

THE INFLUENCE OF ABUSIVE SUPERVISION ON HIGHER EDUCATIONAL LECTURER'S PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AND INNOVATIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

Leadership in education, particularly in secondary and higher education in Indonesia, plays a crucial role in shaping the performance, innovation, and sustainability of educators. However, abusive supervision practices are still prevalent and have the potential to negatively impact lecturer motivation and retention. This study explores the influence of Abusive Supervision (AS) by educational leaders on Lecturer Intention to Quit (LIQ), with Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), and Higher Education Lecturer Performance (HELP) as mediating variables. The study population consisted of lecturers working in private and public university in West Java, Indonesia. A total of 115 lecturers voluntarily participated in this study by completing a questionnaire based on a validated measurement scale. A quantitative approach with a survey design was used, and data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results showed that AS significantly increased EE and LIQ, while decreasing IWB and HELP. Furthermore, IWB had a positive effect on HELP, while HELP had a negative relationship with LIQ. Mediation analysis confirmed that IWB and HELP mediated the relationship between AS and LIQ, while EE had no effect on HELP, thus not acting as a mediator. These findings confirm that abusive supervision has a detrimental impact on lecturer innovation, performance, and retention. This study concludes that abusive supervision has serious implications for the sustainability of higher education, making leadership style transformation an urgent need.

Keywords

Abusive supervision; Emotional exhaustion; Higher educational lecturer performance; Innovative work behaviour; Lecturers' intention to quit.



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INTRODUCTION

Lecturer retention has become one of the most pressing challenges in education systems, particularly in developing countries like Indonesia. The quality of education depends heavily on the stability and performance of lecturers, while high turnover has serious consequences for the continuity of learning, institutional knowledge, and college student achievement (Menzies, 2023). This turnover also increases recruitment costs, weakens university culture, and disrupts long-term educational planning (Diagne, 2024). Therefore, understanding the factors that drive lecturer turnover intention is crucial for maintaining educational sustainability.

One significant factor influencing turnover intention is abusive supervision (AS), which is the perception by subordinates of persistent hostile verbal and non-verbal behavior from a leader, without involving physical violence (Agbayani-Pineda, 2025). In the educational context, abusive supervision can include demeaning comments, unfair evaluations, excessive criticism, or public humiliation (Chaudhry et al., 2023; Oyewunmi & Oyewunmi, 2022). Such behavior has the potential to drain lecturers' emotional resources, lead to emotional exhaustion (EE), inhibit innovative work behavior (IWB), and reduce lecturer performance (HELP). Relevant theoretical frameworks to explain this phenomenon include the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which emphasizes the loss of psychological energy due to stress (Merino et al., 2021), and the Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) Theory, which highlights low-quality relationships between leaders and subordinates as a trigger for turnover intentions (Hattab et al., 2022).

Numerous studies have demonstrated a negative relationship between abusive supervision and various aspects of work. Vázquez et al., (2024), Ali et al., (2022) and Oliveira & Najnudel (2023) found that abusive supervision increases employee turnover intentions. Westbrook and Peterson (2022) reported that an abusive leadership style decreases job satisfaction and increases burnout. In the educational context, Meher et al. (2025) showed that lecturers experiencing abusive supervision experienced a decline in professional identity. Wang et al. (2024) found that emotional exhaustion was a key factor bridging work stress and burnout in educators. Dias and Palma-Moreira (2024) and Bagdžiūnienė et al., (2023) also confirmed that EE was positively related to intention to leave teaching.

Furthermore, lecturer innovation and performance have also been shown to be influenced by leadership style. Özcan et al. (2025) found that innovative work behavior (IWB) is significantly influenced by leadership support. Konidari & Stathopoulos (2025) emphasized that IWB supports

university resilience in the face of educational reform. Bucar et al., (2025) identified that IWB increases lecturer effectiveness and job satisfaction. Meanwhile, Suryanef et al., (2023) emphasized that higher education lecturer performance (HELP) is a crucial indicator of educational success. Zhang et al., (2021) and Zhong et al., (2024) demonstrated that high performance reduces turnover intention because it correlates with professional recognition and satisfaction. These findings suggest a link between AS, EE, IWB, HELP, and LIQ, but comprehensive studies examining these variables simultaneously in the Indonesian educational context are still limited.

This research gap is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where educational reform emphasizes professionalism, innovation, and improving lecturer quality (Darawsheh & Al-Shurman, 2024). Despite this, problems of burnout, dissatisfaction, and faculty turnover persist, particularly in private institutions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the authoritarian leadership style of principals or university leaders exacerbates these conditions, but empirical studies examining the role of abusive supervision are still limited. Therefore, this study offers a novel approach by simultaneously examining the influence of AS on LIQ through the mediation of EE, IWB, and HELP in the context of Indonesian higher education.

