource-consuming factor (Tepper, 2007). Employees who perceive abuse divert their focus to understanding and managing the basis and outcomes of the harm (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Thau, Aquino, & Wittek, 2007). Exposed to constant criticism and ridicule, employees concentrate on overcoming the threatening situation, which, in line with Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1988, 1989), will deplete their resources. Where resources are scarce, employees are less likely to contribute to the organization in a way that goes beyond task requirements.

Organizational citizenship behaviors are constructive, discretionary behaviors that transcend an employee's role requirements and are usually not formally rewarded by the organization (e.g., Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). Researchers suggest there are affiliative as well as challenging forms of OCB (e.g., Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Affiliative OCBs are interpersonal and cooperative, and tend to solidify or preserve relationships with others (e.g., helping behavior). Challenging OCBs go against the status quo and involve speaking up, questioning, and improving existing work processes and relationships (e.g., voice behavior). OCBs are considered to be important for organizations because OCBs facilitate an organization's effective functioning. Research has linked OCBs with important outcomes such as individual and unit-level performance (see Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009). When resource depletion occurs due to an abusive leader, individuals likely reduce their OCB (Duffy et al., 2002; Janssen, Lam, & Huang, 2010). In addition, subordinates may refrain from showing OCB as a relatively safe form of retaliation for the abuse (Zhang et al., 2019). The negative relationship between abusive supervision and OCB is well established. Mackey et al. (2017) and Zhang et al. (2019) meta-analyzed the relationship between abusive supervision and

OCB and found a consistent negative impact. Thus, we expect that when employees perceive abusive supervision, they will show less OCB.

Hypothesis 4: Abusive supervision is negatively related to follower OCB.

Resource depletion has also been described as key to the stress process. Individuals find the potential or actual loss or lack of valued resources to be threatening (Hobfoll, 1988, 1989). Abusive supervision represents a lack of leadership support (Tepper, 2000) and threatens additional potential resource losses, such as the loss of promotion opportunities (Whitman, Halbesleben, & Holmes, 2014). Actual and potential resource losses are linked to symptoms of work stress, including emotional exhaustion (Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993). In line with this, abusive supervision is expected to trigger the psychological strain of emotional exhaustion. As an important marker of employee well-being, emotional exhaustion is defined as the feeling that one's energy resources are depleted and is the core component of burnout, a chronic work-related stress syndrome (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2011; Maslach & Jackson, 1981). It has been linked to a variety of deleterious consequences including psychological problems, depression, turnover intentions, and reduced job performance (e.g., Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003). Followers who perceive their leader as abusive tend to report greater levels of emotional exhaustion (Duffy et al., 2002; Harvey et al., 2007; Tepper, 2007). In line with this, we expect a positive relationship between abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion.

Hypothesis 5: Abusive supervision is positively related to follower emotional exhaustion.

A Moderated Mediation Model of Leader Mach

Combining our arguments from the development of Hypotheses 1 through 5 we posit a moderated mediation model (see Figure 1) which is reflected in the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 6: Leader Machiavellianism is negatively related to follower OCB and positively related to emotional exhaustion via conditional indirect effects, such that the indirect effects via abusive supervision are stronger when rules climate is low rather than high.

Hypothesis 7: Leader Machiavellianism is negatively related to follower OCB and positively related to emotional exhaustion via conditional indirect effects, such that the indirect effects via abusive supervision are stronger when instrumental climate is high rather than low.

Study 2 Methods

Sample and Procedure

We conducted a multi-source survey-based field study to test the proposed full theoretical model. We used the same sampling strategy as in Study 1. We contacted 383 leader-subordinate dyads working in various occupations (consultants, engineers, data scientists, sales persons) in a wide range of firms in various industries in the Netherlands (including retail, finance, transportation, education) and received responses from 234 focal employees (61% response rate), and 222 supervisors (58% response rate), yielding a sample of 183 unique complete leader - subordinate dyads (i.e., no two employees had the same leader). Leaders rated their own personality and follower OCB, followers rated the psychological climate and their degree of emotional exhaustion as well as their supervisors' abusive behavior. The response rate at the dyad level was 48%. In total, 67.8% of the leaders and 48.1% of the subordinates were male. Average age was 43.5 years ($SD = 11.02$) for leaders and 36.8 years for subordinates. Average leader tenure was 11.8 years ($SD = 9.40$ and for subordinates this was 8.3 years ($SD = 8.60$).

