Abusive leadership and turnover intention: How employee and work engagement act as shields

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Abstract

Abusive behavior in organizations is widely acknowledged to increase employee turnover intention, but the exact nature of this relationship remains debated in academic circles. This study aims to validate a structural model integrating employee engagement and work engagement as mediators between abusive leadership and turnover intention, addressing a gap in the current literature. This study used Harry King Nomogram sampling techniques, and primary data was collected from 111 employees working in the digital company sector. Utilize surveys to collect data, and then use SmartPLS's Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling to evaluate research model hypotheses. The hypothesis test shows that abusive leadership negatively impacts employee engagement and work engagement, employee engagement negatively impacts turnover intention, and work engagement negatively impacts turnover intention. However, the positive impact of abusive leadership on turnover intention was not supported. The mediation analysis between abusive leadership and turnover intention, conducted through employee and work engagement, demonstrated a comprehensive mediation effect. Abusive leadership was not proven to positively affect turnover intention, which means that how abusive the leadership behavior is is not why employees increase internal turnover. However, turnover intention can be increased when employees are not involved personally or in work. Organizations must ensure that they always carry out work engagement and employee engagement as an alternative to retaining employees.

Introduction

Abusive leadership refers to harmful behaviors by leaders, such as bullying and verbal abuse, that could have a negative impact on workforce satisfaction and company effectiveness. Human resources involves the abilities of individuals to think, communicate, and perform both technical and conceptual tasks. To maintain organizational growth, companies must develop strong leaders and improve employee quality, as an effective collaboration between leaders and teams is essential for agility and sustained growth (Hadi et al., 2023; Hadi et al., 2024b). Abusive leadership must be minimized, as it can severely undermine organizational productivity and harm the work environment (Owen & Meilani, 2022). One of the deviant behaviors that midlevel management often performs is abusive leadership (Chen et al., 2023; Huang & Zhou, 2023; Rafique et al., 2023; Zia et al., 2024). Abusive leadership is the behavior of a leader who constantly demeans, insults, or neglects their employees. Unconstructive criticism, public humiliation, unreasonable assignments, neglect, and unfair supervision can negatively impact employees' mental health, decrease their desire to work, and reduce overall company productivity (Harwita, 2023).

Numerous studies have examined how abusive leadership affects turnover intentions (Lyu et al., 2019; Mahmood et al., 2024; Oliveira & Najnudel, 2022; Pradhan et al., 2020). For companies, turnover intention is a crucial concern, as it can reduce overall performance (Bui et al., 2024; Khairunisa & Muafi, 2022; Wang et al., 2024) and is a common problem faced by companies worldwide. Retaining highly skilled employees is particularly important, as losing key talent can be detrimental to an organization, making it difficult to replace them with equally qualified individuals. However, the problem arises from conflicting evidence in the literature. While many studies show that abusive leadership increases turnover intentions (Lyu et al., 2019; Mahmood et al., 2024; Oliveira & Najnudel, 2022; Rahman, 2023), previous studies have found no significant correlation between these factors (Afshan et al., 2022). This inconsistency creates a significant empirical gap, which calls for further investigation. Specifically, the problem lies in understanding why abusive leadership does not always lead to increased turnover intention. To address this, the study proposes mediating variables such as job engagement and employee engagement, which may offer a deeper understanding of the relationship between turnover intention and abusive leadership.

Employee engagement is employees' positive attitude toward the values and goals of the organization (Owen & Meilani, 2022). Assert that enhancing employee engagement is essential for addressing the prevalent issue of high turnover. Moreover, maintaining high employee engagement levels is fundamental to managing organizational turnover rates. Employees who develop a strong attachment to their workplace are generally more dedicated to the company, achieve better goals, have higher productivity, and lower turnover intention rates (Savitri et al., 2023). In addition, work engagement can also reduce the possibility of turnover intention in the organization because it can provide positive work experiences, such as improving performance and creating a good work-health environment. Positive thoughts can produce better performance and make employees feel more valued. Employees with high satisfaction always have enthusiasm and responsibility in carrying out all work, protecting, and advancing the organization (Anjani et al., 2023). Work engagement can reduce turnover intention and create productive employee behavior (Naidoo et al., 2019), so work engagement is recognized as an indispensable factor that can inhibit worker turnover intention (Andriani et al., 2023; Laulié et al., 2021).

