

Employee engagement as a psychological buffer in the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention

Peran keterikatan kerja sebagai *psychological buffer* pada hubungan antara *abusive supervision* dan *turnover intention*

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ARTICLE INFO:

Received: 2026-02-02
Revised: 2026-02-22
Accepted: 2026-03-08
Published: 2026-03-28

Keywords:

Abusive supervision, Employee engagement, Job demands-resources theory, Turnover intention

Kata Kunci:

Abusive supervision; Employee engagement; Job demands-resources theory; Turnover intention

ABSTRACT

Organizations in service-intensive industries face persistent challenges related to employee turnover, particularly under high performance pressure and demanding supervisory practices. This study aims to examine the effect of abusive supervision on turnover intention and to test the moderating role of employee engagement as a psychological buffer. Using a quantitative explanatory design, data were collected through a census survey of 210 employees at a passenger vehicle distribution company in Indonesia and analyzed using variance-based structural equation modeling. The results indicate that abusive supervision has a strong positive effect on turnover intention, while employee engagement has a significant negative effect. Furthermore, employee engagement moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention by weakening its positive impact. Additional analysis shows that the buffering effect of engagement is stronger for intention to quit and thinking of quitting than for intention to search for alternatives. These findings contribute to the literature on destructive leadership by clarifying the boundary role of employee engagement and provide practical implications for improving leadership practices and retention strategies in service-oriented organizations.

ABSTRAK

Tingginya tingkat turnover karyawan masih menjadi tantangan utama bagi perusahaan berbasis layanan yang beroperasi di bawah tekanan kinerja dan tuntutan supervisi yang tinggi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh abusive supervision terhadap turnover intention serta peran moderasi employee engagement sebagai sumber daya psikologis. Penelitian menggunakan desain kuantitatif eksplanatori dengan metode survei sensus terhadap 210 karyawan pada perusahaan distribusi kendaraan penumpang di Indonesia. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan structural equation modeling berbasis varians. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa abusive supervision berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap turnover intention, sedangkan employee engagement berpengaruh negatif dan signifikan. Selain itu, employee engagement terbukti memoderasi hubungan antara abusive supervision dan turnover intention dengan melemahkan pengaruh negatif kepemimpinan tersebut. Analisis lanjutan menunjukkan bahwa efek moderasi employee engagement lebih kuat pada intention to quit dan thinking of quitting dibandingkan intention to search for alternatives. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis terhadap kajian kepemimpinan destruktif serta implikasi praktis bagi pengelolaan sumber daya manusia dan strategi retensi karyawan.

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How to cite: Ayulanningsih., Lubis, R., & Fadilah, R. (2026). Employee engagement as a psychological buffer in the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention. *Jurnal Psikologi Tabularasa*, 21(1), 16-32.

doi: <http://doi.org/10.26905/jpt.v21.i1.16748>

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary organizations operate in an environment characterized by intensifying managerial pressures, rapid innovation, technological acceleration, and escalating employee expectations, all of which add complexity to human resource management (Andari et al., 2024). Despite robust industrial growth and expanding business opportunities in Indonesia, many organizations continue to face persistent challenges in employee retention (Rohendra et al., 2024). Recent workforce data show that in 2023 the average employee turnover rate in Indonesia reached 41 percent, far exceeding the commonly accepted healthy benchmark of 5–10 percent per year (Awardco, 2024). High turnover has been particularly evident in professional services, construction, and the trade, transportation, and utilities sectors (Valentine et al., 2020). These figures indicate that workforce instability has become a structural issue rather than a specified organizational problem. Turnover intention, defined as an employee's conscious and deliberate consideration of leaving the organization, is widely recognized as the most immediate antecedent of actual turnover behavior (Hom et al., 2019).

The turnover phenomenon is also evident at PT. X, a passenger vehicle distribution and aftersales service company operating across major cities in Indonesia within the trade and automotive retail sector (Sigma Research, 2023). Internal company records reveal a pattern of high and fluctuating employee turnover between 2022 and 2024. The turnover rate increased from 18.06 percent in 2022 to 29.73 percent in 2023 before declining to 11.71 percent in 2024, resulting in an average turnover rate of 19.83 percent over the three-year period. According to established benchmarks, turnover rates above 10 percent are categorized as high and signal the need for targeted organizational intervention (Valentine et al., 2020). These fluctuations indicate instability in workforce composition, particularly in operational divisions such as sales and aftersales services, which are characterized by intensive performance pressure and direct customer interaction.