Measures

All measures had a 7-point response scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Leader Machiavellianism was measured using the same 8-items of Christie and Geis (1970) as in Study 1. Cronbach's alpha was .71.

Abusive supervision was measured using the same 5-items of Tepper's (2000) Abusive Supervision scale as in Study 1. Cronbach's alpha was .92.

Rules climate was measured using the same 4-item scale from Victor and Cullen (1988) as in Study 1. Cronbach's alpha was .84.

Instrumental climate was measured using the 4 items with the highest factor loadings from the Ethical Climate Questionnaire (Victor & Cullen, 1988). A sample item is "In this company, people are mostly out for themselves." Cronbach's alpha was .83. Both constructs were measured at the individual level reflective of psychological climate (cf. Kessler, 2019).

Supervisors completed a measure of *employee OCB*. Items were from the affiliative and challenging OCB scales developed by Van Dyne and LePine (1998). Mindful of the length of the survey, we used three items for each dimension. Sample items are: "helps others in this group with their work responsibilities" and "speaks up in this group with ideas for new projects or changes in procedures." Each supervisor indicated the extent to which s/he agreed with statements about his/her subordinate's OCB. As research has shown that OCB is best represented as a single higher-order factor (Hoffman, Blair, Meriac, & Woehr, 2007; LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002), we computed a composite score across all items. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) revealed that two first-order factors (affiliative and challenging OCB) and one second-order factor (OCB) showed reasonable fit, χ^2 (7, N = 183) = 25.00, p = .000, CFI = .96, RMSEA =. 12. SRMR = .05. Although the RMSEA was above the recommended .08 or less (Hu & Bentler, 1999) the RMSEA often exceeds such cut-offs with models with

low degrees of freedom (Kenny, Kaniskan, & McCoach, 2015). Our model was clearly satisfactory on the two other indices. Factor loadings for all items were significant ($p < .01$) and the two dimensions were highly correlated, $r = .57$, $p = .000$. In addition, in order to provide evidence that the six-item (shortened) OCB scale was equivalent to the 13-item (full-measure), we administered the full measure to an independent sample of 39 workers rated by their direct manager. Bivariate correlations indicated that the shortened and full version were highly correlated, $r = .97$, $p = .000$. Thus, we averaged the dimensional scores to create a single overall OCB score. Cronbach's alpha for the OCB scale was .83.

Emotional exhaustion was measured with the 5-item Dutch scale from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Schaufeli & Van Dierendonck, 2000; Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996). A sample item is "I feel emotionally drained from my work," Cronbach's alpha was .89.

As in Study 1, we checked if leader gender and leader tenure were needed as *control variables*. Leader tenure did not significantly alter the variables, interactions, or relationships (effect size, significance levels, and directions remained the same). Leader gender was significantly linked to emotional exhaustion and affected the overall significance of the model, the interaction and the percentage of explained variance in abusive supervision. Thus, we report the results with leader gender, but not tenure, as a control.

Measurement Model

To test the proposed six-factor measurement model (Machiavellianism, abusive supervision, rules climate, instrumental climate, OCB and exhaustion) we conducted a CFA using Mplus. Our hypothesized model exhibited acceptable fit, χ^2 (480, $N = 183$) = 767.89, $p = .000$, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06. Alternative models (e.g., Machiavellianism

combined with abusive supervision, rules climate combined with instrumental climate, OCB combined with exhaustion) showed significantly worse fit.

Study 2 Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 2. Machiavellianism is positively related to abusive supervision ($r = .29$, $p = .000$). Both leader Machiavellianism and abusive supervision are positively related to instrumental climate ($r = .24$, $p = .001$; $r = .36$, $p = .000$), and follower exhaustion ($r = .18$, $p = .014$; $r = .33$, $p = .000$), and negatively related to follower OCB ($r = -.15$, $p = .045$; $r = -.23$, $p = .002$). Interestingly, rules climate is low but positively related to leader Machiavellianism ($r = .16$, $p = .030$), whereas in Study 1 they were unrelated. Instrumental climate is negatively related to OCB ($r = -.22$, $p = .003$) and positively related to exhaustion ($r = .20$, $p = .007$). In line with the literature (Purvanova & Muros, 2010) women report higher levels of emotional exhaustion ($r = .15$, $p = .044$).