Based on this description, this study aims to examine the direct influence of AS on EE, IWB, HELP, and LIQ; analyze the mediating role of EE and HELP in the AS–LIQ relationship; and investigate the mediating role of IWB and HELP in the AS–LIQ relationship.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a survey design to examine the relationship between Abusive Supervision (AS), Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), Higher Education Lecturer Performance (HELP), and Lecturer Intention to Leave (LIQ). This approach was chosen because it aligns with the research objectives, which are to test hypotheses and assess causal relationships between variables using statistical analysis.

The study population consisted of lecturers working in private and public university in West Java, Indonesia. A total of 115 lecturers participated voluntarily. Inclusion criteria were lecturers under the direct supervision of the principal and regularly interacting with college activities. The majority of respondents had a bachelor's degree, with work experience ranging from less than three to more than five years, and came from both public and private university. Participation was

voluntary with guaranteed data confidentiality, and informed consent was obtained before completing the questionnaire.

Data were collected using a five-point Likert-based questionnaire (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) adapted from previously validated instruments: Abusive Supervision (Drory et al., 2022), Emotional Exhaustion (Maslach Burnout Inventory), Innovative Work Behavior, Lecturer Performance (HELP), and Intention to Leave (Al Zamel et al., 2020). Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS. This approach was chosen to examine the direct and indirect relationships between variables and the mediating role of EE, IWB, and HELP in the research model.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Before testing the hypotheses, the measurement model was evaluated to ensure that the instruments used were both reliable and valid. The quality of the constructs was examined through indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). Table 2 presents the results.

All indicators demonstrated loadings greater than 0.70, surpassing the recommended cut-off value, which confirms that each item contributed substantially to its respective latent variable. This result suggests that the selected instruments are suitable for measuring Abusive Supervision (AS), Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB), Higher educational lecturer performance (HELP), and Lecturers' Intention to Quit (LIQ) in the university context.

The internal consistency of each construct was also verified. Cronbach's alpha values for AS (0.927), EE (0.891), IWB (0.873), HELP (0.936), and LIQ (0.901) all exceeded 0.70, indicating that the items within each construct are homogenous and measure the same underlying concept. Likewise, the CR values, which range between 0.905 and 0.945, further confirmed the strong internal consistency reliability of the measurement model.

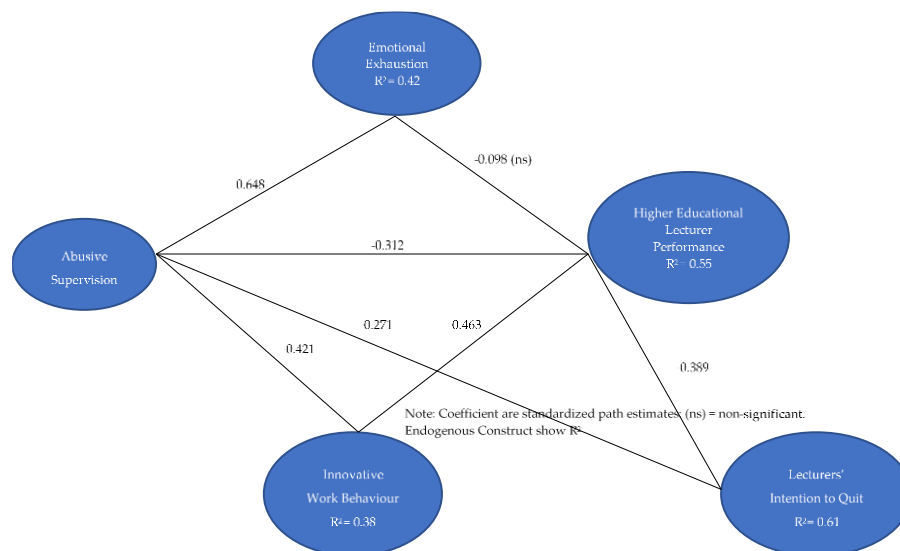
Regarding convergent validity, the AVE values for all constructs were above the minimum threshold of 0.50. Specifically, AS = 0.584, EE = 0.578, IWB = 0.575, HELP = 0.605, and LIQ = 0.616. These values indicate that more than 50% of the variance in the indicators is explained by their respective latent variables, fulfilling the criteria of convergent validity.