If turnover intention is not effectively addressed, it may escalate into actual turnover behavior, generating substantial organizational consequences. High turnover disrupts operational continuity, increases recruitment and training costs, reduces productivity, and results in the loss of accumulated knowledge and expertise (Iskandar & Rahadi, 2021). In service-oriented industries, such as automotive retail, human resources represent a strategic asset, and frequent employee exits may compromise service quality, weaken customer trust, and increase operational costs related to repeated hiring and onboarding processes (Galan, 2023). When turnover persists at high levels, it undermines organizational stability and poses long-term risks to competitiveness and sustainability.

Understanding the determinants of turnover intention is therefore essential for organizational sustainability. Li & Zhang (2022), in their quantitative examination of employee withdrawal behavior, identified job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job stress, compensation fairness, and leadership behavior as significant predictors of turnover intention. Their findings indicate that unfavorable work conditions and ineffective supervisory practices substantially increase employees' intention to leave. Similarly, Rohendra et al. (2024), investigating employee retention in Indonesian organizational contexts, found that career development opportunities, perceived organizational support, and leadership quality significantly influence turnover intention. Their results highlight that limited growth prospects and inadequate organizational support strengthen employees' withdrawal cognitions. Among these various predictors, leadership behavior, particularly destructive forms of leadership

have received increasing scholarly attention because of its direct and immediate impact on employees' psychological experiences at work. Empirical evidence demonstrates that negative supervisory treatment elevates stress, emotional exhaustion, and withdrawal tendencies, which subsequently intensify turnover intention (Oliveira & Najnudel, 2023).

One form of destructive leadership behavior that has been extensively examined in organizational research is abusive supervision. Abusive supervision refers to employees' perceptions of sustained hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors from supervisors, excluding physical aggression (Tepper, 2000). These behaviors include public humiliation, ridicule, aggressive communication, intimidation, and emotional neglect (Harwita, 2023). Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework, abusive supervision can be conceptualized as a social stressor that intensifies job demands while simultaneously eroding essential psychological resources (Bakker et al., 2023). When employees experience persistent hostile supervision, they are required to expend additional emotional and cognitive resources, potentially increasing strain and withdrawal cognitions, including turnover intention (Dhali et al., 2023).

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention across different contexts. Handaru et al. (2021), using a survey-based quantitative approach among service-sector employees in Indonesia and analyzed with structural modeling techniques, found a significant positive effect of abusive supervision on turnover intention. Similarly, Oliveira & Najnudel (2023), employing structural equation modeling in a multinational sample, reported that abusive supervision significantly predicted employees' intention to leave. In contrast, Susanto et al. (2019) and Yulmia & Putra (2020), studying employees in collectivistic organizational contexts using quantitative survey designs, reported nonsignificant relationships between abusive supervision and turnover intention. These mixed findings suggest that the relationship may vary depending on contextual or psychological conditions.

The inconsistency of prior findings emphasizes an important gap in the literature concerning the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention. Although several studies have reported a significant positive effect of abusive supervision on employees' intention to leave (Handaru et al., 2021; Oliveira & Najnudel, 2023), other research has found nonsignificant relationships, particularly in specific organizational or cultural contexts (Susanto et al., 2019; Yulmia & Putra, 2020). These mixed results suggest that the effect of abusive supervision on turnover intention may depend on additional contextual or psychological factors. Most prior studies have primarily focused on mediating mechanisms, while limited attention has been given to examining potential moderating variables that may weaken or strengthen this relationship (Hadi et al., 2025). Employee engagement, defined as a positive psychological state characterized by cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in work (Bakri, 2024), may serve as such factor. Although employee engagement has been shown to relate negatively to turnover intention (Gallup, 2025; Ghimire, 2024), other studies report inconsistent findings (Purba & Ananta, 2018; Utami & Siswanto, 2021). Therefore, a gap remains in testing employee engagement as a moderating variable in the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention, particularly within high-turnover service contexts such as the automotive sector represented by PT. X.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to examine the effect of abusive supervision on turnover intention and to test the moderating role of employee engagement

in this relationship. Specifically, this research seeks to clarify whether employee engagement weakens the positive association between abusive supervision and turnover intention. The hypotheses are formulated as follows: H1: Abusive supervision has a positive relationship on turnover intention. H2: Employee engagement moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention, such that the positive effect of abusive supervision on turnover intention is weaker when employee engagement is high.