The conceptual model built in this study is based on various research gaps and urgencies and on the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory, which is a model for comprehending how job expectations and job resources are balanced regarding worker well-being, especially in reducing employee turnover. This model can be flexible and universally applied in various cultural and work contexts (Alhajaj & Ahmad, 2023; Junça Silva & Caetano, 2024; Khan et al., 2024; Thi & Mai, 2023; Upadhyay & Singh, 2023). The subject of this research is a digital company in Indonesia experiencing a significant employee turnover issue, which is crucial at the organization's lower and upper levels. Internal data reveal that from July 2022 to June 2023, the company witnessed a notable decrease in its workforce from 354 employees in July 2022 to 314 employees by June 2023. This period's quantitative turnover rate index was 11.97%, indicating a high turnover rate in this digital company. A turnover rate of 5-10% annually is considered average, while a rate exceeding 10% is deemed high. This suggests that the turnover phenomenon is a significant problem affecting all employees within the company. Based on the empirical gap and the phenomenon that occurs, this study aims to 1) close a gap in the body of literature by examining how employee and work engagement mediate the connection between abusive leadership and turnover intention; 2) testing the goodness of fit for this integration model; 3) providing various recommendations in reducing turnover intention both directly as well as through mediation.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory developed by Demerouti et al. (2001) explains how high job expectations and low job resources can affect employees' well-being, leading to increased turnover intention. Abusive leadership refers to leaders who belittle, fail to support employees, and demand high work expectations while providing minimal resources. This worsens stress levels,

reduces work engagement, and increases the intention to leave. Alam et al. (2024) found that job control and social support are essential for increasing motivation at work; this might lessen the adverse consequences of abusive leadership. Furthermore, Arnold and Rigotti (2023) emphasize that the well-being of leaders also affects the work environment and employee engagement, which may influence plans to leave. Chowhan and Pike (2022) reveal that stress is increased when job expectations and resources are out of balance, reducing job satisfaction and performance. Duan et al. (2023) and Mellner et al. (2022) also highlight the value of employment resources, such as freedom and feedback, in mitigating the adverse effects of excessive expectation and managing a stressful work environment. Finally, Rai and Chawla (2021) work engagement, which acts as a mediator between job resources, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, depends on striking the correct balance between job needs and resources. Therefore, organizations must create harmony between job demands and resources while considering leadership behaviors to reduce turnover risks.

Abusive Leadership and its Effect on Turnover Intention, Employee Engagement, and Work Engagement

Abusive leadership is defined as sustained, hostile behaviors exhibited by supervisors toward subordinates, such as public scolding, unreasonable decision-making, and neglecting subordinates' contributions (Afshan et al., 2022; Alhajaj & Ahmad, 2023; Pradhan et al., 2020). Abusive leadership behavior, along with its various impacts on employees' psychological and emotional well-being, often creates a work environment that is unsupportive and filled with tension. Employees feeling pressured or undervalued can trigger frustration and dissatisfaction with their work. These negative effects can impact their organizational commitment, leading to increased turnover intention. Which aligns with the findings of Oliveira and Najnudel (2022), Hosseini et al. (2019), Hakan (2022), Hanifah et al. (2021), Afshan et al. (2022), and Islam et al. (2023) also show that abusive supervisors have a positive impact on turnover intention. Employees' deliberate wish to quit their company soon is reflected in their turnover intention, often due to dissatisfaction or stress (Oh et al., 2022). Employee engagement encompasses employees' emotional and cognitive connection toward their organization, while work engagement refers to the energy, focus, and dedication employees exhibit toward their specific tasks (Saad et al., 2021). Rationalization of Relationships: Abusing leadership undermines employees' psychological safety and professional dignity, which are critical to fostering engagement (Oliveira & Najnudel, 2022). Employees who experience abusive leadership are more likely to feel undervalued and disempowered, reducing their emotional attachment to the organization and diminishing employee engagement.

Additionally, the stress and hostility from abusive supervisors drain employees' energy and focus, directly impacting their task-related work engagement (Huh & Lee, 2021). Both decreased engagement and heightened dissatisfaction contribute to increased turnover intention as employees seek to escape a toxic work environment. This aligns with the theory of psychological contract breach, where abusive behaviors violate employees' expectations of mutual respect and support, leading to negative organizational outcomes. Numerous studies corroborate these relationships. Pradhan et al. (2020) and Afshan et al. (2022) found that abusive leadership significantly increases turnover intention by fostering dissatisfaction and stress. Furthermore, Oliveira and Najnudel (2022) demonstrated that abusive leadership negatively affects employee and work engagement. This dual effect amplifies the likelihood of turnover as employees become disconnected from their organizations and tasks (Osei et al., 2022).
H_1: Abusive leadership positively impacts turnover intention.
H_2: Abusive leadership negatively impacts employee engagement.
H_3: Abusive leadership negatively impacts work engagement.