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Abusive Supervision (AS)	0.927	0.938	0.584
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	0.891	0.916	0.578
Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB)	0.873	0.905	0.575
Higher educational lecturer performance (HELP)	0.936	0.945	0.605
Lecturers' Intention to Quit (LIQ)	0.901	0.927	0.616

Furthermore, discriminant validity was established using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The square root of the AVE of each construct was greater than the correlations with other constructs, and HTMT ratios were below 0.85, providing evidence that each construct is distinct and measures a unique concept. This ensures that abusive supervision, for instance, does not overlap conceptually with emotional exhaustion or higher educational lecturer performance. In sum, the measurement model met all the necessary validity and reliability standards, thereby confirming that the constructs and their indicators are statistically sound and appropriate for further hypothesis testing.

Having established the robustness of the measurement model, the next step was to evaluate the structural model to determine the relationships among constructs. Figure 2 presents the results of the PLS-SEM analysis, including standardized path coefficients and R^2 values.

**Figure 2.** Structural Model Results

The explanatory power of the model was found to be moderate to substantial. The R^2 for EE was 0.42, meaning that 42% of the variance in lecturers' emotional exhaustion could be explained by principals' abusive supervision. For IWB, the R^2 was 0.38, indicating that 38% of the variation in innovative work practices was accounted for by AS. Higher educational lecturer performance

showed an R^2 of 0.55, suggesting that more than half of the variance in lecturers' effectiveness was influenced by AS, EE, and IWB. Lastly, LIQ demonstrated an R^2 of 0.61, indicating a substantial level of explanatory power. In other words, 61% of the variance in lecturers' intention to quit was predicted by the joint influence of AS, EE, IWB, and HELP.

These R^2 values underscore the significance of the structural relationships: abusive supervision not only directly influences psychological and behavioral constructs but also indirectly affects lecturers' turnover intentions through performance-related pathways. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was conducted to test the hypotheses. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Hypotheses Testing

Path	Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Decision
AS → EE	0.648	10.532	0.000	Supported
AS → IWB	-0.421	6.271	0.000	Supported
AS → HELP	-0.312	4.516	0.000	Supported
AS → LIQ	0.271	3.482	0.001	Supported
EE → HELP	-0.098	1.342	0.180	Not Supported
IWB → HELP	0.463	6.735	0.000	Supported
HELP → LIQ	-0.389	5.823	0.000	Supported

The results revealed several significant patterns:

1. AS → EE: Principals abusive supervision significantly increased lecturers' emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.648$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that negative supervisory behavior such as humiliation, ridicule, or excessive criticism contributes directly to heightened stress and burnout symptoms among lecturers'.
2. AS → IWB: The influence of abusive supervision on innovative work behaviour was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.421$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that lecturers' exposed to destructive leadership become less likely to engage in creative instructional practices, experimentation, or pedagogical innovations.
3. AS → HELP: The direct impact of abusive supervision on higher educational lecturer performance was also negative and significant ($\beta = -0.312$, $p < 0.001$). Lecturers' working under hostile leadership tend to show reduced productivity, less engagement in lesson planning, and diminished teaching effectiveness.
4. AS → LIQ: Abusive supervision exerted a positive and significant effect on lecturers' intention to quit ($\beta = 0.271$, $p < 0.01$). This result indicates that negative supervisory behaviours not only lower lecturers' morale and performance but also increase their desire to leave the profession or transfer to another university.

5. EE → HELP: Emotional exhaustion did not significantly influence higher educational lecturer performance ($\beta = -0.098, p > 0.05$). This non-significant result indicates that while lecturers' may feel emotionally drained, they still maintain a certain level of performance due to professional commitment, external accountability, or intrinsic motivation.
6. IWB → HELP: Innovative work behaviour had a positive and strong effect on higher educational lecturer performance ($\beta = 0.463, p < 0.001$). Lecturers' who actively experiment with new working methods and adapt pedagogical strategies are more effective in delivering lessons and achieving learning outcomes.
7. HELP → LIQ: Higher educational lecturer performance negatively and significantly influenced intention to quit ($\beta = -0.389, p < 0.001$). This suggests that lecturers' who perform well and feel effective in their roles are less likely to consider leaving the university or profession.

The mediating roles of EE, IWB, and HELP were further examined. The analysis revealed nuanced patterns:

- EE as Mediator: Emotional exhaustion did not mediate the relationship between AS and HELP. Although AS increased EE, the latter did not significantly reduce performance, rendering the indirect pathway non-significant. This implies that while lecturers' may experience emotional fatigue, they still strive to fulfill their working obligations.
- IWB as Mediator: IWB significantly mediated the relationship between AS and HELP. Principals abusive behaviors lowered lecturers' innovative practices, which in turn negatively affected their performance. This pathway highlights the critical role of innovation in sustaining lecturer effectiveness and mitigating the adverse effects of poor leadership.
- HELP as Mediator: Higher educational lecturer performance functioned as a mediator between AS and LIQ. The direct influence of AS on LIQ was complemented by an indirect effect through HELP, suggesting a dual pathway. Abusive supervision not only directly pushed lecturers' toward resignation but also indirectly contributed by diminishing performance, which then increased LIQ.