Hypothesis Tests

The proposed model including all hypothesized relationships (see Figure 1) was tested using path analysis in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). The variables included in the interaction terms were centered to reduce multicollinearity (Iacobucci et al., 2017). The model in Figure 1 showed a good fit to the data, χ^2 (4, $N = 183$) = 3.98, $p = .409$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00, SRMR = .01, explaining 25% of the variance in abusive leadership as well as 9% and 16% of the variance in OCB and exhaustion, respectively. As a further test of fit, the hypothesized model was compared with one in which the pathways between leader Machiavellianism and rules climate as well as between leader Machiavellianism and instrumental climate were estimated. However, adding both paths resulted in a worse fit between model and data, χ^2 (11, $N = 183$) = 46.05, $p = .000$, CFI = .74, RMSEA = .13, SRMR

= .07, $\Delta \chi^2(7) = 42.07$, $p = .000$. Thus, we decided to retain the hypothesized model for further analysis. Table 3 and Figure 3 present the results of path analysis.

In line with Hypothesis 1, leader Machiavellianism is positively related to abusive supervision ($b = .23$, $p = .001$). In line with Hypotheses 2 and 3, we found significant interactions of leader Machiavellianism with rules climate ($b = -.12$, $p = .047$) and with instrumental climate ($b = .19$, $p = .001$) on abusive supervision. In Figure 4 we depict the interaction effects and illustrate the mitigating effect of rules climate and the accentuating effect of instrumental climate. To further assess the significant moderation effects, and in line with the work of Edwards and Lambert (2007) and Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007), we estimated conditional coefficients (i.e., simple slopes). Leader Machiavellianism is positively related to abusive supervision when rules climate is low (1 *SD* below the mean, $b = .35$, $p = .000$), and this relationship becomes non-significant when rules climate is high (1 *SD* above the mean, $b = .12$, $p = .170$). Also, leader Machiavellianism is unrelated to perceived abusive supervision when instrumental climate is low (1 *SD* below the mean, $b = .02$, $p = .817$), and this relationship becomes significantly positive when instrumental climate is high (1 *SD* above the mean, $b = .41$, $p = .000$). Thus, as predicted, when rules climate is low or instrumental climate is high, leader Machiavellianism is positively related to abusive supervision. However, the positive relationship between leader Machiavellianism and abusive supervision becomes nonsignificant for high values of rules climate or low values of instrumental climate. Our Hypotheses 2 and 3 thus receive support.

In line with Hypothesis 4 we find a negative relationship between abusive supervision and OCB ($b = -.16$, $p = .033$). Furthermore, we find support for conditional indirect effects of leader Machiavellianism on OCB via abusive supervision as a conditional effect analysis

shows that the relationship of leader Machiavellianism with OCB differs significantly in strength across low and high levels of rules and instrumental climates. Specifically, the effect of Machiavellianism on OCB via abusive supervision is marginally negative when rules climate is low (1 *SD* below the mean, *I.E.*= -.06, *p* = .066) and this effect weakens when rules climate is high (1 *SD* above the mean, *I.E.* = -.02, *p* = .248). Also, there is a negative effect of leader Machiavellianism on OCB via perceived abusive supervision when instrumental climate is high (1 *SD* above the mean, *I.E.* = -.07, *p* = .044). This effect becomes non-significant when instrumental climate is low (1 *SD* below the mean, *I.E.* = .00, *p* = .818). Thus, in line with Hypothesis 6 leader Machiavellianism exerts an indirect effect on OCB through perceived abusive supervision when rules climate is low or instrumental climate is high. When rules climate is high or instrumental climate is low, leader Machiavellianism is no longer related to OCB via abusive supervision.

In line with Hypothesis 5 we find a positive relationship between abusive supervision and emotional exhaustion (*b* = .41, p = .000). We also find support for conditional indirect effects of leader Machiavellianism on emotional exhaustion via abusive supervision. Specifically, there is a positive effect of leader Machiavellianism on emotional exhaustion via abusive supervision when rules climate is low (1 *SD* below the mean, *I.E.* = .14, *p* = .008), which becomes non-significant when rules climate is high (1 *SD* above the mean, *I.E.* = .05, *p* = .196). There is a positive effect of leader Machiavellianism on emotional exhaustion via abusive supervision when instrumental climate is high (1 *SD* above the mean, *I.E.* = .17, *p* = .001), which becomes non-significant when instrumental climate is low (1 *SD* below the mean, *I.E.* = .01, *p* = .817). Thus, in line with Hypothesis 7, leader Machiavellianism exerts an indirect effect on emotional exhaustion through perceived abusive supervision when rules climate is low or instrumental climate is high. When rules climate is high or instrumental

climate is low, leader Machiavellianism is no longer related to exhaustion via abusive supervision.