Employee Engagement and Work Engagement: Their Impact on Turnover Intention

Employee engagement represents employees' emotional and cognitive commitment to their organization, encompassing loyalty, satisfaction, and advocacy (Owen & Meilani, 2022). Work engagement focuses on vigor, dedication, and absorption related to job tasks (Saad et al., 2021). As defined earlier, turnover intention is a precursor to actual employee turnover, influenced by

engagement levels and job satisfaction. Rationalization of Relationships: Engaged employees are more likely to find fulfillment in their roles and perceive a sense of alignment between personal and organizational goals. High employee engagement fosters organizational loyalty, reducing the likelihood of turnover intention. Similarly, high work engagement promotes a sense of purpose and motivation in daily tasks, countering dissatisfaction or disengagement that often leads to turnover intention. Together, these forms of engagement create a psychological anchor, making employees less likely to consider leaving their organizations. Andriani et al. (2023) and Kissi et al. (2023) provide empirical evidence of a clear correlation between reduced turnover intention and higher employee and work engagement levels. Yucel et al. (2021) emphasized that both constructs act as buffers against external stressors, creating a supportive environment that reduces employees' desire to leave. These findings align with the conservation of resources theory, which asserts that workers work to protect resources like emotional commitment and energy, which are nurtured through engagement.

H_4: Employee engagement negatively impacts turnover intention.

H_5: Work engagement negatively impacts turnover intention.

Mediating Role Employee Engagement and Work Engagement

Abusive leadership negatively affects engagement and fosters dissatisfaction, while engagement (both employee and work) can serve as protective factors that mitigate negative outcomes such as turnover intention. Employee engagement guarantees that workers feel appreciated and connected to the organization, while work engagement maintains their motivation and focus on tasks despite external challenges (Saad et al., 2021). Rationalization of Relationships, the function of the mediating role of engagement, is grounded in the idea that supportive organizational elements can counterbalance the negative effects of abusive leadership. For example, while abusive leadership erodes trust and psychological safety, high levels of engagement can buffer its effects by maintaining employees' intrinsic motivation and emotional connection. Employee engagement reduces the psychological toll of abusive leadership by reinforcing loyalty and a sense of belonging. Similarly, engagement at work motivates workers to concentrate on their assignments and derive satisfaction from their daily work, lowering the possibility that they will quit the company. These mediating effects highlight the dual protective mechanisms of engagement in mitigating the adverse outcomes of toxic leadership styles. Huh and Lee (2021) found that abusive leadership diminishes both forms of engagement, indirectly increasing turnover intention. However, Naidoo et al. (2019) demonstrated that high engagement levels could counteract these effects by maintaining employees' emotional resilience and task focus. Osei et al. (2022) and Andriani et al. (2023) further support the role of engagement as mediation, suggesting that addressing both employee and work engagement together provides a comprehensive strategy to minimize turnover intention in the presence of abusive leadership. The results of this previous research can be summarised in Figure 1.

H_6: Employee engagement mediates the positive relationship between abusive leadership and turnover intention.

H_7: Work engagement mediates the positive relationship between abusive leadership and turnover intention.
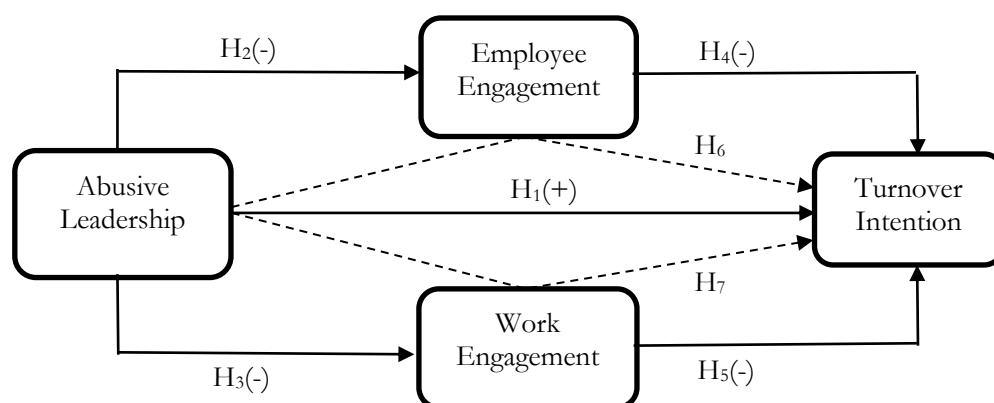

Figure 1. Framework for Research

Research Methods

This research focused on a population of 244 employees working in Indonesian technology companies. The sample was determined using the Harry King Nomogram formula 0.38 x 244 x 1.195 = 110.8. Based on these calculations, the sample size determined for use is rounded up to 111 to obtain primary data by directly distributing questionnaires to respondents through Google Forms, with a response rate of 100%, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality to minimize social desirability bias. The results of the data tabulation obtained were then tested to see the validity and reliability of the instrument. A descriptive analysis describes the tabulated data that had been collected. Furthermore, inferential analysis was carried out using Partial Least Square (PLS), a variance-based SEM, with SmartPLS software. Smart PLS testing starts with a sequence of indicator validity and reliability tests, assessing convergent validity with a correlation value >0.50, discriminant validity with an AVE value >0.50, and composite reliability with a value >0.70. The following stage tests the goodness of fit by comparing the results of the SRMR, d_ULS d_G, Chi-Square, NFI, and RMS Theta criteria. Finally, hypothesis testing and mediation analysis will be conducted. The instruments in this study were developed from previous research (Ali et al., 2024; Jindain & Gilitwala, 2024; Laulié et al., 2021; Owen & Meilani, 2022; Pradhan et al., 2020), which can be seen below in Table 1.