The overall model is depicted in Figure 3, which integrates measurement items, factor loadings, structural paths, and explained variances (R^2).

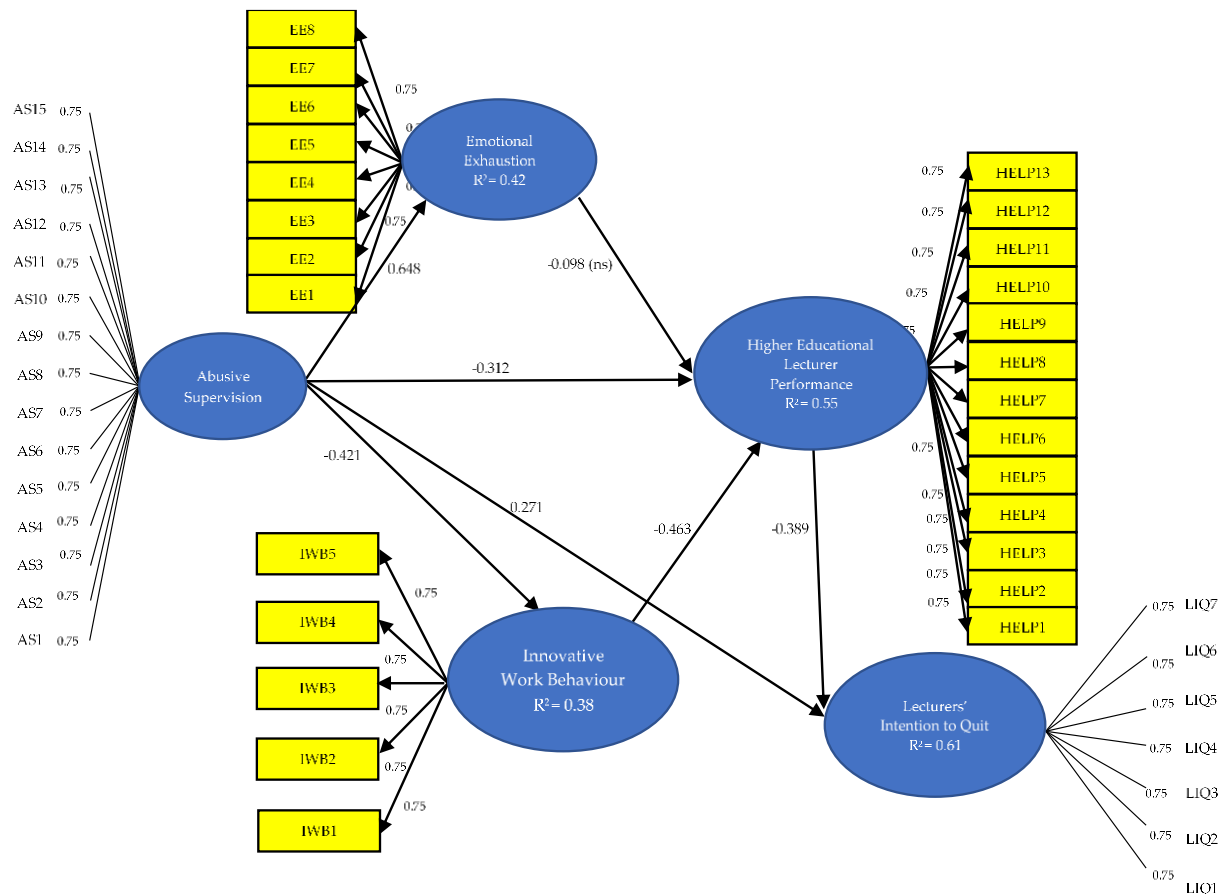


Figure 3. Full Measurement and Structural Model

The findings of this study provide strong empirical evidence of the negative consequences of abusive supervision in the university context. Key points include:

1. Abusive supervision significantly increases lecturers' emotional exhaustion, thereby creating a stressful and unsupportive working environment.
2. Principals abusive behaviours reduce lecturers' willingness to adopt innovative working methods, which directly undermines their overall performance.
3. Lecturers' intention to quit is influenced both directly by AS and indirectly through reductions in innovative work behaviour and performance.
4. Emotional exhaustion, although elevated by abusive supervision, did not significantly impair performance, suggesting that lecturers' may continue to maintain work standards despite feeling drained.
5. The mediating roles of IWB and HELP emphasize that destructive leadership not only harms lecturers' psychologically but also reduces their functional contributions to the university.