Discussion

In this paper, we sought to further understanding of the trait expression of leader Machiavellianism and the role of the psychological work climate in this. We show that leader Machiavellianism is only detrimental to subordinate OCB and emotional exhaustion if leading to perceptions of abusive supervision and that the psychological work climate is critical for this trait to be expressed in and perceived as abusive supervision. Both for a low rules climate and a high instrumental climate, leader Machiavellianism is positively related to abusive supervision, and abusive supervision, in turn, is negatively related to subordinate OCB and positively to subordinate emotional exhaustion. However, when rules climate is high or instrumental climate is low, there is no effect of Machiavellianism on abusive supervision and thus also no indirect effect of leader Machiavellianism on follower OCB or exhaustion through abusive supervision.

Theoretical Implications

Our findings contribute to the literature in several ways. First, our findings show that a work climate that leaves individuals room to maneuver and freely choose (un)ethical work behaviors or a climate that suggests that the use of unethical and exploitative behavior is acceptable to achieve one's goals play a crucial role in the expression of leader Machiavellianism. While research has suggested that Machs can hide their Mach tendencies and that they are able to adapt to the situation (Czibor & Bereczkei, 2012; Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012), our research extends this work by suggesting that the interplay of leader Machiavellianism with psychological work climate helps determine when leaders express their Mach trait in harmful abusive supervision.

In a low rules or high instrumental climate, Mach leaders seem most inclined to show their Mach tendencies and subsequently elicit negative effects in their subordinates, whereas in a high rules or low instrumental climate, cues for Mach trait expression are absent and leader Machiavellianism is not as clearly expressed in visible abusive behavior. This result qualifies earlier research by Kiazad and colleagues (2010) who argued that Mach leaders are generally perceived as abusive, and could explain why some studies found a positive relationship between leader Machiavellianism and abusive supervision while others did not (see Zhang & Bednall, 2016). Specifically, leader Machiavellianism is not necessarily always equally harmful as trait expression only occurs in certain climates. Interestingly, not only the presence of clear rules (rules climate) is able to suppress the expression of the Mach trait; also a climate that does not value selfishness and an ends-justify-the-means mentality was able to effectively reduce Mach leaders' tendency to show abusive supervision. The latter mirrors results by O'Boyle and colleagues (2012) who found that organizational norms that encouraged cooperation and loyalty rather than selfishness and exploitation reduced narcissists' unethical behaviors.

Our study also contributes to the still relatively scarce leader Machiavellianism-outcome literature (e.g., Belschak et al., 2018; Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012) by addressing when and how leader Machiavellianism is related to negative effects in organizations. It sheds some light on the underlying mechanisms by establishing expressed abusive supervision as a mediator of the leader Machiavellianism-outcomes link. The findings are in line with the argument by Wilson and colleagues (1996) that Machs are able to be cooperative and do not exploit or manipulate others if this is not advantageous for them or might even hurt them. In case of a high rules climate or a low instrumental climate, the climate norms suggest that means other than abusive behavior are likely to be more effective in achieving personal goals. The strong goal focus of Mach individuals (Christie & Geis,

1970) thus may be helpful in effectively managing these individuals (Belschak et al., 2015, 2018).

The results also indicate that clear ethical organizational norms help suppress the expression of unethical behavior by employees with a disposition for such behavior like Machiavellians. This may also hold for narcissists. While O'Boyle and colleagues (2012) found that an organizational climate that emphasizes cooperation and relatedness was able to suppress unethical behavior related to narcissism, we found here that a strong rules and a low instrumental climate inhibited the expression of Machiavellianism in terms of unethical abusive behavior. These findings highlight the importance of an ethical work climate for managing (un)ethical work behavior.

Our study further contributes to the literature by deepening our knowledge about trait activation in the context of a dark trait relevant to leadership. We showed that leader Machiavellianism was positively related to abusive supervision but only in work climates that provide cues for Mach trait expression, namely low rules climates and high instrumental climates. The similar form of the interactions found for the two conceptually different climates indirectly provides evidence of replication (Golding, 1975). Our findings are consistent with prior research on trait activation (Judge & Zapata, 2015; Tett & Guterman, 2000), showing that traits are more likely to be expressed in the presence of trait-relevant task, social, and organizational cues. We thus add further to the literature on (Mach) trait activation and to the work of Greenbaum and colleagues (2017) who studied trait activation in Mach followers.