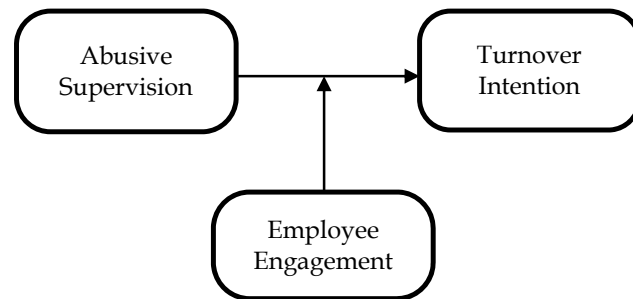


Figure 1. Framework for Research

2. METHODS

Design

This study employed a quantitative explanatory design to examine the effects of abusive supervision and employee engagement on turnover intention. An explanatory approach was used to test the hypothesized direct and moderating effects among variables through statistical analysis. The study aimed to explain the influence of abusive supervision (independent variable) on turnover intention (dependent variable), as well as the moderating role of employee engagement.

Participants

The population of this study consisted of all active employees of PT. X as of 2025 (N = 210). The sample was slightly dominated by male employees (53.4 percent), while female employees accounted for (46.6 percent). Most respondents were aged 26–30 years (30.5 percent), followed by 31–35 years (20.0 percent) and 36–40 years (18.1 percent). The majority were married (64.3 percent) and held a bachelor's degree (78.1 percent). Most employees were employed under contract-based arrangements (79.0 percent). In terms of organizational distribution, the largest proportion worked in the Sales division (36.7 percent), followed by Aftersales/Service (16.7 percent) and Finance & Accounting (9.5 percent). Overall, the respondent profile represents employees in operational and frontline roles with high performance demands, providing a relevant context for examining turnover intention dynamics

Research Instruments

Turnover intention was measured using the Turnover Intention Scale–15 (TIS-15) developed by Bothma & Roodt, (2013) and adapted into the Indonesian context by Lubis et al., (2024). The instrument consists of 15 items designed to assess employees' intention to leave

the organization. An example item is, "I often think about leaving this organization." In this study, the scale demonstrated high internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha > .90). Abusive supervision was assessed using a 15-item scale originally developed by Tepper (2000) and adapted by Yulmia & Putra (2020). The instrument measures employees' perceptions of sustained hostile supervisory behaviors. A sample item is, "My supervisor ridicules me." The scale showed strong reliability in this study (Cronbach's alpha > .90). Employee engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale-9 (UWES-9) developed by Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) and adapted into Indonesian by Kristiana et al. (2018). The instrument consists of nine items assessing employees' level of work engagement. An example item is, "At my job, I feel bursting with energy." The reliability coefficient in this study indicated satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha > .80).

Procedure

Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the Human Capital Division of PT. X. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and confidentiality assurances. Questionnaires were distributed to all employees during the data collection period. Completed responses were coded anonymously and entered into a statistical database for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS software. The analysis followed a two-stage approach. First, the measurement model was evaluated to assess indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Second, the structural model was examined to test the direct effect of abusive supervision on turnover intention and the moderating effect of employee engagement. Hypotheses were evaluated based on path coefficients, t-values, and significance levels ($p < .05$).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis

The findings from the descriptive analysis are presented in Table 1. The table summarizes respondents' distribution across response categories for abusive supervision (AS), employee engagement (EE), and turnover intention (TOI).