Table 1. Statement Items

Turnover Intention	
Thoughts of Quitting	I often think about moving from the company where I currently work.
	I often think about accepting a job offer from another company.
Desire to Search for Vacancies	I often think about other job alternatives.
	I am looking for alternatives to moving to another company in the next year.
Desire to Leave the Organization	I have decided to leave the company soon.
	I intend to leave the company where I work.
Abusive Leadership	
Belittlig Behaviour	My boss laughs at me in front of other colleagues.
	My boss criticizes me in front of others.
Scapegoating	My boss blames me for saving his/her skin.
	My boss gets upset with me when he's upset for other reasons.
Credit Stealing	My boss does not give me credit for the work I have done.
	My boss told me that I was incompetent.
Employee Engagement	
Training and Career Development	I am more enthusiastic about working with a career path in the company.
	I am allowed to develop my career in the company.
Compensation	I work well because the salary is satisfactory.
	I am more enthusiastic about working with the awards given.
Work Welfare	I feel prosperous in the company where I work.
	I have much experience working at the company, so I want to work even better.
Work Engagement	
Vigor	I feel full of energy at work.
	I feel excited to go to work when I wake up in the morning.
Dedication	I am enthusiastic about doing my work.
	I take pride in the work I do.
Absorption	I feel happy when I work conscientiously.
	I feel carried away with my work when I am working.

Results and Discussion

Characteristics of Respondent

The study's respondents were primarily men, constituting 52% of the sample; they were mostly aged between 20 and 29 years old, possessed a bachelor's degree, and had 1-2 years of professional experience. Table 2 displays the data characteristics of the respondents involved in this study.

Table 2. Characteristics of the Respondents

	Total (n=111)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	58	52
Female	53	48
Age (years old)		
<20	0	0
20 to 29	67	60
30 to 39	44	40
>40	0	0
Education		
Senior High School	5	5
Diploma	6	5
S1 (Bachelor)	92	83
S2 (Master)	8	7
Working Period (years)		
<1	6	5
1 to 2	55	50
>2	50	45

Descriptive Analysis

The findings from the descriptive analysis are presented in Table 3 as shown below:

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis

Categories	AL	EE	WE	TI
Strongly Disagree	48%	3%	2%	5%
Disagree	44%	10%	13%	44%
Neutral	3%	7%	10%	20%
Agree	4%	59%	62%	25%
Strongly Agree	1%	21%	13%	6%

Note. AL=Abusive Leadership; EE=Employee Engagement; WE=Work Engagement; TI=Turnover Intention

48% strongly disagreed with the most abusive leadership variable statement, and 44% disagreed with the most turnover intention variable statement. Meanwhile, 59% agreed with the most employee engagement variables, and 62% agreed with the most work engagement variables.

Convergent Validity
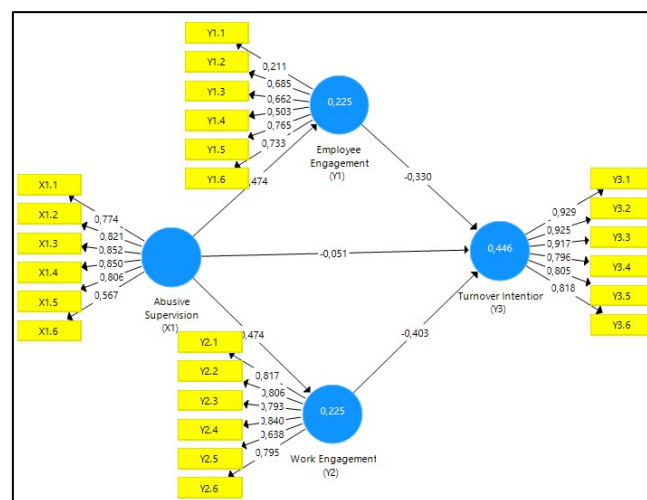
Figure 2. SmartPLS Structural Model

Figure 2 shows the output findings of indicator testing. An indicator has good convergent validity if the loading factor is >0.7. Table 4 displays the tabulation findings.