Specifically, we found that certain ethical psychological work climates seem to endorse flexibility in moral standards for the purpose of personal gain, thus leading to reduced pro-social behavior (OCB) and enhanced emotional exhaustion. While Greenbaum and colleagues (2017) argued that dominating behavior by someone in a higher hierarchical

position might activate the Mach trait by playing in on Machs' general distrust and desire for control and status, our findings suggest additional mechanisms. Situations characterized by self-government and lack of behavioral monitoring and situations that promote selfish and instrumental behaviors with a disregard for ethical aspects also seem able to activate the Mach trait and its expression in behavior, suggesting that the amorality component might form a core driver of the detrimental effects of this trait. This idea is further supported by the important role of abusive supervision as a mediator in our study.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are a number of limitations of this research that require discussion. First, in this study, we focused on climate-based cues as moderators of the link between leader personality and behavior. However, there are other cues that may be relevant, such as ones based on specific job or task factors (Tett & Burnett, 2003) or on other organizational factors such as HRM practices (Judge & Cable, 1997). Future researchers might examine how other situational factors impact the relationship between leader Machiavellianism, leader behavior, and potential negative outcomes.

We used a composite measure of Machiavellianism. Several authors have argued that Machiavellianism consists of different facets and have tried to measure these (Dahling et al., 2009; Fehr, Samsom, & Paulhus, 1992). Recent research shows that measures do not yet successfully differentiate facets (Miller, Smart, & Rechner, 2015), and it is still common to study aggregate Machiavellianism at the trait level (e.g., Belschak et al., 2020; Kuyumcu & Dahling, 2014; Zagenczyk et al., 2014). Once facet level measurement is possible, it would be of interest to assess whether specific facets drive the expression of abusive supervision in unethical climates. Several authors have also argued that Machiavellian behaviors extend beyond mere manipulation and have tried to measure broader conceptualizations (Rauthmann & Will, 2011) and workplace-specific versions (Kessler et al., 2010). These broader

conceptualizations could do justice to other elements of the original work of Machiavelli on power and governance which is far less 'vile' than often described (see Kessler et al., 2010). In fact, many see several lessons from Machiavelli's original works as still relevant for management today (Galie & Bopst, 2006).

To minimize the cognitive load supervisors faced we kept their surveys brief and used the employee's perspective to measure work climates as was done in related climate research (e.g., Schminke et al., 2005). However, focal managers' own perceptions of the climate are also relevant for explaining trait relevant behavior as compared to perceptions of subordinates, especially for Machs as they are particularly sensitive to their environment (e.g., Bereczkei & Czibor, 2014; Czibor & Bereczkei, 2012). Related to this, Kessler (2019) suggested using climate perceptions of the 'doer'- in our study this would be the leader - whereas we measured subordinate climate perceptions, thus perceptions from the 'experiencers' of leader behavior. The design of our study may thus have introduced a (conservative) bias in our study.

Also, in line with psychological climate research (e.g., King, Hebl, George, & Matusik, 2010; Norton, Zacher, Parker, & Ashkanasy, 2017), we measured rules and instrumental climates as individuals' perceptions of the work-environment (i.e. not based on group-membership). These individual perceptions may be biased as they may just reflect an attitude of a sole individual (Guion, 1973). Traditional group aggregate measures indicating shared perceptions among coworkers can provide valuable insights (e.g., Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Mathieu & Kohler, 1990). However, aggregation of individual perceptions also comes with costs, as discussed by Kessler (2019). Team members likely perceive the same phenomena differently and may often experience different phenomena. As a result, aggregated scores may not be more accurate than individual perceptions of the environment.

In line with Kesssler's (2019) recent call to focus on individual employee's perspective without aggregating these perceptions when interested in understanding how climate affects employees' attitudes and behavior (here, employees' perception of abusive supervision), we therefore relied upon individual employees' perceptions of climate (i.e., psychological climate). As Kessler notes "employees ultimately form their own viewpoints of the climate, and these viewpoints affect their attitudes and behaviors" (Kessler, 2019, p. 1052) and "there is value in understanding an individual employee's perception of the environment given that this perception influences his/her attitudes and behaviors" (Kessler, 2019, p. 1053). This also allowed us to include dyads from many different organizations, which enhances generalizability of the results.

