

Managers Behaving Unethically: Coping with the Ebb and Flow of Job Insecurity through Abusive Supervision

Abstract

Increasingly complex and volatile work environments challenge long-term employment and job security. Managers are not buffered from this, because they often perceive their own jobs to be precarious. Drawing upon conservation of resources theory, we offer a fresh perspective with which understand how and when abusive supervision is induced by manager job insecurity on a daily basis. We draw upon manager need for power as a within-person novel explanatory mechanism to explain why job insecurity triggers managers to display abusive supervision on a daily basis. To test our model, we conducted a study over a period of 10 consecutive days, using an experience sampling methodology, in which 126 managers in Chinese banks completed 1,058 daily surveys. In agreement with our hypotheses, we found that managers' need for power that was prompted by job insecurity is a proximal cause of abusive supervision on a daily basis, after controlling for several other variables that have been found to lead to abusive supervision. The detrimental effects of daily manager job insecurity are alleviated when managers are equipped with higher levels of trait resilience and daily state mindfulness. Thus, our findings provide a more comprehensive picture of how managers' stable and dynamic resources operate as beneficial buffers, alleviating the harm resulting from a daily workplace stressor—in this case, job insecurity. Overall, our study traces the fluctuation of a specific resource fluctuation, and reveals the consequences of manager job insecurity from a leader-centric perspective.

Keywords Manager job insecurity · Trait resilience · State mindfulness · Need for power · Abusive

supervision

Introduction

“The old model of work, where you could expect to hold a steady job with good benefits for an entire career, is long gone.”

— Hillary Clinton (2016)

With the advent of rapid and ongoing technological advances and global economic changes (Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018), job insecurity—defined as the subjective experience of a threat to job continuity and stability in the future (Shoss, 2017)—now manifests as a typical stressor bringing the potential tension to all positions today, including that of managers (Chui et al., 2015; Hassard & Morris, 2018). Contrary to the intuitive assumption that managerial jobs are more secure than others, scholars have long found that managers in any organization, at any given time, may face the threat of losing their job (Erdogan et al., 2020; Roskies & Louis-Guerin, 1990). In fact, in the current turbulent external environment, managerial work is particularly challenging and daily worries and psychological resource loss from more complex and demanding work create significant insecurity for managers on a daily basis (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Graves et al., 2012; Hassard & Morris, 2020; Lee et al., 2018).

As a workplace stressor, daily job insecurity has been demonstrated to inflict psychological distress on employees because it induces feelings of powerlessness over the continuity of their employment (Wu et al., 2018) and promotes negative self-evaluations (Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018). Despite the accumulation of empirical findings on job insecurity among employees, however, scholars have paid little attention to the unique effects of manager job insecurity (Lee et al., 2018)—an oversight that represents a critical gap in the literature and warrants urgent attention

(Hassard & Morris, 2018). In contrast to their employees, managers' susceptibility to daily job insecurity transcends the mere apprehension of job loss itself and is intricately tied to a perception that their authority in their roles is compromised—thus triggering complex threats to an important psychological resource. Because existing findings of employee job insecurity cannot be simply extrapolated to the managerial level without considering these critical distinctions, research that adopts a leader-centric perspective is vital to a thorough understanding of how and when daily job insecurity takes a toll on managers.

Drawing upon the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), we know that when managers face job insecurity on a given day, this workplace stressor can result in resource loss (Hobfoll, 2001, 2002). Because managers are viewed as powerholders in organizations, their feeling of power represents a unique and pivotal psychological resource for them (Foult et al., 2018; Sherman et al., 2020). In that light, a focus on this prominent resource (i.e., feeling of power) is important because the feeling symbolizes the leadership roles and status that set managers apart from ordinary employees (Sherman et al., 2020). Moreover, managers' feeling of power ensures their authority and control within organizations, thereby effectively supporting their leadership functions (Schmid & Schmid-Mast, 2013; Sherman et al., 2012). In line with previous research demonstrating that power is a key factor in shaping personal behavior, perception, and attention (Hoogervorst et al., 2012), we propose that the loss of managers' feeling of power provides a resource-based explanation that accounts for the harm induced by daily manager job insecurity.

Focusing on this unique resource, we posit that job insecurity in managers triggers a pressing sense of losing their feeling of power, because a potential break in employment implies a

corresponding loss of the influence, control, and authority inherent in the managerial role as powerholders (Hopton et al., 2013; Lammers et al., 2016). Consistent with COR theory, the importance of resource acquisition intensifies in tandem with a heightened prominence of resource loss (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018). In the quest to restore balance in personal resources, a proclivity for actively seeking actions to acquire resources emerges (Hobfoll et al., 2018), thereby provoking a manager's need for power as a way to re-establish his or her feelings of influence, control, and authority (Bennett, 1988). Driven by this compelling desire to re-acquire their psychological resources (i.e., feeling of power), managers are propelled to conduct unethical behaviors—notably, abusive supervision—as a direct and costless strategy to fortify their dominance and authority in the organizational context (McClelland, 1987) on that particular day. Therefore, we propose that daily manager need for power is a resource-loss process that accounts for abusive supervision induced by manager job insecurity on that day.

However, managers are not always able to effectively cope with the threats created by daily job insecurity under all conditions. Consistent with COR theory, “those with greater resources are less vulnerable to resource loss” (Hobfoll et al., 2018, p. 106). In this regard, personal characteristics can be regarded as kinds of resources to aid stress resistance (Hobfoll & Ford, 2007, p. 563). Indeed, some managers are more inclined to disregard and reject harmful information, making it easier for them to handle stressors, while others focus their attention on the taxing aspects of job insecurity, which leads to an increasingly pronounced resource loss (Southwick et al., 2017). To unpack this puzzle, we account for managers' capacity to rebound from stressful experiences, with manager trait resilience serving as a pivotal internal resource that aids in the ongoing stress

experience by effectively filtering information about such a stressor (Mitchell et al., 2019).