Table 4. Results of Convergent Validity Test

Ins.	AL	EE	WE	TI	Description
	X1	Y1	Y2	Y3	
X1.(1)	0.774				Valid
X1.(2)	0.821				Valid
X1.(3)	0.852				Valid
X1.(4)	0.850				Valid
X1.(5)	0.806				Valid
X1.(6)	0.567				Valid
Y1.(1)		0.211			Valid
Y1.(2)		0.685			Valid
Y1.(3)		0.662			Valid
Y1.(4)		0.503			Valid
Y1.(5)		0.765			Valid
Y1.(6)		0.733			Valid
Y2.(1)			0.817		Valid
Y2.(2)			0.806		Valid
Y2.(3)			0.793		Valid
Y2.(4)			0.840		Valid
Y2.(5)			0.638		Valid
Y2.(6)			0.795		Valid
Y3.(1)				0.929	Valid
Y3.(2)				0.925	Valid
Y3.(3)				0.917	Valid
Y3.(4)				0.796	Valid
Y3.(5)				0.805	Valid
Y3.(6)				0.818	Valid

Note. Ins.=Instrument; AL=Abusive Leadership; EE=Employee Engagement; WE=Work Engagement; TI=Turnover Intention.

Table 5. Discriminant Validity Test Results

Ins.	AL	EE	WE	TI	Description
	X1	Y1	Y2	Y3	
X1.(1)	**0.774**	-0.188	-0.347	0.252	Valid
X1.(2)	**0.821**	-0.305	-0.266	0.133	Valid
X1.(3)	**0.852**	-0.341	-0.267	0.196	Valid
X1.(4)	**0.774**	-0.188	-0.347	0.252	Valid
X1.(5)	**0.850**	-0.340	-0.250	0.152	Valid
X1.(6)	**0.806**	-0.582	-0.613	0.403	Valid
Y1.(1)	**0.567**	-0.215	-0.185	-0.005	Valid
Y1.(2)	-0.013	**0.211**	0.131	-0.068	Valid
Y1.(3)	-0.481	**0.685**	0.479	-0.304	Valid
Y1.(4)	-0.185	**0.662**	0.447	-0.424	Valid
Y1.(5)	-0.206	**0.503**	0.277	-0.199	Valid
Y1.(6)	-0.228	**0.765**	0.666	-0.664	Valid
Y2.(1)	-0.477	**0.733**	0.652	-0.404	Valid
Y2.(2)	-0.454	0.691	**0.817**	-0.617	Valid
Y2.(3)	-0.284	0.607	**0.806**	-0.609	Valid
Y2.(4)	-0.479	0.693	**0.793**	-0.512	Valid
Y2.(5)	-0.402	0.656	**0.840**	-0.478	Valid
Y2.(6)	-0.248	0.363	**0.638**	-0.242	Valid
Y3.(1)	-0.297	0.552	**0.795**	-0.405	Valid
Y3.(2)	0.290	-0.614	-0.616	**0.929**	Valid
Y3.(3)	0.216	-0.542	-0.559	**0.925**	Valid
Y3.(4)	0.308	-0.518	-0.566	**0.917**	Valid
Y3.(5)	0.107	-0.435	-0.464	**0.796**	Valid
Y3.(6)	0.307	-0.538	-0.538	**0.805**	Valid
X1.(1)	0.293	-0.559	-0.551	**0.818**	Valid

Note. Ins.=Instrument; AL=Abusive Leadership; EE=Employee Engagement; WE=Work Engagement; TI=Turnover Intention.

The loading value of all indicators has a loading factor value >0.7. Thus, it can be concluded that most indicators have good convergent validity except for the statement from the abusive leadership variable, "My boss said that I was incompetent" (X1.6), work engagement variable, "I feel happy when I work seriously," and four questions from the employee engagement variable, namely Y1.1 to Y1.4.

Discriminant Validity

As Table 5 shows, indicators are declared valid if their relationship with their construct is higher than with other constructs.

The discriminant validity test results show valid numbers because the correlation between items and the same indicator is more significant than the correlation with others. Therefore, it can be conclusively stated that this data exhibits discriminant validity.

Construct Reliability

The construct reliability is considered strong, as indicated by a loading factor greater >0.70 and an average variance extracted exceeding >0.50, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of Construct Reliability

Variables	LF	AVE	Description
Abusive Leadership	0.913	0.678	Reliable
Employee Engagement	0.798	0.664	Reliable
Work Engagement	0.948	0.752	Reliable
Turnover Intention	0.907	0.662	Reliable

Note. LF=Loading Factor; AVE=Average Variance Extracted.

The analysis confirms that all the variables meet the reliability criteria. This is demonstrated by loading factor (LF) values that are consistently higher than 0.70 and average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.50, ensuring the validity and reliability of the measurement model.

Goodness-of-Fit

Model fit testing evaluates the SmartPLS estimated output against the criteria outlined in Table 7.