Further, we used cross-sectional data to test the hypotheses and argued for a specific direction of causality based on trait activation theory. However, it is also possible that leaders show more abusive supervision to employees who show little OCB and high levels of exhaustion. While earlier research using (scenario) experimental designs supports the hypothesized direction of causality (e.g., Farh & Chen, 2014; Wang & Jiang, 2015), future research could use longitudinal designs to explore the possibly reciprocal relationships. Future research could also study the link between leader Mach, abusive supervision, and other important indicators of well-being and performance, such as in-role performance. Research suggests that abused employees are more likely to respond to abusive supervision in safer ways, such as reducing OCB, as opposed to engaging in counterproductive work behaviors or reducing in-role performance, which more likely comes with negative consequences for the employee (Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). Yet, we would expect the same aversive effects of leader Machiavellianism via abusive supervision on these outcomes, depending on the psychological climate.

Practical Implications

Our finding that leader Machiavellianism does not need to be manifested and lead to abusive supervision per se, but is contingent on the work climate holds important practical implications for organizations. In line with previous work, we show that abusive supervision is detrimental for subordinates' OCB and may enhance feelings of emotional exhaustion in organizations. However, trait Machiavellianism is only detrimental if expressed in visible abusive supervision, which does not always occur. Organizations thus do not necessarily need to avoid hiring Mach employees at all costs – which might also prove to be difficult given Machs' proficiency in deceiving and manipulating others – but should rather strive to limit Mach trait expression by reducing room for and acceptance of unethical behavior and abusive supervision and ensuring that there are clear norms and regulations for leaders and followers alike. Our results reinforce the importance of creating a climate where following company policies and ethical rules is the norm (high rules) and/or a climate where it is not accepted to disregard morality and take advantage of others to achieve one's own ends (low instrumental).

Conclusion

In conclusion, our findings suggest that an ethical psychological work climate may provide a way to avoid the expression of leader Machiavellianism in abusive supervision, along with its adverse effects for followers in terms of engaging in less OCB and experiencing more emotional exhaustion. Specifically climates emphasizing following rules and conveying that the ends do not justify the means are likely to protect organizations from the downsides of leader Machiavellianism.

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Table 1. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Study 1.*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Leader tenure	9.60	8.98	-				
2. Leader Gender	1.47	0.50	-.06	-			
3. Leader Mach	2.71	0.99	-.13	-.10	.83		
4. Abusive Supervision	1.60	0.95	-.08	.07	.27**	.87	
5. Rules Climate	4.31	1.13	.05	.09	-.01	-.02	.80

Note. N = 219 dyads. Tenure in years. Men coded 1, women coded 2. Reliabilities in the diagonal.
*p <.05. **p <.01.

Table 2. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Study 2.*

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Leader tenure	11.84	9.40	-							
2. Leader Gender	1.32	0.47	-.09	-						
3. Leader Mach	3.03	0.82	-.10	-.11	.71					
4. Abusive Supervision	1.55	0.84	-.01	-.12	.29**	.92				
5. Rules Climate	3.96	1.32	.01	-.06	.16*	.01	.84			
6. Instrumental Climate	2.85	1.20	.00	-.07	.24**	.36**	.38**	.83		
7. OCB	5.50	0.79	.03	-.06	-.15*	-.23**	-.10	-.22**	.83	
8. Exhaustion	2.81	1.18	-.05	.15*	.18*	.33**	.01	.20**	-.05	.89

Note. *N* = 183 dyads. Tenure in years. Men coded 1, women coded 2. Reliabilities in the diagonal.

p < .05. **p* < .01.

Table 3. *Results of Path Analysis Testing Moderated Mediation Study 2.*

Variable	Abusive Supervision		OCB		Emotional Exhaustion	
	Coefficient	*SE*	Coefficient	*SE*	Coefficient	SE
Leader Gender	-.17	.12	-.18	.12	.50**	.17
Leader Mach	.23**	.07	-.07	.07	.15	.10
Rules Climate	-.10*	.05	-.03	.05	-.03	.07
Instrumental Climate	.21**	.05	-.09	.06	.10	.08
Leader Mach X Rules	-.12*	.06				
Leader Mach X Instrumental	.19**	.06				
Abusive supervision			-.16*	.08	.41**	.11
R^2	.25**	.06	.09*	.04	.16**	.05