In addition to citing a stable resource related to personality traits, Hobfoll (1989) called for a dynamic perspective on resources and noted that the research on coping with stress primarily has emphasized whether a particular coping behavior results in a stress-buffering effect on outcomes but has largely overlooked the resource dynamics in the stress-coping process. As managers' resources for navigating daily job insecurity naturally fluctuate with their varying daily states (Zivnuska et al., 2016), we thus shift our attention to a within-person-level resource-building intervention that gives managers greater agency in their propensity to engage in abusive supervision. Prior work proposed that mindfulness at work is just such a tool, allowing individuals to build and accrue psychological resources (Polk et al., 2020), and indicating that those who exhibit higher levels of state mindfulness on a particular day are likely to possess more resources (Zivnuska et al., 2016). Thus, again aligning with the COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), we propose that managers who report higher levels of daily state mindfulness and thus have greater resources on that day will be more capable of ameliorating the sense of resource loss emanating from their daily managerial job insecurity. Taken together, by focusing on both stable and also dynamic resource-based moderators, we offer a comprehensive picture of how managers' resources can operate as beneficial buffers to alleviate the harm from daily job insecurity and subsequently prevent abusive supervision on that day.

It is important to note that this study's focus on manager trait resilience and daily manager state mindfulness holds particular relevance in the context of job insecurity. Specifically, manager trait resilience alters the way in which managers appraise their job insecurity (Mitchell et al., 2019),

which then contributes to their ability to interpret the fluidity and subjectivity of job insecurity. Indeed, previous literature has demonstrated that resilience is an important strength, particularly for workplace roles where stressors are high in regularity and intensity (Southwick et al., 2017)—which is germane to the managerial context. Furthermore, because managers' perception of their job insecurity mirrors their apprehensions about their future unemployment, having elevated levels of state mindfulness can mitigate their detrimental plight by shifting their concentration from their future concerns to their present situation (Liu et al., 2023; Ni et al., 2023). In detail, mindfulness comprises three foundational cornerstones: ethical conduct, wisdom, and the cultivation of attention (Monteiro et al., 2015), all of which are essential for managers' efforts to remain calm and focused when facing threats to their job security.

By examining how and when day-to-day job insecurity triggers managers to lash out at their employees, our research makes three important contributions. First, we add to the paucity of extant literature regarding manager job insecurity by providing a complementary and alternative perspective on why insecure managers display counterproductive and unethical behavior toward their employees. Adopting a leader-centric perspective facilitates our ability to answer previous calls to examine the detrimental effects that job insecurity has on managers (Lee et al., 2018).

Second, by identifying the need for power as a key motivation, this research enriches our understanding of why managers engage in unethical actions toward their employees. Our theorizing departs from the dominant view that abusive supervision consists of largely impulsive reactions, and we instead suggest that managers engage in unethical behavior as a way to feel better about themselves.

Third, our research emphasizes the roles of managers trait resilience and their daily state mindfulness as two critical moderators, by elucidating why some managers are more or less able to cope with daily job insecurity. This sheds light on how managers, who fulfill unique roles that require optimized traits and daily states to navigate complex tasks (Sayles, 1993; Williams, 2016), can develop prepotent resistance to various threats in the workplace. Fig. 1 depicts our theoretical model.

 Insert Fig. 1 about here

Theory and Hypotheses Development

COR theory

COR theory, with its central tenet proposing that individuals are motivated to acquire and protect resources (Hobfoll, 1989), has often been applied in the literature on stress (Halbesleben et al., 2009). Job insecurity is largely considered to be a workplace stressor for managers because it not only brings tension, fear, and worry about employment stability and future economic security (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015; Richter et al., 2010), but also threatens the inherent authority and power associated with the managers' leadership roles. According to COR theory, individuals experiencing resource loss engage in efforts to restore their depleted resources (Hobfoll, 1989). That said, the feeling of power is a crucial psychological resource for managers (Sherman et al., 2020), and once they have lost it via job insecurity, they are driven to actively seek to re-acquire that resource and

thus to reestablish their influence, control, and authority (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Bennett, 1988), thereby manifesting the resource-loss process as a heightened need for power. In this regard, when managers are facing such a resource loss, they often engage in abusive supervision as a coping mechanism for restoring and regaining resources and enabling them to perceive an arbitrary dominance, authoritative control, and significant influence over employees (Ju et al., 2019).

COR theory also suggests that “those with greater resources are less vulnerable to resource loss” (Hobfoll et al., 2018, p. 106). Because personal characteristics can be viewed as personal resources that aid in stress resistance (Hobfoll & Ford, 2007), we situate trait resilience as a pivotal internal resource that enables managers to offset the resource loss resulting from daily job insecurity. In addition to the static resource perspective, we heed Hobfoll’s (1989) call to shift our attention to resource dynamics, examining how day-to-day variations in resource-building play a role in influencing the magnitude of the detriments of job insecurity. Therefore, we propose that daily state mindfulness functions as a critical daily contingency that facilitates a manager’s adoption of resource-building strategies to cope with job insecurity on a day-to-day basis.

Daily Manager Job Insecurity, Need for Power, and Abusive Supervision

Job insecurity derives individuals to have a limited degree of control over their employment status (Kim et al., 2021). On a given day, because of its hampering effect on individuals’ ability to prepare for possible threats to their job (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015), job insecurity renders them prone to thinking about future crises, such as economic instability and decreased well-being for their families (Richter et al., 2010). However, for managers, the tension, fear, and worry induced by daily job insecurity (De Witte, 1999; Shoss, 2017) extend beyond the threat of job loss itself, and

are intricately linked to managers' perception that the authority vested in their managerial positions is being undermined. Because managers inherently occupy the role of powerholders within the organization (Foult et al., 2018), they are endowed with specific privileges to "apply sanctions, coerce, or force others to behave in intended ways" (Bennett, 1988, p. 363). Thus, this feeling of power constitutes a unique psychological resource for managers (Sherman et al., 2020), and once it is depleted, they may engage in poorer leadership in their decision-making, motivation, resource allocation, conflict resolution, and the overall developmental trajectory of the tea (Foult et al., 2018).

When facing daily job insecurity, the uncertainty enveloping the continuity of managerial roles as powerholders instills a looming sense of imminent peril (Hallier & Lyon, 1996). This impending threat can deprive managers of their sense of elevated social status and prestige, significant influence in the organization, tangible control over employees, and the qualified competence required to direct teams (Hallier & Lyon, 1996; Hoption et al., 2013; Lammers et al., 2016). As COR theory suggests, individuals are inclined to proactively seek actions to obtain resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018), so to cope with a resource depletion and restore the feeling of power that supports their ongoing managerial endeavors, insecure managers are inclined to seek ways to exert influence, control, and authority in their work context, and that ultimately augments their need for power on that day.