Table 1. Descriptive analysis

Categories	AS (%)	EE (%)	TOI (%)
Strongly Disagree	6.12	27.67	12.41
Disagree	6.71	23.70	11.62
Neutral	18.13	16.62	18.41
Agree	36.51	19.94	28.98
Strongly Agree	32.54	12.07	28.57

Note. AS = Abusive Supervision; EE = Employee Engagement; TOI = Turnover Intention

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The distribution shows that perceptions of abusive supervision were relatively high, as 69.05 percent of respondents reported agree or strongly agree responses. Similarly, turnover intention tended to be elevated, with 57.55 percent of respondents indicating that they often or very often experienced intentions to leave the organization. In contrast, employee engagement appeared comparatively lower, as a substantial proportion of respondents reported strongly disagree (27.67 percent) and disagree (23.70 percent) responses toward engagement statements.

To further contextualize these findings, a comparison between hypothetical and empirical means was conducted, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean comparison

Variable	Hypothetical Mean	Empirical Mean	Category
Abusive Supervision	45.00	57.81	High
Employee Engagement	31.50	24.93	Low
Turnover Intention	45.00	53.18	High

The mean comparison results reinforce the descriptive distribution. Abusive supervision and turnover intention both exceeded their respective hypothetical means, indicating high perceived levels among employees. Conversely, employee engagement fell below its hypothetical mean, suggesting generally low engagement. Taken together, these findings reflect an imbalance between job demands and available psychological resources, where high exposure to abusive supervision coincides with elevated turnover intention and diminished employee engagement.

Convergent validity is considered satisfactory when indicator outer loading values exceed 0.70 (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The results of the convergent validity test are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of convergent validity test

Item	Outer Loading	Item	Outer Loading	Item	Outer Loading
AS1	0.703	EE1	0.849	TOI1	0.806
AS2	0.800	EE2	0.887	TOI2	0.809
AS3	0.774	EE3	0.856	TOI3	0.844
AS4	0.721	EE4	0.863	TOI4	0.803
AS5	0.708	EE5	0.878	TOI5	0.815
AS6	0.718	EE6	0.872	TOI6	0.809
AS7	0.823	EE7	0.834	TOI7	0.844
AS8	0.714	EE8	0.869	TOI8	0.837
AS9	0.749	EE9	0.869	TOI9	0.824
AS10	0.774			TOI10	0.730
AS11	0.738			TOI11	0.803
AS12	0.766			TOI12	0.796
AS13	0.734			TOI13	0.836
AS14	0.765			TOI14	0.803
AS15	0.777			TOI15	0.824

Note. Ins. = Instrument; AS = Abusive Supervision; EE = Employee Engagement; TOI = Turnover Intention

Based on Table 3, all indicators across Abusive Supervision, Employee Engagement, and Turnover Intention demonstrated outer loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.70. The lowest loading value was observed for AS1 (0.703), while the highest loading value was recorded for EE2 (0.887). These results indicate that all indicators adequately represent their respective latent constructs, and therefore, no indicators were eliminated from the measurement model.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Table 4 presents the HTMT values among constructs.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Test Results (HTMT)

	AS	EE	TOI
AS			
EE	0.506		
TOI	0.819	0.753	
EE × AS	0.284	0.262	0.077

Note. AS=Abusive Supervision, EE=Employee Engagement, TOI= Turnover Intention

All HTMT values were below the threshold of 0.90, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity. This finding was further supported by the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Table 5), where the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs.

Table 5. Fornell–Larcker criterion

	AS	EE	TOI
AS	0.753		
EE	-0.486	0.864	
TOI	0.785	-0.726	0.812

Note. AS=Abusive Supervision, EE=Employee Engagement, TOI= Turnover Intention

Thus, the measurement model demonstrates adequate discriminant validity, confirming that each construct is empirically distinct.

Construct Reliability

Construct reliability was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of construct reliability

Variables	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Description
Abusive Supervision	0.945	0.947	0.566	Reliable
Employee Engagement	0.958	0.959	0.747	Reliable
Turnover Intention	0.963	0.964	0.660	Reliable

All constructs exceeded the recommended thresholds (α and CR > 0.70; AVE > 0.50), indicating strong internal consistency and construct reliability.