These results collectively highlight the profound impact of leadership quality on lecturers' well-being, innovation, and retention in the educational sector.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that abusive supervision has a significant impact on lecturers' psychological well-being, behavior, and performance. Directly, abusive supervision increases emotional exhaustion and intention to quit, while simultaneously decreasing innovative work behavior and lecturer performance. Furthermore, the results confirm that innovative work behavior positively contributes to performance, while lecturer performance is negatively related to intention to quit. Significant mediation was found between innovation and performance, but not emotional exhaustion.

The finding that abusive supervision increases emotional exhaustion is consistent with the conservation of resources (COR) theory. Stressful supervision drains lecturers' emotional energy, leading to chronic fatigue, loss of motivation, and decreased engagement in learning (Oderinde et al., 2024). However, the lack of a significant effect between emotional exhaustion and performance suggests that although lecturers feel emotionally drained, they still strive to maintain work standards due to professional demands and institutional norms.

Abusive supervision has been shown to suppress innovative work behaviour (Islam et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2022). Consistent with leader-member exchange (LMX) theory, negative interactions with leaders reduce psychological safety, making lecturers reluctant to take risks or try new methods. This results in reduced creativity in teaching and adaptation to curriculum changes.

The decline in lecturer performance due to abusive supervision emphasizes the crucial role of leadership in creating a supportive work environment. Lecturers who feel intimidated tend to lose intrinsic motivation, reduce collaboration, and reduce the quality of interactions with college students (Abdelrahman, 2020; Karimi & Fallah, 2021). Conversely, previous research has shown that supportive leadership can increase lecturer motivation, autonomy, and collaboration.

The results also emphasize the importance of the mediating mechanism between innovative behavior and performance. Abusive supervision suppresses innovation, which in turn lowers performance (Yuan et al., 2022). Low performance then increases the likelihood of intention to quit (Brown et al., 2020; Liu & Raghuram, 2022). Thus, this indirect relationship indicates that detrimental leadership styles not only have psychological impacts but also weaken productive behavioral aspects that are crucial for the sustainability of lecturers' careers.

These findings align with previous research: Berame et al., (2024) found a relationship between job stress and intention to quit; Hair & Alamer (2022) linked emotional exhaustion to burnout; Ma (2024) and Konidari & Stathopoulos (2025) emphasized the role of innovation in improving performance; Rahardja et al., (2020) demonstrated the importance of lecturer performance to educational quality; Siyal et al., (2021) emphasized the impact of abusive supervision on job satisfaction; Dias & Palma-Moreira (2025) found an effect of emotional exhaustion on commitment; Bucar et al., (2025) highlighted the relationship between innovation and work effectiveness; and Stor (2024) demonstrated a correlation between performance and retention. The synthesis of these studies reinforces the finding that abusive supervision has a multidimensional impact that leads to intention to leave.

The practical implication of these findings is the need for more supportive leadership interventions in university. Principals need to reduce authoritarian supervision practices and replace them with fair, transparent communication patterns that allow for innovation (Chen et al., 2023; Ke & Su, 2025). For lecturers, increasing emotional resilience and collaborative support among colleagues can be strategies to minimize the negative impacts of abusive leadership.

In the Indonesian context, the relevance of this research is even greater because the challenge of lecturer retention remains a pressing issue. With educational reforms emphasizing professionalism, innovation, and teaching quality, abusive leadership styles can hinder the achievement of these goals. Therefore, the results of this study not only enrich the academic literature, but also provide important input for leadership development policies in higher education institutions to further empower lecturers and strengthen the sustainability of the education system.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that abusive supervision negatively impacts innovative work behavior, performance, and retention among lecturers in Indonesia. Innovation and performance are shown to be the primary pathways through which destructive leadership influences intention to quit, while emotional exhaustion does not act as a significant mediator. These results emphasize that transforming leadership styles toward more supportive and empowering patterns is an urgent need to support lecturer well-being, maintain professional sustainability, and improve the quality of higher education. Despite its theoretical and practical contributions, this study has limitations, particularly related to its cross-sectional design, use of self-report data, and limited geographic

coverage. Future studies are recommended to employ longitudinal designs, involve multiple data sources, and expand the cross-cultural context to strengthen the validity of the findings. Furthermore, exploring protective factors such as lecturer resilience, organizational support, and cultural values could provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that mitigate the impact of abusive supervision on lecturer performance and retention.

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