Hypothesis 1 Daily manager job insecurity is positively related to their daily need for power.

A need for power is "an emotional drive to influence others, get status, control over others, and desire for winning" (Khan & Batool, 2022, p. 23). On a given day, when driven by a

compelling desire to acquire psychological resources (i.e., feeling of power), managers are propelled to participate in behaviors directed at fortifying their dominance and authority in the organizational context (McClelland, 1987). In that regard, these managers are more likely to lean toward expeditious yet unethical means, which is a preferential option that comes with fewer personal costs but “confers psychological benefits derived from a sense of greater autonomy and influence” (Qin et al., 2018, p. 1959). Supporting this argument, previous research has demonstrated that an intense need for power may lead managers to engage in actions that prioritize personal gain (e.g., selfishness) and the manipulation of others rather than the assistance of others (Winter, 1973).

Accordingly, to satisfy an intense need for power, managers with a higher position in the hierarchy (Biemann et al., 2015) are often predisposed to engage in destructive and manipulative behaviors directed at employees on a given day, such as ridiculing their employees and maliciously depriving employees of valued resources and goals (Hu & Liu, 2017). These unethical behaviors manifest as abusive supervision (Tepper et al., 2017), through which managers perceive arbitrary dominance, authoritative control, and pronounced influence over employee-valued resources (Ju et al., 2019). Therefore, we hypothesize that managers with a need for power on a particular day will be more likely to exhibit instances of abusive supervision on that day.

Hypothesis 2 Daily manager need for power is positively related to daily abusive supervision.

Taken together, consistent with COR theory, the depletion of their unique managerial resource (i.e., feeling of power) due to managers’ perceived job insecurity, triggers them to reassert their need for power on a given day. To expedite a rebound from resource losses and acquire new

resources more swiftly, these managers are motivated to re-establish their authority through any means possible, and that effort can take the form of abusive supervision. By examining the situation through this resource lens, we are able to reveal a leader-centric picture of how the fluctuation of a specific and unique resource for managers that is induced by daily job insecurity leads to harmful consequences.

Hypothesis 3 Daily manager need for power mediates the within-person relationship between daily manager job insecurity and daily abusive supervision.

The Moderating Role of Person-Level Manager Trait Resilience

Notably, unlike employees, managers are required to possess a complex amalgamation of technical, functional, cultural, and social competencies in order to successfully navigate the intricacies of ever-changing challenges, as well as to lead, guide, and direct successful outcomes from the teams they manage (Sayles, 1993). Accordingly, the ability to adapt is particularly crucial for managers, especially when they are confronted with stressful situations, such as job insecurity, because adaptability allows them to be more adept at handling workplace stressors (Southwick et al., 2017). Given this, to gain a more granular understanding of the dynamic within-person effects of job insecurity (Zhao et al., 2024), we identify manager trait resilience as a person-level moderator that helps managers maintain resources for coping with day-to-day job insecurity.

Individuals differ in their ability to adapt to day-to-day stressors and adversity (Wagnild & Young, 1993). This distinctive disposition of individual adaptability is encapsulated by trait resilience, which equips individuals to protect and replenish their reservoir of self-resources and thus enables them to feel “alive” rather than “drained” during stressful experiences (Ryan &

Frederick, 1997). Previous research has demonstrated that individuals with higher levels of trait resilience are better able to maintain normal functioning and adjustment when faced with circumstances that change day-to-day (Hu et al., 2015; Waugh et al., 2011). This is the case because resilience allows individuals to filter out and dismiss negative or potentially harmful information and thereby reduce their likelihood of pessimistically interpreting such stressors (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004).

Notably, when resilient managers encounter stressors, such as job insecurity at work on a given day, they are more inclined to maintain a cool head (Southwick et al., 2017), rather than allowing themselves to excessively magnify negative perceptions stemming from this stressor (Mitchell et al., 2019). Accordingly, managers with higher levels of trait resilience are less sensitive to perceived threats to their prestige, influence, and authority that accompany job insecurity. Hence, we reason that the fortification of resilient managers' psychological reserves and diminished dysfunctional attitudes (Mitchell et al., 2019) reduces the power threat and decreases their need to bolster psychological resources, thus diminishing their need for power on that day. As the motivation to acquire a greater sense of autonomy and influence wanes, these resilient managers are less likely to display abusive supervision in order to obtain psychological benefits on that day.

In contrast, we expect that managers with lower levels of trait resilience are likely to experience relatively amplified and more intense concerns about threats and harms associated with daily job insecurity, because they tend to focus on adverse information about workplace stressors (Mitchell et al., 2019). In line with this, in the face of a workplace stressor, such as daily job

insecurity, these managers will be more likely to dwell on and display prolonged reactions on that day, and to engage in dysfunctional thinking in response to aversive and threatening contextual cues (Vaughn et al., 2008). By consistently focusing on the threat of job insecurity on a given day, these managers with lower levels of trait resilience may experience a more pronounced depletion of their resources linked to the undermining of their power, such as perceiving an increased likelihood that they will be deprived of their managerial authority, control, and influence. Managers who possess lower levels of trait resilience are more prone than others to manifest an intensified need for power in response to their heightened perception of a threat arising from job insecurity on a particular day. With the intensified aspirations to influence others and achieve status, these managers are relatively more likely to exhibit abusive supervision on that day.

All in all, we expect manager trait resilience to serve as a key dispositional factor which alleviates the adverse impact that manager job insecurity over the course of the day has on their abusive supervision via manager need for power.

Hypothesis 4 Manager trait resilience moderates the indirect within-person relationship between daily manager job insecurity and daily abusive supervision through daily manager need for power, such that this indirect relationship is weaker when manager trait resilience is higher rather than lower.

The Moderating Role of Day-Level Manager State Mindfulness

Up to this point, we have delineated manager trait resilience as a person-level moderator, elucidating why some managers handle daily job insecurity better than others do. However, even resilient managers' responses to experiencing daily job insecurity may vary, depending on their

nuanced state on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, to provide a more comprehensive picture of the downstream consequences of job insecurity on a given day, we also focus on daily state mindfulness as a key boundary condition to identify how the harmful effects catalyzed by job insecurity vary in strength on a daily basis.