Goodness-of-Fit

Model fit was assessed using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and related indices. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Goodness-of-fit results

Fit Summary	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.049	0.049
d_ULS	1.871	1.900
d_G	1.142	1.142
Chi-square	1,216.683	1,220.163

The SRMR value of 0.049 is well below the cut-off value of 0.08, indicating a good fit between the measurement model and the empirical data. Overall, the goodness-of-fit indices suggest that the measurement model is acceptable for hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted after the measurement model satisfied validity and reliability requirements. The structural relationships among constructs were examined using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples, bias-corrected, two-tailed testing, and a significance level of 0.05. The results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Hypothesis testing results

Path	β	t-statistics	p-values	Result
AS → TOI	0.635	11.844	0.000	Supported
EE → TOI	-0.383	6.483	0.000	Supported
EE × AS → TOI	-0.166	3.023	0.003	Supported

Note. AS = Abusive Supervision; EE = Employee Engagement; TOI = Turnover Intention.

The results indicate that abusive supervision had a positive and significant effect on turnover intention ($\alpha = 0.635$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that higher exposure to abusive supervisory behaviors increases employees' intention to leave the organization. In contrast, employee engagement showed a significant negative effect on turnover intention ($\alpha = -0.383$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that engaged employees are less likely to develop withdrawal intentions.

Additionally, the interaction term between abusive supervision and employee engagement (EE × AS) was also significant ($\alpha = -0.166$, $p = 0.003$). This finding confirms that employee engagement moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention, weakening the positive impact of abusive supervision on employees' intention to leave.

Moderation Analysis

To further examine the moderating role of employee engagement, the interaction effect between abusive supervision and employee engagement was analyzed using the product indicator approach in PLS-SEM. The strength and direction of moderation were evaluated through path coefficients, effect size (f^2), and graphical inspection via simple slope analysis.

Based on the structural model, the interaction effect (EE × AS) demonstrated a negative and statistically significant coefficient ($\alpha = -0.166, p = 0.003$), indicating that employee engagement functions as a buffering variable. Specifically, when employee engagement is high, the positive relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention becomes weaker.

The effect size analysis further supports this conclusion. As shown in Table 9, abusive supervision exhibited a very large effect on turnover intention ($f^2 = 1.111$), employee engagement showed a moderate effect ($f^2 = 0.409$), while the interaction term EE × AS demonstrated a small but meaningful moderating effect ($f^2 = 0.060$).

Table 9. Effect Size (f^2), R^2 , and Q^2

Predictor	f^2 on TOI	
Abusive Supervision	1.111	
Employee Engagement	0.409	
EE × AS	0.060	
Endogenous Variable		
Turnover Intention	R^2	0.785
	Adjusted R^2	0.782
	Q^2	0.764

According to Sarstedt et al. (2021), an R^2 value above 0.75 indicates strong explanatory power. Thus, the model demonstrates substantial explanatory and predictive capability, with more than 78 percent of the variance in turnover intention explained by abusive supervision, employee engagement, and their interaction.

Simple Slope Analysis

The moderating effect of employee engagement was further illustrated using simple slope analysis, as shown in Figure 2. The graphical representation reveals distinct slope patterns across different levels of employee engagement.

When employee engagement was low, the slope between abusive supervision and turnover intention was steep, indicating that increases in abusive supervision were associated with a sharp rise in turnover intention. Conversely, when employee engagement was high, the slope became noticeably flatter. This pattern demonstrates that although abusive supervision still increases turnover intention, its impact is substantially reduced when employees are highly engaged.

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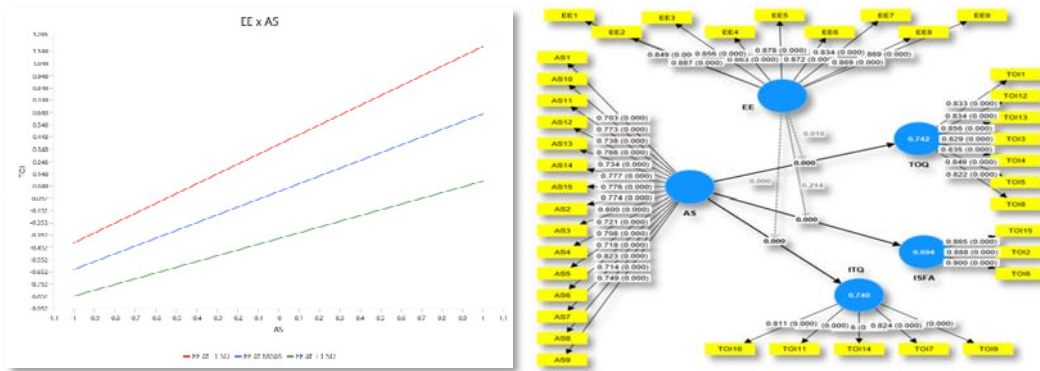