Note. $N = 183$ dyads. Unstandardized coefficients are presented. Men coded 1, women coded 2.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.
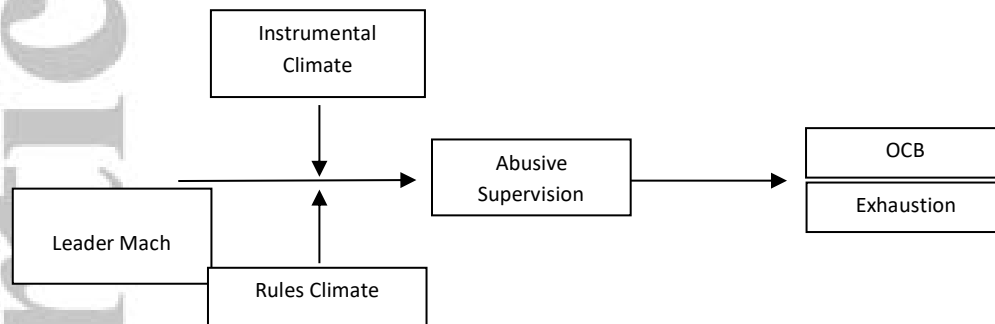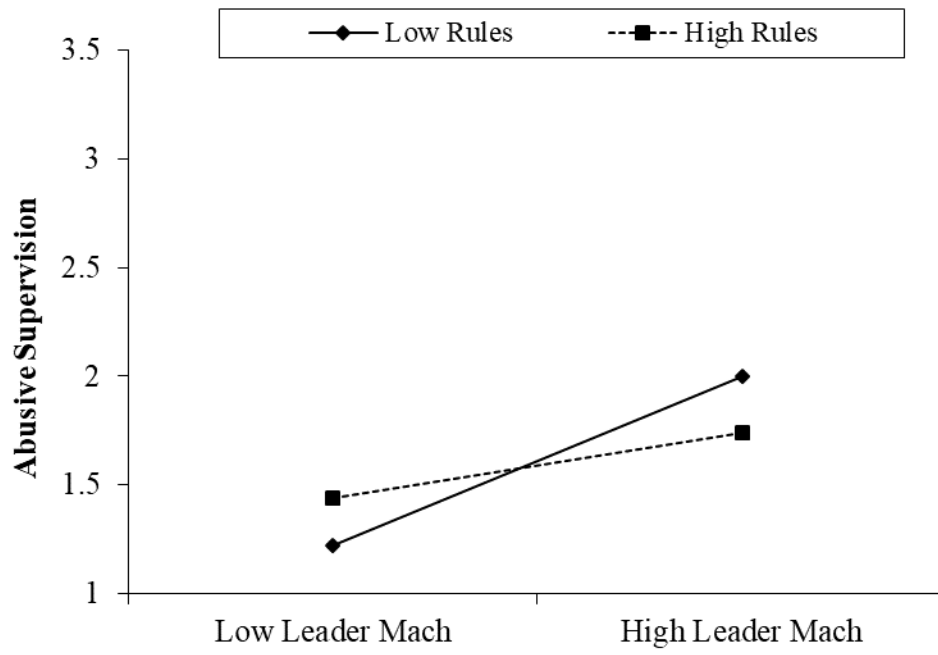
Figure 1. Theoretical model.

Figure 2. Effects of rules climate on Leader Mach and perceived abusive supervision (Study
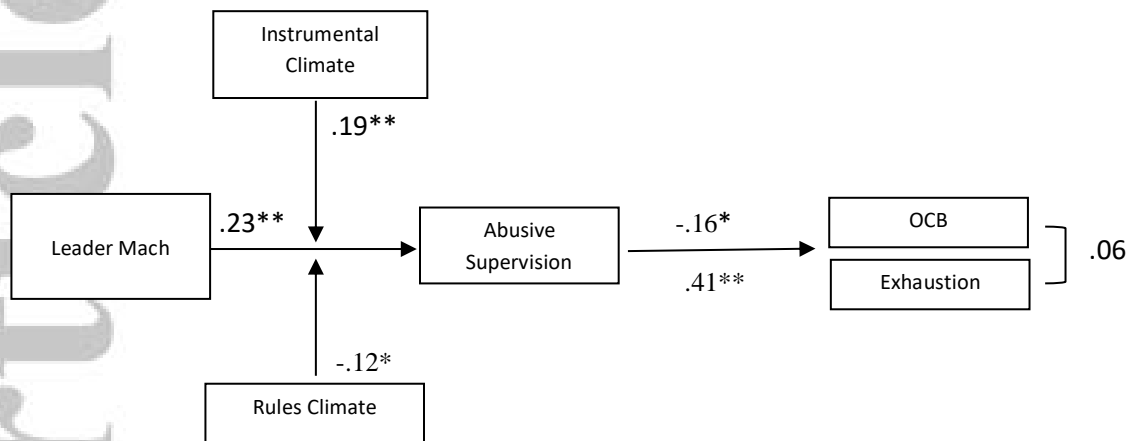
1).