Table 7. Goodness of Fit Results

Fit Summary	Cut-Off	Estimation	Description
SRMR	<0.10	0.168	Not Fit
Chi-Square	$\chi^2_{Statistics} < \chi^2_{Table}$	611.622 > 135.480	Not Fit
NFI	Close to 1	0.650	Fit
RMS_Theta	<0.12	0.231	Not Fit
d_ULS	CI > OS	(CI) 1.539 > (OS) 4.850	Not Fit
d_G	CI > OS	(CI) 0.657 > (OS) 1.180	Not Fit

Table 7 shows that only NFI has an estimated value of 0.650, close to 1, so the model is said to be fit. Several other indicators, such as SRMR, Chi-Square, d_ULS, d_G, and RMS_Theta, cannot be declared fit. However, with one of the goodness of fit indicators, the current model is applicable for testing hypotheses.

Hypothesis Testing

Only valid and reliable instrument test results are used in hypothesis testing. The hypothesis test results from this research indicate that all hypotheses are accepted, except for the one concerning the impact of abusive leadership on turnover intention, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Original Sample	t-statistics	p-value	Description
Abusive leadership → Turnover intention	-0.019	0.201	0.841	Not Proven positive
Abusive leadership → employee engagement	-0.435	5.478	0.000***	Proven negative
Abusive supervison → Work engagament	-0.487	6.500	0.000***	Proven negative
Employee engagement → Turnover intention	-0.394	2.971	0.003**	Proven negative
Work engagement → Turnover intention	-0.339	2.603	0.010*	Proven negative

Note. *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.000.

Mediation Analysis

Two mediation analyses were performed: the first examined the path from abusive leadership to turnover intention through employee engagement, and the second explored the path from abusive leadership to turnover intention through work engagement. The findings are presented in Table 9, which shows that the total effect (TE) of the second mediation relationship has a higher value than the direct effect (DE) and also has a significance <0.05, so it can be concluded that this mediation analysis is proven full mediation.

Table 9. Mediation Analysis Result

Flow of Influence	Direct Effect (DE)		Indirect Effect (IE)		Total Effect (TE)	
	OS	PV	OS	PV	OS	PV
Abusive leadership → Employee engagement → Turnover intention	-0.019	0.841	0.171	0.008**	0.152	0.000***
Abusive leadership → Work engagement → Turnover intention	-0.019	0.841	0.183	0.024*	0.164	0.000***

Note. *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.000.
OS=Original sample; PV=p-value.

Discussion

Abusive leadership and its effect on turnover intention, employee engagement, and work engagement

Abusive leadership does not significantly affect turnover intention (p-value 0.841 > 0.05), which diverges from much of the existing literature but aligns closely with Afshan et al. (2022), who found that abusive supervision does not directly lead to retaliation or turnover intentions. Instead, their study highlights the mediating role of supervisor undermining. In contrast, studies like Lyu et al. (2019) and Yasmeen et al. (2023) provide evidence that abusive supervision significantly predicts turnover intention through mediators such as psychological empowerment and organizational or leadership identification. Similarly, Oliveira and Najnudel (2022) emphasize that engagement mediates this relationship, with stress not playing a significant role. Mahmood et al. (2024) introduce workplace friendships as a mitigating factor, reducing the impact of abusive supervision on turnover intention. Rahman (2023) links this dynamic through stress, highlighting its dual mediation by abusive supervision and coworker incivility. Lastly, Hadi et al. (2024a) underline the role of organizational culture in fostering adaptability and collaboration, which could buffer against the negative effects of abusive leadership. These nuanced perspectives suggest that this study's lack of a significant relationship could be due to contextual factors such as cultural norms, organizational policies, or interpersonal dynamics. Further exploration incorporating these mediating and moderating variables could enrich the theoretical framework and contribute to a deeper understanding of abusive supervision's operation across different settings. This study's findings challenge existing assumptions and invite further research into the boundaries and conditions under which abusive supervision does or does not affect employee turnover intention.

Abusive leadership significantly and negatively impacts employee engagement (p-value 0.000 < 0.05), which aligns with previous research that highlights the detrimental effects of abusive

supervision on workplace dynamics. Conducted in the context of employees in the digital company sector—a fast-paced, innovation-driven environment—these results gain additional significance due to the critical reliance of such industries on high engagement for creativity, collaboration, and productivity. Oliveira and Najnudel (2022) similarly found that abusive supervision reduces employee engagement, with engagement acting as a mediator for turnover intention, underlining the cascading effects of poor leadership. In a digital sector context, this highlights the risk of losing high-performing talent due to disengagement. Wang et al. (2020) expanded on this by demonstrating how abusive supervision fosters employee silence, which mediates declines in engagement and satisfaction. For digital companies, where open communication and rapid problem-solving are vital, such silence can severely impact team dynamics and innovation cycles. Osei et al. (2022) confirmed the negative relationship between abusive leadership and engagement while suggesting that individual traits, such as proactive personalities, can buffer these effects. This is particularly relevant in the digital sector, where diverse personalities contribute to agile and innovative work environments. By situating these findings within the digital company sector, this study enriches the theoretical framework by emphasizing the unique challenges and implications of leadership behaviors in industries reliant on high engagement and innovation. Future research could explore tailored interventions for digital companies, such as leadership training focused on fostering psychological safety, enhancing communication platforms, and leveraging employee diversity to mitigate the adverse effects of abusive supervision and sustain competitive advantage.