Figure 2. Simple slope analysis

Figure 3. Smart PLS Structural Model on turnover intention aspect moderation (Moderating effect of employee engagement on turnover intention dimensions)

To obtain a more nuanced understanding of the moderating role of employee engagement, this study further examined the effect of employee engagement (EE) at the dimension level of turnover intention. Turnover intention was decomposed into three aspects: Intention to Search for Alternatives (ISFA), Intention to Quit (ITQ), and Thinking of Quitting (TOQ). This analysis employed a separate PLS-SEM model using the repeated indicators approach, enabling the interaction effect between abusive supervision (AS) and employee engagement to be tested for each specific aspect of turnover intention.

Measurement Model Evaluation for Turnover Intention Dimensions

The outer model evaluation for the aspect-level analysis demonstrated strong psychometric properties. As presented in Table 10, all indicators associated with AS, EE, ISFA, ITQ, and TOQ exhibited outer loading values exceeding 0.70, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. No indicators were removed from the model.

Table 10. Outer loadings for turnover intention dimensions

Item	Outer Loading	Item	Outer Loading	Item	Outer Loading
AS1	0.703	EE1	0.849	ISFA1	0.865
AS2	0.774	EE2	0.887	ISFA2	0.888
AS3	0.800	EE3	0.856	ISFA3	0.900
AS4	0.721	EE4	0.863	ITQ1	0.811
AS5	0.708	EE5	0.878	ITQ2	0.874
AS6	0.718	EE6	0.872	ITQ3	0.866
AS7	0.823	EE7	0.834	ITQ4	0.824
AS8	0.714	EE8	0.869	ITQ5	0.777
AS9	0.749	EE9	0.869	TOQ1	0.833
AS10	0.773			TOQ2	0.834
AS11	0.738			TOQ3	0.856
AS12	0.766			TOQ4	0.829
AS13	0.734			TOQ5	0.835
AS14	0.777			TOQ6	0.849
AS15	0.776			TOQ7	0.822

Note. AS = Abusive Supervision; EE = Employee Engagement; ISFA = Intention to Search for Alternatives; ITQ = Intention to Quit; TOQ = Thinking of Quitting.

Reliability and convergent validity were further supported by Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability, and AVE values shown in Table 11. All constructs exceeded the recommended thresholds (α and CR > 0.80; AVE > 0.60). The SRMR value of 0.05 indicates good overall measurement model fit.

Table 11. Reliability, AVE, and SRMR

Variable	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	SRMR
AS	0.945	0.947	0.566	0.05
EE	0.958	0.959	0.747	
ISFA	0.861	0.864	0.783	
ITQ	0.887	0.889	0.691	
TOQ	0.929	0.929	0.700	

Discriminant validity was assessed using the HTMT criterion, as reported in Table 12. All HTMT values were below the threshold of 0.90, confirming adequate discriminant validity. Notably, the interaction construct (EE × AS) exhibited very low HTMT values with all other constructs, indicating that the moderation effect represented a distinct interaction rather than construct overlap.

Table 12. HTMT values

	AS	EE	ISFA	ITQ	TOQ
AS					
EE	0.506				
ISFA	0.851	0.706			
ITQ	0.781	0.795	0.966		
TOQ	0.822	0.735	0.984	0.992	
EE × AS	0.284	0.262	0.030	0.149	0.047

Structural Model Results at the Aspect Level

The structural model exhibited strong explanatory and predictive power across all turnover intention dimensions. As shown in Table 13, abusive supervision, employee engagement, and their interaction explained a substantial proportion of variance in ISFA ($R^2 = 0.694$), ITQ ($R^2 = 0.740$), and TOQ ($R^2 = 0.742$). All Q-square values were positive and high, indicating strong predictive relevance.