Mindfulness denotes one's response to internal and external stimuli (Brown & Ryan, 2003), which is closely related to ethics because conforming to ethical principles and behaving ethically are viewed as fundamental pillars in mindfulness training, thereby informing so-called "right mindfulness" (Monteiro et al., 2015). This suggests that mindfulness not only entails attention and wisdom, but also emphasizes intentionality and ethicality (Reb et al., 2019). Certainly, mindfulness has robust and reliable stress reduction effects (Manigault et al., 2021) and is conceptualized as a within-person, state-like construct, because it fluctuates over time and varies with daily intervention (Polk et al., 2020). Previous research has indicated that the enhancement of state mindfulness is a resource-building process (Polk et al., 2020) in which an induced open attitude cultivates greater psychological space between emotional experiences and reactions (Brown et al., 2007). This, in turn, equips individuals with a more positive mindset, thus enabling them to cope more effectively with various workplace stressors (Liu et al., 2023).

To date, the burgeoning empirical research on the role of state mindfulness in the workplace has lagged behind in regard to leaders (Reb et al., 2019). Indeed, increasingly practitioner-oriented writing has contended that mindful managers perform their managerial tasks more effectively (e.g., Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Carroll, 2008; Goldstein, 2011). Higher levels of state mindfulness enable managers to maintain a stable focus on the present moment, both nonreactively and

nonjudgmentally (Liu et al., 2023; Ni et al., 2023). When managers encounter job insecurity on a given day, those with higher levels of state mindfulness step back from subjective experiences and view job insecurity as a neutral event, rather than dwelling on future concerns and passing judgment on its potential meaning (Montani et al., 2021; Reb et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2022). In such instances, these mindful managers are less inclined than others to equate daily job insecurity with potential future threats to their feeling of power (Montani et al., 2021), such as by degraded prestige, reduced influence, and diminished control related to their managerial roles (Hallier & Lyon, 1996; Hopton et al., 2013; Lammers et al., 2016).

Based on COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), nonjudgmental attitudes have been found to decouple managers themselves from their insecure feelings (Glomb et al., 2011; Reb et al., 2019), and we expect that mindful manager alleviated concerns about power loss will decrease mindful their motivation to actively bolster their psychological resources. According to this reasoning, higher levels of state mindfulness will lead to a diminished need for power among these managers when they experience daily job insecurity, thereby curbing the occurrence of abusive supervision on that day.

In contrast, when managers hold lower levels of state mindfulness, their cognitive processes are inundated with a plethora of thoughts, feelings, perspectives, and emotions from both the past and the future (Liu et al., 2023; Ni et al., 2023). Faced with job insecurity on a given day, these managers worry about the future (Montani et al., 2021; Reb et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2022), and feel particularly uncertain regarding the continuity of their managerial roles — which in turn can escalate their sense of power deprivation. Because managers with lower levels of state mindfulness

experience exacerbated depletion of their perceptions of power, they experience an intensified motivation to actively seek such psychological resources, thereby increasing their daily need for power during that day. Urged by this heightened desire to fortify their dominance and authority in the organizational context, managers with lower levels of state mindfulness are more likely than others to engage in abusive supervision on that day.

In conclusion, we expect daily manager state mindfulness to serve as a within-person moderator that alleviates the adverse impact of manager job insecurity on abusive supervision through manager need for power over the course of the day.

Hypothesis 5 Daily manager state mindfulness moderates the indirect within-person relationship between daily manager job insecurity and daily abusive supervision through daily manager need for power, such that this indirect relationship is weaker when daily manager state mindfulness is higher rather than lower.

Methods

Sample and Procedures

Data were collected from four banks in China, and we first contacted senior managers from each company and informed them about the purpose of our study. After obtaining their consent, we collected data in two phases, with both a one-time initial survey and a series of daily surveys. In the first phase, we administered a one-time paper-and-pencil survey (baseline survey) to managers, assessing their trait resilience and collecting data on their demographics. Two weeks later, in the second phase, participants completed daily paper-and-pencil surveys two times per workday (at the middle of their workday and the end of their workday) over a period of 10 consecutive

workdays (Monday through Friday). The middle-of-work survey (T1: available from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.) assessed manager job insecurity, manager state mindfulness, and manager need for power, and the end-of-work survey (T2: available from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.) assessed abusive supervision.

Participants were assured of the confidentiality of the surveys. Completed surveys were returned directly to research assistants on site. In the first phase, a total of 169 managers were voluntarily invited to take part in a general paper-and-pencil survey and 151 managers (89.35% initial response rate) completed questions regarding trait resilience and demographic information. After screening out missing responses and unmatched lagged data, our final sample included 1,058 matched daily surveys out of 1,510 possible surveys (a response rate of 70.07%) from 126 managers (a response rate of 74.56%). Among the participating managers, 67.5% were male, with an average age of 33.94 years ($SD = 6.39$) and an average organizational tenure of 6.18 years ($SD = 4.76$).

Measures

All items were translated from English into Chinese following the translation-back translation procedure recommended by Brislin (1986). Unless otherwise noted, a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* was used for the measures. All scale items are presented in Supplementary Material 1.

One-time Baseline Survey

Manager trait resilience. We used Smith et al.'s (2008) three-item scale to measure manager trait resilience. An example item is: "I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times." The Cronbach's

alpha was .83.

Daily Middle-of-Work Survey (T1)

Manager job insecurity. Managers rated the extent to which they experienced job insecurity each day using De Witte's (2000) four-item scale. An example item is: "Today, I feared that I might lose my job." Across the surveyed days, the mean Cronbach's alpha was .91.

Manager state mindfulness. Managers rated their daily state mindfulness on a four-item scale from Long and Christian (2015). An example item is: "Now, I focus on the present." Across the surveyed days, the mean Cronbach's alpha was .88.

Manager need for power. Managers rated their daily need for power on a four-item scale adapted from Bennett (1988). An example item is: "Today, I want to be the one who makes the decisions." Across the surveyed days, the mean Cronbach's alpha was .89.

