

# Being mistreated by your boss could make you less responsible outside of work, research reveals

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Mean or abusive bosses can harm their employee's prosocial initiatives outside the workplace but this is not always the case, new research from Trinity Business School reveals.

Professors Wladislaw Rivkin, Nishat Babu, Kenneth De Roeck, and Sudeshna Bhattacharya delved into the complex dynamics of workplace environments, focusing on the weekly relationships between abusive supervision and employee socially responsible behaviors.

The study looked at how bosses' mean or abusive behaviors affect employees, especially when it comes to doing good things for others outside of the workplace. They wanted to see if this bad behaviour from bosses made employees less likely to be helpful or socially responsible outside of work.

They studied this over 12 weeks, asking employees about their experiences each week.

They found that in those weeks when bosses were mean employees felt more drained in terms of exerting self-control and engaged in less socially responsible behaviors outside of work such as donating money to charity or helping out in a local food bank.

However, there was a catch. For those employees who did not perceive their supervisor to be in general particularly abusive and in those weeks when the employees did not face high levels of stress; the findings indicate that there was no detrimental impact of abusive supervision on employees' socially responsible behaviors outside of the workplace.

According to Professor Wladislaw Rivkin: "While we cannot deny the harmful implications of abusive leadership within and outside of the workplace these leader behaviors may not be as harmful as we previously assumed. Our study surprisingly shows that as long as one's boss is not viewed as engaging in generally consistent abusive behaviors and as long as weekly work demands are kept in check leaders' abusive behaviors do not affect employees' engagement in socially responsible behaviors."

"Identifying under which circumstances abusive supervision is less harmful to employees has important practical implications. Any leader may accidentally engage in mean behaviors towards employees for example because the leader is drained or under pressure. Our research shows that while such behavioral slip-ups are not ideal not all is lost for leaders if they do not consistently display such behaviors and as long as work demands are low. This highlights additional ways how organizations and employees can deal with abusive supervision."

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