Abusive leadership significantly and negatively impacts work engagement (p-value 0.000 < 0.05), underscoring the hypothesis that such leadership behaviors create a disengaging work environment. This is consistent with Osei et al. (2022), who found that abusive supervision reduces work engagement and emphasized that individual traits, such as proactive personalities, can moderate the impact. The study also noted that silence did not mediate the relationship, suggesting that engagement is directly influenced by leadership behavior without being significantly shaped by employees' withholding of communication. On the other hand, Huh and Lee (2021) highlighted a more complex dynamic, showing that when employees attribute abusive supervision to performance-driven motives and possess strong workplace friendships, engagement levels can increase. This contrast suggests that employee perceptions and the availability of job resources play a pivotal role in mediating the effects of abusive leadership. In the digital company sector context, where teamwork, creativity, and rapid adaptability are key, abusive leadership likely disrupts the collaborative and innovative culture necessary for success. Integrating insights from these studies, organizations can prioritize enhancing interpersonal relationships, ensuring transparent leadership practices, and fostering environments where employees interpret feedback constructively. These measures can help mitigate the adverse effects of abusive behaviors while promoting a more engaging and resilient workplace culture in sectors that thrive on innovation and collaboration.

Employee engagement and work engagement: their impact on turnover intention

Employee engagement significantly reduces turnover intention, as demonstrated by this study with a p-value of 0.003 < 0.05, supporting the hypothesis that higher engagement levels lead to lower employee turnover. This is consistent with Otoo (2024a) and Ribeiro et al. (2021), who found that employee engagement mediates the relationship between job resources like autonomy and supervisory support and turnover intention, emphasizing engagement as a critical factor in retaining employees. Similarly, Islam et al. (2023) demonstrated that empowerment and information sharing increase engagement, which partially mediates their relationship to turnover intention. Oh et al. (2022) added depth by identifying a non-linear relationship where engagement and satisfaction significantly reduce turnover intention, particularly at higher levels of these factors. In the digital company sector, where innovation and adaptability are key, high engagement is even more critical, as the industry's dynamic nature requires motivated and committed employees. The findings from Huh and Lee (2021) also highlight how engagement can increase in unique contexts, such as under perceived abusive supervision when paired with positive workplace friendships and performance-driven attributions. These studies collectively emphasize the central role of employee engagement as a mediator in reducing turnover intention, especially in fast-paced sectors like digital companies. By leveraging job resources, empowerment, and

supportive organizational environments, companies can enhance engagement, address industry-specific challenges, and foster a more stable and committed workforce.

Work engagement significantly reduces turnover intention (p-value 0.010 < 0.05), confirming that motivated workers are less likely to quit their companies. This aligns with prior research, including Kissi et al. (2023), which highlighted the function of job engagement as a mediator between supervisory support and turnover intention, emphasizing its critical impact on organizational and project performance. Similarly, Yucel et al. (2021) supervisor support moderates these dynamics. However, job engagement negatively correlates with turnover intention and partially mediates the association between work-family conflict and turnover intention. Islam et al. (2023) added depth by demonstrating that empowerment and information sharing enhance engagement, which mediates their relationship with reduced turnover intention, showing how organizational practices shape employee retention. Alhajaj and Ahmad (2023) further confirmed that work engagement is a mediator between human resource practices—such as pay satisfaction, empowerment, and communication—and talent turnover intention, underscoring the role of engagement in linking HR practices to retention outcomes.

Meanwhile, Momin and Rolla (2024) expanded on these ideas by emphasizing the connection between workplace well-being (WWB) and work engagement (WE), suggesting that while turnover intention did not moderate the relationship, it mitigated the link between engagement and well-being. Within the digital company sector, these findings underscore the importance of fostering engagement through supportive leadership, empowerment, and effective communication, as the dynamic nature of this industry demands high levels of employee commitment to maintain innovation and competitiveness. Strengthening work engagement mitigates turnover intention and contributes to individuals' and organizations' overall well-being and effectiveness.