Daily End-of-Work Survey (T2)

Abusive supervision. In line with recent daily diary research on abusive supervision (e.g., Barnes et al., 2015), managers rated their own daily activities using a five-item scale developed by Johnson et al. (2012). Participants were invited to indicate how often they had engaged in various forms of abusive supervision at work that day, utilizing a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *never* to 6 = *five or more times*). An example item is: "Today, I behaved in a nasty or rude manner to my subordinates." Across the surveyed days, the mean Cronbach's alpha was .87.

Control variables. To ensure that the observed effect of daily job insecurity is not the result of omitted confounding factors, we incorporated a list of control variables in the second phase (i.e., the daily survey phase). First, we controlled for the initial level of manager need for power (mean

of Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$) in the daily before-work survey (T0: available from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.) to model the change in the level of manager need for power as a result of perceived job insecurity. Likewise, to model the change in abusive supervision level as a result of manager need for power, we also capture the initial level of abusive supervision (mean of Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$) in the middle-of-work daily survey (T1).

Second, to ensure that the effect of manager need for power triggered by job insecurity goes beyond basic workplace demands and strain, we included workload as an important form of strain in the workplace domain, and family–work conflict as a crucial demand in the family domain as control variables. According to COR theory, managers face diverse resource threats from both the workplace and family domains, culminating in a resource-consuming process and subsequently leading to abusive supervision (Courtright et al., 2016; Eissa & Lester, 2017). Therefore, we assessed workload and family–work conflict in the middle-of-work daily survey (T1). Workload was measured using Janssen's (2001) three-item scale, and an example item is: "Today, I had to deal with a work backlog" (mean of Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$). Family–work conflict was assessed using Grzywacz and Marks's (2000) four-item scale, and an example item is: "Today, personal or family worries and problems distracted me when I was at work" (mean of Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$).

Analytical Strategy

Due to the hierarchical structure of the data, with days nested within managers, we used multilevel path analysis to test our hypotheses. The hypothesized paths were modeled using random slopes, while control paths were modeled using fixed slopes. We first estimated a multilevel path-analytic model (Model 1) to test the within-person main effects and mediating effect without considering

moderating effects.

On the basis of Model 1, we estimated the second multilevel path-analytic model (Model 2), which included manager trait resilience and daily manager state mindfulness as two predictors to evaluate the between-person level and within-person level moderation effects. Prior to hypotheses testing, within-person level predictors were group-mean centered, whereas the between-person level predictor was grand-mean centered (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998). Further, we modeled the direct effect of daily manager job insecurity on daily abusive supervision. To evaluate our indirect effect (mediation) and conditional indirect effects (moderating mediation), we utilized bootstrapping-based approach via Monte Carlo simulation, using R program with 20,000 replications to calculate 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CI).

Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations of all study variables. We examined intrapersonal variances for within-person variables and found substantial amounts of variance at the within-person level, which ranged from 41.09% to 59.34%.

Next, we conducted a multilevel confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the fit of our measurement model, including within-person daily manager job insecurity, daily manager need for power, daily abusive supervision, daily manager state mindfulness, daily workload, and daily family–work conflict (six Level 1 factors), as well as between-person manager trait resilience (one Level 2 factor). The results indicated that the multilevel seven-factor measurement model provided a good fit for the data (χ^2 (237) = 420.40, CFI = .99, TLI = .98, RMSEA = .03, (SRMR) (within) = .03, SRMR (between) = .00). All standardized factor loadings were significant, ranging from .70

to .95. Then, using the Satorra-Bentler-scaled Chi square difference test (Satorra & Bentler, 2001; Satorra & Bentler, 2010), we compared the six-factor model with all the other factor alternative models (see Table S1 in Supplementary Material 2), including 15 six-factor alternative models in which any two of the six within-person factors were combined ($555.52 \leq \Delta\chi^2\text{'s } (\Delta df = 5) \leq 13,005.92, ps < .001$). These results revealed that our seven-factor model provided the best fit to the data, supporting the discriminant validity of our measurement model.

The results of the multilevel path analysis are shown in Table 2 and Table 3. Daily manager job insecurity was positively related to daily manager need for power ($\gamma = .22, p < .001$), which in turn was positively associated with daily abusive supervision ($\gamma = .25, p < .001$), thereby supporting Hypotheses 1 and 2. There was a significant indirect effect of daily manager job insecurity on daily abusive supervision via daily manager need for power (*estimate* = .06, 95% CI [.027, .086], excluding zero), thus supporting Hypothesis 3. These results, in practical aspects, suggest that when managers experience job insecurity on a given day, they are more likely to exhibit a heightened need for power on that day. This increased need for power, in turn, drives them to subsequently engage in abusive supervision in the workplace. In this regard, we elucidate how manager need for power emerges and how it serves as a catalyst for unethical behavior in the workplace (i.e., abusive supervision).

For our moderated moderation hypotheses (Hypotheses 4 and 5), the within-person indirect effect of daily manager job insecurity on daily abusive supervision via daily manager need for power was moderated by manager trait resilience (*indirect effect difference* = -.09, 95% CI [-.127, -.062], excluding zero), such that the effect was positive and significant at lower levels of manager

trait resilience (*indirect effect* = .11, 95% CI [.076, .137], excluding zero) but not at higher levels (*indirect effect* = .01, 95% CI [-.008, .034], including zero). Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported. These results reveal that the harm received from daily job insecurity is not uniform to all managers. In this regard, manager trait resilience, a stable personal resource, serves as a between-person level buffer, such that managers with higher levels of trait resilience experience less detrimental effects of job insecurity. Finally, the moderating effect of daily manager state mindfulness on the indirect effect between daily manager job insecurity and daily abusive supervision via daily manager need for power was significant (*indirect effect difference* = -.20, 95% CI [-.384, -.043], excluding zero). Specifically, this effect was positive and significant at lower levels of daily manager state mindfulness (*indirect effect* = .16, 95% CI [.070, .264], excluding zero), but not at higher levels (*indirect effect* = -.04, 95% CI [-.124, .030], including zero), supporting Hypothesis 5. These results reveal that the harm that managers experience from daily job insecurity fluctuates depending on their daily state. Manifested as a resource-building process, daily state mindfulness serves as a within-person level buffer, such that when managers hold higher levels of daily state mindfulness, the destructive effects of job insecurity are further diminished.