Effect size (f^2) analysis revealed that abusive supervision exerted a very large effect on all aspects, while employee engagement demonstrated a moderate-to-large effect, particularly for ITQ and TOQ. The interaction term EE × AS showed aspect-specific moderation effects, being strongest for ITQ and weakest for ISFA.

Table 13. R-square, Q-square, and Effect size (f^2)

Endogenous Variable	R ²	Q ²	f ² (AS)	f ² (EE)	f ² (EE × AS)
ISFA	0.694	0.675	0.776	0.200	0.010
ITQ	0.740	0.711	0.746	0.385	0.105
TOQ	0.742	0.722	0.905	0.307	0.036

Path Coefficients and Moderation Effects

Hypothesis testing results for each turnover intention dimension are presented in Table 14. Abusive supervision had a positive and significant effect on ISFA, ITQ, and TOQ. Employee engagement showed a significant negative effect on all three aspects. Regarding moderation, the interaction between EE and AS was significant for ITQ and TOQ, but not significant for ISFA.

Table 14. Path coefficients for turnover intention dimensions

Path	β	t-statistics	p-values	Result
AS → ISFA	0.634	10.828	0.000	Significant
AS → ITQ	0.573	10.718	0.000	Significant
AS → TOQ	0.627	11.055	0.000	Significant
EE → ISFA	-0.320	4.807	0.000	Significant
EE → ITQ	-0.409	6.654	0.000	Significant
EE → TOQ	-0.364	5.908	0.000	Significant
EE × AS → ISFA	-0.080	1.242	0.214	Not Significant
EE × AS → ITQ	-0.241	4.292	0.000	Significant
EE × AS → TOQ	-0.141	2.412	0.016	Significant

Interpretation of Moderation at the Aspect Level

The results indicate that abusive supervision most strongly influences the early cognitive tendency to search for alternative employment (ISFA), followed by thinking of quitting (TOQ) and intention to quit (ITQ). Employee engagement, in contrast, was most effective in reducing actual quitting intentions (ITQ).

Importantly, the moderating role of employee engagement differed across aspects. Employee engagement did not significantly moderate ISFA, suggesting that highly engaged employees may still explore alternative job options when exposed to abusive supervision. However, employee engagement significantly weakened the impact of abusive supervision on ITQ and TOQ, indicating a strong buffering effect at more advanced stages of turnover cognition. This pattern is further supported by the simple slope analysis (Figure 2), where steeper slopes were observed under low engagement conditions and flatter slopes under high engagement conditions, particularly for ITQ and TOQ. The results section contains results or findings from data analyses processes. For quantitative studies, the results may provide but not limited to descriptive statistics, correlation between variables, and hypotheses tests. For qualitative studies, it may contain themes which are described narratively and supported by relevant excerpts from participants. The results or findings should answer research hypotheses or research questions in the introduction parts. Tables and Figures could be used to describe research findings.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the effect of abusive supervision on turnover intention and to investigate the moderating variables affects employee engagement among employees of PT. X. The findings show that abusive supervision increases employees' intention to leave, whereas employee engagement reduces such intention. Moreover, employee engagement weakens the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention, suggesting that engaged employees are less likely to perceive negative supervisory experiences into withdrawal intentions. Overall, the proposed model explains turnover intention dynamics within this organizational context.

The positive association between abusive supervision and turnover intention can be understood through the psychological consequences of sustained hostile leadership behaviors. Abusive supervision, characterized by verbal hostility, humiliation, and unfair treatment (Tepper, 2000), undermines psychological safety and increases emotional strain. Continuous exposure to such treatment depletes emotional resources and weakens employees' attachment to the organization, thereby fostering withdrawal cognitions (Hom et al., 2019; Oliveira & Najnudel, 2023). When supervisors are perceived as sources of threat rather than support, leaving the organization becomes a coping response to restore well-being.

Employee engagement not only functions as a general psychological resource, but also differentially moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and the multidimensional structure of turnover intention. A key contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that the buffering effect of engagement is not linear across stages of withdrawal cognition. Engagement most effectively weakens the relationship at the level of intention to quit and, to a lesser extent, at the stage of thinking of quitting. However, it does not significantly reduce the tendency to search for alternative employment. This pattern suggests that engagement operates more strongly at the internal and decision-oriented phases of turnover intention rather than at the exploratory stage, which may be influenced by broader labor market considerations (Hom et al., 2019). In other words, engaged employees may still evaluate external opportunities, but they are less likely to convert abusive supervisory experiences into a definitive decision to leave. This nuanced moderating pattern extends prior research by clarifying that engagement serves as a psychological buffer primarily at the final evaluative stage of withdrawal, thereby enriching the understanding of turnover intention as a staged and multidimensional process (Dai et al., 2019; Hadi et al., 2025).