Mediating role employee engagement and work engagement

Employee engagement mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention is confirmed, with a significant mediation effect of 0.152 (p-value 0.000 < 0.05), which surpasses the non-significant direct effect of -0.019 (p-value 0.841 > 0.05). This result validates the hypothesis by showing that while abusive supervision does not directly influence turnover intention, its impact is channeled through the engagement of employees. This result is consistent with (Otoo, 2024a, 2024b), who revealed that employee engagement mediates the relationship between job resources, such as supervisory support, and turnover intention, emphasizing the protective role of engagement in retaining employees. Afshan et al. (2022) also support this by identifying that supervisor undermining indirectly affects turnover intention through reduced engagement and quiescent silence. Yasmeen et al. (2023) further highlighted that abusive supervision negatively influences organizational identification, which is closely tied to employee engagement, ultimately increasing turnover intention. Lyu et al. (2019) demonstrated that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention, indicating the importance of fostering empowerment to enhance engagement and reduce turnover. Mahmood et al. (2024) suggested that workplace friendships mitigate the negative effects of abusive supervision, indirectly enhancing engagement and reducing turnover intention. Oh et al. (2022) emphasized the dynamic relationship between engagement and turnover intention, showing that higher engagement consistently reduces turnover. These findings collectively advance the theoretical understanding of employee engagement as a key mediator in mitigating the negative effects of abusive supervision, particularly by highlighting organizational practices, such as fostering supportive leadership, empowerment, and workplace relationships, that sustain engagement and reduce turnover intention.

Work engagement mediating the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention is also supported, with a significant mediation effect of 0.164 (p-value 0.000 < 0.05), surpassing the weak direct effect of -0.019. This validates the hypothesis by demonstrating that work engagement plays a critical role in transforming the negative impact of abusive supervision into lower turnover intention. Oliveira and Najnudel (2022) have shown that engagement mediates the association between turnover intention and abusive supervision, with lesser abusive behaviors resulting in more engagement and lower turnover. Wang et al. (2020) abusive supervision encourages

employee quiet, which lowers job engagement and raises the desire to leave. Islam et al. (2023) supported this by demonstrating that empowerment and information sharing enhance work engagement, which then mediates turnover intention, emphasizing the importance of leadership and communication in fostering engagement. Alhajaj and Ahmad (2023) confirmed that work engagement mediates the relationship between HR practices such as pay satisfaction and communication and turnover intention, demonstrating how engagement links retention and organizational activities. Momin and Rolla (2024) linked workplace well-being to engagement, further substantiating that engagement indirectly reduces turnover intention by enhancing the overall workplace experience. Huh and Lee (2021) provided a nuanced perspective by showing that abusive supervision may even enhance work engagement under certain conditions, such as positive causal attributions and strong workplace friendships. Osei et al. (2022) added that while silence does not mediate the relationship, proactive personalities strengthen engagement despite abusive behaviors. Finally, Yucel et al. (2021) confirmed that work engagement mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention, reinforcing its role as a protective factor. These findings enrich the theoretical framework by highlighting work engagement as a powerful mediator, suggesting that organizations should foster engagement through supportive practices, reduce abusive supervision, and enhance employee empowerment to sustain retention and minimize turnover intention.

Implication and Conclusion

This study provides significant theoretical contributions by confirming the role of employee engagement and work engagement in mediating the relationship between abusive leadership and turnover intention. The findings demonstrate that while abusive leadership does not directly influence turnover intention, its indirect effects through engagement are substantial. These results expand leadership theories, such as the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, by illustrating how engagement buffers the negative impacts of abusive behaviors. Moreover, this study emphasizes the importance of engagement in the Indonesian technology sector, where employee creativity and adaptability are vital for organizational success. By integrating these insights, the research offers a valuable framework for understanding how leadership styles affect workforce stability in fast-paced, innovation-driven industries.

Organizations must focus on enhancing employee and work engagement to mitigate the adverse effects of abusive leadership. Leadership training programs should aim to reduce abusive behaviors while promoting supportive, empowering, and transparent leadership practices. In technology companies, fostering engagement through structured feedback, employee empowerment, and workplace friendships can significantly reduce turnover intention. Integrating psychological safety training and improving communication platforms can also help create a more resilient and collaborative work environment. These initiatives are particularly crucial in the technology sector, where high engagement directly contributes to maintaining innovation and competitiveness.

This work has limitations despite its significant contributions, particularly regarding its methodology. The sample size of 111 respondents from Indonesian technology companies, determined using the Harry King Nomogram formula, limits the generalizability of the findings. Although anonymity and confidentiality were assured, using self-reported surveys introduces the potential for social desirability bias. Additionally, the study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between variables. Future research should address these limitations by employing larger, more diverse samples and adopting longitudinal or mixed-method approaches, such as combining surveys with interviews. Investigating additional mediators, like psychological well-being, and moderators, such as organizational culture, can further enhance the findings' theoretical framework and practical relevance.

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