To demonstrate the robustness of our results, we ran analyses without all of the control variables, and the significance level of our results remained unchanged (see Supplementary Material 3).

Insert Table 1-2 about here

Supplemental Analysis

To test the robustness of our model, we performed a supplemental analysis to rule out an alternative mechanism. Previous research has demonstrated that frustration is an important consequence of job insecurity (Vander Elst et al., 2012) and, when managers become engulfed in this feeling, they have a heightened propensity to engage in abusive supervision (Eissa & Lester, 2017). Therefore, we examined daily manager frustration as a potential mediator between manager job insecurity and abusive supervision on a daily basis. Consistent with manager need for power, we assessed manager frustration in both the before-work survey (T0) and middle-of-work survey (T1), using Peters, O'Connor, and Rudolf's (1980) three-item scale. An example item is: "Today, I think being frustrated comes with this job" (mean of Cronbach's alpha = .92 at T0; mean of Cronbach's alpha = .91 at T1).

The results showed that daily manager job insecurity was positively related to daily manager frustration ($\gamma = .13, p < .01$), and daily manager frustration was positively related to daily abusive supervision ($\gamma = .08, p < .05$). However, the indirect effect of daily manager job insecurity on daily abusive supervision via daily manager frustration was not significant (*estimate* = .01, 95% CI [-.019, .040]). When controlling for daily manager frustration, there was no change in the significance of our results or the interpretation of our hypotheses tests (see Table S2 in Supplementary Material 4), thus demonstrating the unique role of manager need for power in the relationship between daily manager job insecurity and daily abusive supervision.

Discussion

This research provides a fresh perspective for understanding how and when managers engage in abusive supervision. Drawing on COR theory, we examine daily manager need for power as a novel mechanism linking daily manager job insecurity and daily abusive supervision, and identify between-person manager trait resilience and within-person manager state mindfulness as two important buffers that can mitigate managers' negative reactions to job insecurity day to day. Our findings are held when we account for other crucial demands that managers face, their frustration, and the initial levels of their daily need for power and daily abusive supervision, lending support to the robustness of our findings.

Theoretical Implications

Our findings offer several theoretical contributions to literature. First, our study regard managers as recipients of daily insecurity at work, answering a recent call for paying additional attention to the effects of manager job insecurity (Lee et al., 2018) and fluctuations of job insecurity on a daily basis (Garrido Vásquez et al., 2019). Scholars have observed that managers who are traditionally privileged in employment also experience precariousness at work (Hassard & Morris, 2018). However, although this qualitative data provides a rich description of the phenomenon, their findings fall short in accounting for its consequences. We address this and reveal the role of daily manager need for power as a novel mechanism to explain the impact of daily manager job insecurity on day-to-day managerial behavior.

Our results demonstrate that daily job insecurity triggers a pressing sense of crisis regarding a manager-specific resource (i.e., feeling of power), which heightens manager need for power and thus drives them to engage in abusive supervision on that day. In doing so, we address a common

criticism of the theory that “nearly anything good can be considered a resource” (Halbesleben et al., 2014, p. 1337). In this regard, it is imperative to consider the specific resource that holds value for an individual in a particular context, because previous research has indicated that what is viewed as valuable may not carry the same significance for an individual in a specific context (Winkel et al., 2011). By shifting attention from a broad interpretation of resources to a context-specific resource, our refined portrayal of power dynamics extends the application of the COR theory to a granular level by tracing the trajectory of fluctuations in a specific resource and offering a more precise lens through which to analyze the dynamics of detailed resource depletion in the context of leadership. Without this research, we would be left with a void in our understanding of how managers respond to daily job insecurity from a leader-centric lens, thereby failing to explain the unique intricacies of their experiences.

Second, our research contributes to the body of knowledge on abusive supervision by casting manager need for power as an important antecedent. The prevailing view of abusive supervision is framed as an emotional and impulsive response induced by the lack of control needed to appropriately regulate one’s own behavior (Tepper et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2018). However, Tepper, Duffy, and Breaux-Soignet (2012) highlighted the significance of exploring managers’ strategic motives for abusing employees with premeditation and cognitive processing. Our results respond to this by identifying abusive supervision as a power-enhancing tactic utilized to allow managers to feel better about themselves. This is consistent with speculation by some scholars that abusive supervision may manifest itself as intentional endeavors to achieve strategic objectives, such as asserting dominance and disciplining certain employees who have transgressed rules (e.g., Hu &

Liu, 2017).

Third, our research advances the literature on job insecurity by identifying trait resilience as an important personal resource and daily manager state mindfulness as an effective resource-building practice that dampens the negative effects of manager job insecurity. Although previous research pertaining to job insecurity has been posited to establish resource-based moderators (e.g., Lam et al., 2015; Lawrence et al., 2013), it falls short in paying close attention to the moderating effect of trait resilience. This is a problematic omission because trait resilience has been demonstrated to play an important role in resource recovery (Egozi Farkash et al., 2022). Previous research has called for further exploration of trait resilience in the context of immediate stressors, in an effort to enhance the “understanding of resilience and various adversities” (Maltby, 2024, p.15). By proposing trait resilience as an important boundary condition, our study offers additional insights into a key resource-based moderator that is associated with how managers’ ability to adapt operates as a personal resource in shaping their reactions to stresses that arise from daily job insecurity.

By adopting a more dynamic perspective in examining the effects of state mindfulness on a daily basis, we complement prior work on the effects of mindfulness in shaping appraisals of job insecurity (e.g., Montani et al., 2021). Moreover, the existing literature on mindfulness literature in the workplace has been criticized for overlooking its relation to ethical dimensions, which is central to its original conceptualization (Reb et al., 2019). To date, little empirical research has focused on whether mindfulness is related to managers’ unethical behaviors, and instead viewed it as an attentional construct without ethical connotations (Reb et al., 2019). Our research contributes

to this issue by exploring the moderating effect of daily manager state mindfulness on the relationship between daily manager job insecurity and daily abusive supervision via daily manager need for power. All in all, our work provides a better understanding of the role that managers' resources play in shaping reactions to stress arising from daily job insecurity.