The findings are consistent with prior research demonstrating a positive relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention (Ahmad et al., 2021; Oliveira & Najnudel, 2023) and a negative association between employee engagement and turnover intention (Ghimire, 2024; Wen et al., 2022). Moreover, the moderating effect of engagement aligns with studies identifying engagement as a psychological shield against destructive leadership (Dai et al., 2019; Hadi et al., 2025). However, unlike some studies reporting non-significant direct effects of engagement on turnover intention (Gupta & Shaheen, 2017; Purba & Ananta, 2018), this study found a strong and significant negative effect, suggesting that engagement may play a more central retention role in high-pressure service environments such as the automotive retail sector.

An important contribution of this study lies in its multidimensional view of turnover intention. The findings reveal that employee engagement is particularly effective in weakening

the influence of abusive supervision on thinking about quitting and actual intention to resign, but not on the initial urge to search for alternative jobs. This pattern suggests that engaged employees may still explore other opportunities as a precaution, yet they are less likely to reach the final decision to leave. In everyday organizational terms, engagement appears to delay exit decisions rather than completely eliminate them, especially in work environments marked by interpersonal pressure.

From a practical perspective, these findings carry important implications for organizations like PT X. The consistently high levels of abusive supervision and turnover intention, combined with relatively low employee engagement, indicate a fragile balance between job demands and psychological resources. While strengthening employee engagement is essential, this study shows that engagement alone cannot fully compensate for destructive leadership practices. Organizations therefore need to address abusive supervision at its source by improving leadership quality, communication styles, and emotional awareness among supervisors.

At the same time, efforts to enhance employee engagement remain highly relevant. Recognition, fair treatment, opportunities for growth, and open communication channels can help employees feel valued and psychologically supported. These initiatives not only improve daily work experiences but also increase employees' capacity to withstand pressure and reconsider impulsive resignation decisions. In this sense, employee engagement should be viewed not only as a performance driver, but also as a retention safeguard that supports employee well-being.

This study is not without limitations. The use of a cross-sectional design means that changes in employee engagement and turnover intention over time could not be captured. In addition, the reliance on self-report measures may introduce subjective bias, particularly when employees assess sensitive experiences such as abusive supervision. Finally, because the research was conducted within a single organization in the automotive sector, caution is needed when generalizing the findings to other industries or organizational contexts.

Future research may build on these findings by adopting longitudinal approaches to better understand how employees' reactions to abusive supervision evolve over time. Including multiple data sources, such as supervisor evaluations or objective HR records, could also strengthen future analyses. Exploring additional factors, such as organizational culture or psychological safety, may further clarify the conditions under which employee engagement can most effectively protect employees from the negative consequences of poor leadership.

4. CONCLUSION

This study provides important insights into how leadership behavior shapes employees' decisions to continue working for or leave an organization. The findings demonstrate that abusive supervision increases turnover intention, while employee engagement both directly reduces employees' intention to leave and weakens the negative impact of abusive supervision. Engagement functions as a psychological buffer that helps employees endure challenging interpersonal conditions, particularly by reducing the likelihood of a final decision to resign. However, engagement does not fully eliminate the effect of sustained abusive behavior, indicating that destructive leadership remains a substantial risk factor for employee withdrawal.

From a practical perspective, these findings highlight the urgency for management to strengthen leadership quality as part of its retention strategy. Reducing abusive supervisory practices through leadership evaluation, communication training, and ethical standards enforcement is essential to prevent psychological strain and turnover intention. At the same time, fostering employee engagement through supportive work climates, recognition systems, and meaningful development opportunities can enhance employees' resilience and organizational attachment. Ultimately, improving employee retention requires not only engaged employees, but also humane, respectful, and psychologically safe leadership practices that support long-term workforce stability.

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