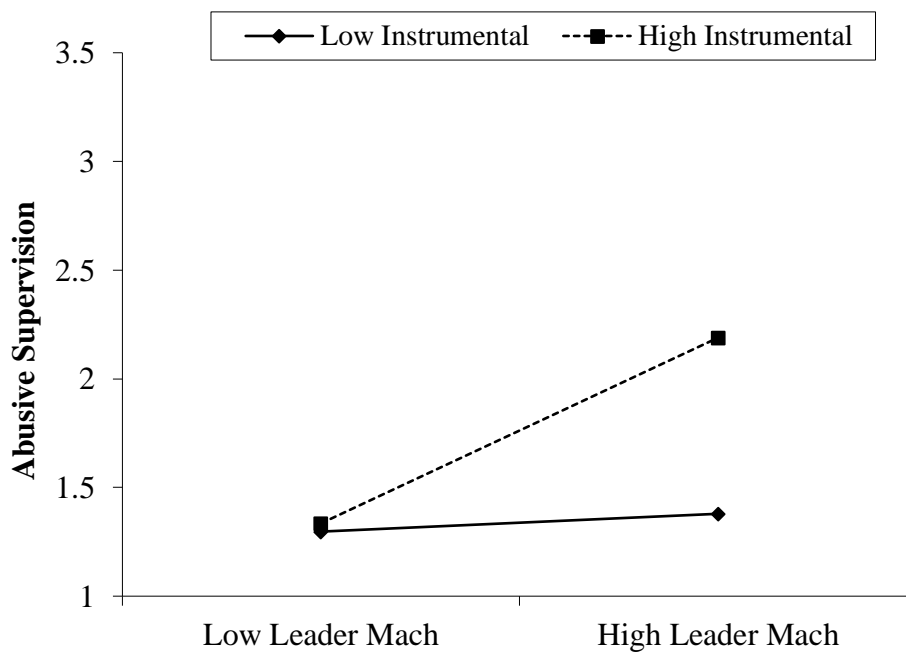*Figure 3*. Path analytic results of the proposed theoretical model.
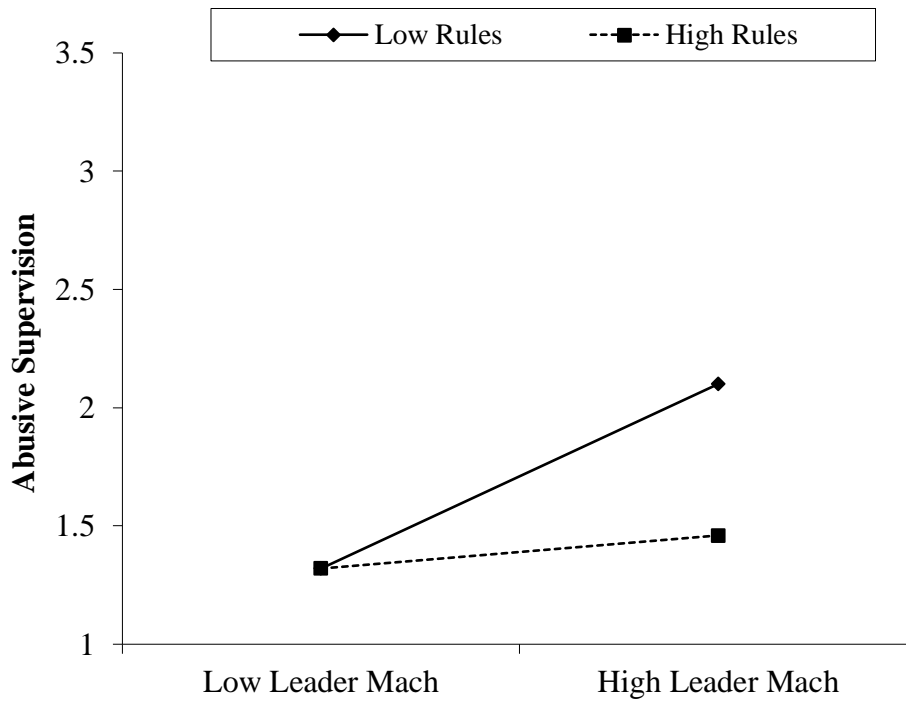
Figure 4. Effects of rules and instrumental climate on leader Mach and perceived abusive supervision (Study 2).