Practical Implications

Our findings have several practical implications for organizations. First, since daily manager job insecurity results in abusive supervision, organizations should be particularly attentive to the presence of job insecurity among their managers more generally, because this stressor can provide a sort of warning system with regard to potential abusive supervision. Recognizing that managers may experience precarity in their jobs, organizations should be mindful of this and take steps to enhance how managers cope with day-to-day uncertainties about their job. In addition, because manager need for power plays an important role in mediating the effect of manager job insecurity on abusive supervision on a daily basis, a critical step for organizations would be to intervene in this power-depletion process. For instance, an effective approach could entail organizations guiding managers to satisfy their need for power in constructive ways (Randel & Wu, 2011). It would be beneficial for organizations to impress upon their managers that instead of adopting destructive and unethical countermeasures (i.e., abusive supervision), taking proactive pathways would realize significant benefits over the long term.

Second, our findings demonstrate that between-person level manager trait resilience and within-person-level manager state mindfulness are two important buffers that mitigate the influence of daily manager job insecurity on abusive supervision. Prior intervention studies have

demonstrated that conducting resilience-building training programs is effective in helping individuals remain more balanced when they are facing stress and are more sensitive to their environment (Waugh et al., 2011). Therefore, organizations should provide training programs that assist managers in effectively dealing with stressors and monitor the effectiveness of those programs on a short-term basis, such as every few days or every week (Wu et al., 2012). Organizations could also incorporate assessments of trait resilience into their decision-making about selection and promotion of managers (Mitchell et al., 2019). Finally, organizations can increase manager state mindfulness in everyday life through offering activities such as meditation sessions (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012). Following the recommendations of Schuh et al. (2017), organizations can provide managers with a daily guided audio recording (lasting approximately 10 minutes), which provides brief instructions on how to develop mindful attention (Schuh et al., 2017). Through this resource-building practice, managers can elevate their state mindfulness, subsequently mitigating the detrimental effects of job insecurity and reducing instances of abusive supervision on a given day.

Limitations and Future Directions

Our study has several limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, because our research utilized data collected from China, one might question whether our theoretical model can be generalized to other cultural settings. Researchers have shown that individuals' reactions to job insecurity can vary across cultures, and indeed Chinese employees have been found to experience higher perceived levels of job insecurity than employees in the West do (Huang et al., 2012). In addition, managers in different countries may vary in their tolerance for job insecurity. It would be

valuable to explore whether managers in cultures characterized by a high tolerance for risk respond with lower levels of abusive supervision. Besides, power distance and preference for hierarchy can also play a critical role in our findings. In high power distance cultures, managers are regarded as more authoritative within the organization (Daniels & Greguras, 2014). This elevated status makes them more sensitive to power threats arising from job insecurity. Managers with more preference for hierarchy place greater importance on power and status in their roles (Zhang & Wei, 2024), making them perceive stronger feelings of tension and unease when their hierarchical position is threatened by job insecurity. To explore the generalizability of our findings, we call for additional research that extends our theoretical model to different cultures.

Second, all of the variables in our research were self-reported, thus raising concerns about common method variance (CMV) (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We therefore employed several steps to attenuate the effects of CMV. We conducted two phases of data collection two weeks apart (i.e., a general survey and a daily survey) and measured our predictor (daily manager job insecurity), mediator (daily manager need for power), and criterion variable (daily abusive supervision) two times per workday (noon and afternoon) for one consecutive week. Moreover, researchers have suggested that concerns regarding CMV owing to the same-resource problem should melt away with the use of repeated-measure research using an experience sampling design (e.g., Butts et al., 2015). Nonetheless, we also encourage future research to use objective measures or other-reported measures to replicate our findings.

Conclusion

Based on COR theory, our research provides new insights to explain how and when manager job

insecurity triggers abusive supervision on a daily basis. As expected, we found that daily manager job insecurity triggers a manager need for power, which ultimately drives managers to engage in abusive supervision on that day. Furthermore, we identify between-person manager trait resilience and within-person manager state mindfulness as two important buffers that alleviate the detrimental effects of daily job insecurity.

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Table 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations

Variables	Mean	Within- person <i>SD</i>	Between- person <i>SD</i>	Percentage of within- person variance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>Within-person level</i>													
1. Daily workload (T1)	2.30	.74	.51	58.92%	(.93)	.55**	.06	-.24**	.42**	.43**	.28**	.36**	-.16
2. Daily family-work conflict (T1)	2.31	.66	.48	54.71%	.41**	(.89)	-.05	-.19*	.53**	.56**	.32**	.41**	-.37**
3. Daily manager job insecurity (T1)	2.65	.70	.57	41.09%	.01	-.02	(.91)	-.52**	.17	.23*	.04	.06	-.17
4. Daily manager state mindfulness (T1)	3.71	.58	.45	45.95%	-.15**	-.12**	-.37**	(.88)	-.34**	-.37**	-.27**	-.34**	.20*
5. Daily manager need for power (T0)	2.17	.57	.40	59.34%	.20**	.26**	.14**	-.17**	(.89)	.70**	.28**	.36**	-.32**
6. Daily manager need for power (T1)	2.23	.60	.42	58.77%	.24**	.32**	.24**	-.20**	.34**	(.89)	.20*	.26**	-.35**
7. Daily abusive supervision (T1)	2.05	.50	.37	56.42%	.19**	.17**	.05	-.20**	.24**	.16**	(.88)	.77**	-.08
8. Daily abusive supervision (T2)	2.05	.49	.36	53.56%	.27**	.28**	.11**	-.25**	.22**	.32**	.41**	(.87)	-.16
<i>Between-person level</i>													
9. Manager trait resilience	3.63	-	.62	-	-.13**	-.25**	-.15**	.16**	-.23**	-.25**	-.09**	-.13**	(.83)

Note. n (Between-person level) = 126, n (Within-person level) = 1,058. Correlations above the diagonal represent between-person correlations. Correlations below the diagonal represent within-person correlations. Coefficient alphas are shown on the diagonal in parentheses. For within-person variables, their coefficient alphas were the mean alphas across five days of observation.

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

Table 2. Results of multilevel path analysis.

Variable	Mediation (Model 1)		Moderated mediation (Model 2)	
	Daily Manager need for power (T1)	Daily Abusive supervision (T2)	Daily Manager need for power (T1)	Daily Abusive supervision (T2)
<i>Control variables</i>				
Daily family-work conflict (T1)	.05 (.04)	.05 (.03)	.06 (.04)	.05 (.03)
Daily workload (T1)	.02 (.03)	.04 (.03)	.03 (.03)	.05 (.03)
Daily manager need for power (T0)	-.04 (.04)		-.04 (.04)	
Daily abusive supervision (T1)		-.01 (.03)		-.01 (.03)
<i>Predictor</i>				
Daily manager job insecurity (T1)	.22** (.04)	-.01 (.03)	.23** (.03)	-.01 (.03)
<i>Mediators</i>				
Daily manager need for power (T1)		.25** (.03)		.25** (.03)
<i>Moderators</i>				
Manager trait resilience			-.24** (.06)	
Daily manager state mindfulness (T1)			-.02 (.04)	
<i>Interaction terms</i>				
Daily manager job insecurity (T1) × Manager trait resilience			-.30** (.05)	
Daily manager job insecurity (T1) × Daily manager state mindfulness (T1)			-.68* (.26)	
Pseudo R^2	.08	.16	.17	.16

Note. n (Between-person level) = 126, n (Within-person level) = 1,058. Estimates are unstandardized coefficients and values in parentheses are standard errors. Pseudo R^2

represents the reduction in the within-person level variance of the dependent variable compared to the null model.

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

Table 3. Results of indirect and conditional indirect effects from multilevel path analysis.

	Indirect Effect	Conditional Indirect Effect
Daily Manager Job Insecurity→Daily Manager Need for Power→Daily Abusive Supervision	.06 [.027, .086]	
<i>Manager Trait Resilience</i>		
High (+1 SD)		.01 [-.008, .034]
Low (-1 SD)		.11 [.076, .137]
Difference		-.09 [-.127, -.062]
<i>Daily Manager State Mindfulness</i>		
High (+1 SD)		-.04 [-.124, .030]
Low (-1 SD)		.16 [.070, .264]
Difference		-.20 [-.384, -.043]

Note. n (Between-person level) = 126, n (Within-person level) = 1,058. Moderated mediation is supported when the confidence interval of the difference between two conditional indirect effects for a given moderator excludes zero. Indirect effects in boldface indicate effects significant at the 95% level (95% bias-corrected CI shown)

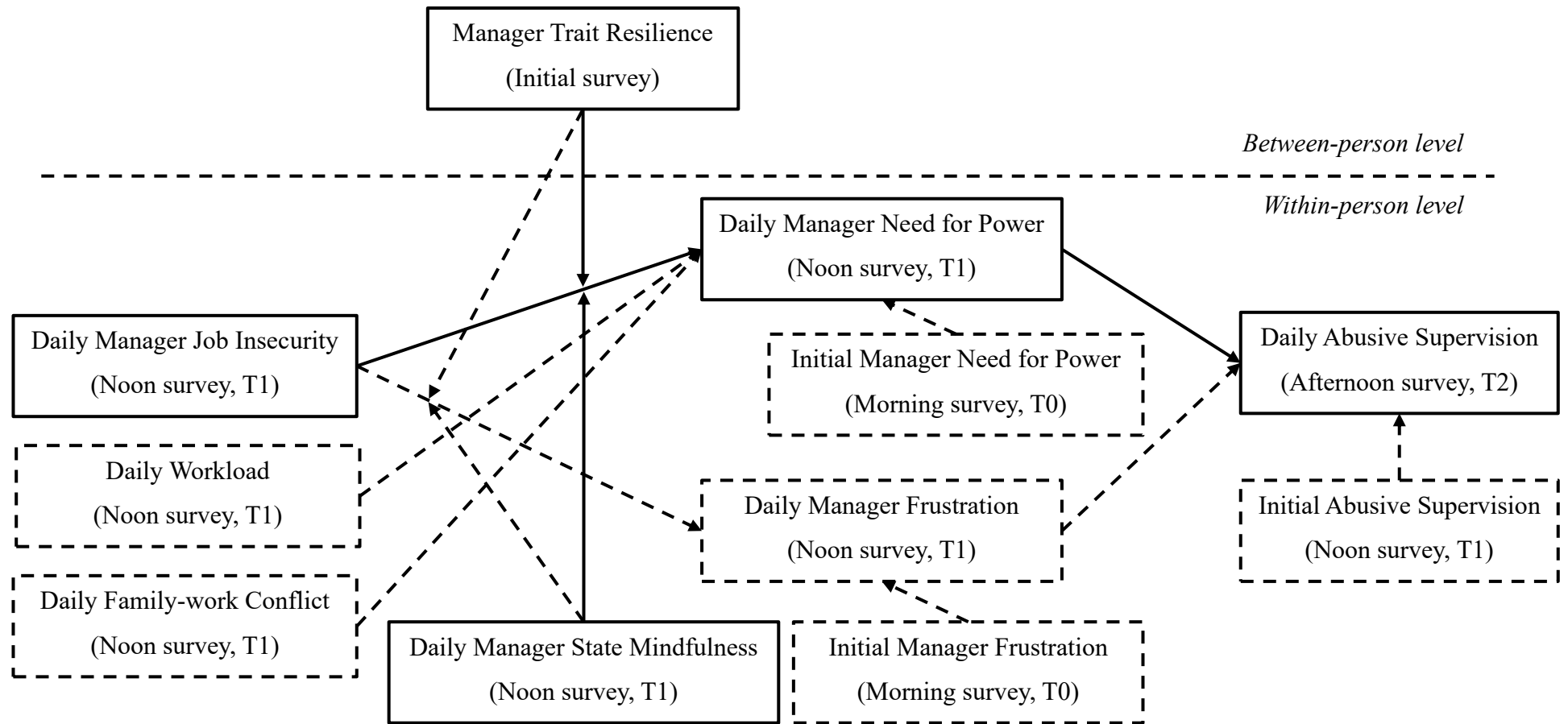


Fig. 1 Overall theoretical model.

Note. Daily workload, daily family-work conflict, daily manager frustration, initial manager need for power, initial manager frustration, and initial abusive supervision are control variables.