

Your abusive boss may not be good for your marriage: study

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Having an abusive boss not only causes problems at work but can lead to strained relationships at home, according to a Baylor University study published online in journal, *Personnel Psychology*. The study found that stress and tension caused by an abusive boss have an impact on the employee's partner, which affects the marital relationship and subsequently the employee's entire family.

The study also found that more children at home meant greater family satisfaction for the employee, and the longer the partner's relationship, the less impact the abusive boss had on the family.

"These findings have important implications for organizations and their managers. The evidence highlights the need for organizations to send an unequivocal message to those in supervisory positions that these hostile and [harmful behaviors](#) will not be tolerated," said Dawn Carlson, Ph.D., study author, professor of management and H. R. Gibson Chair of Organizational Development at the Hankamer School of Business at Baylor University, Waco.

A supervisor's abuse may include tantrums, [rudeness](#), public criticism and inconsiderate action.

"It may be that as supervisor abuse heightens tension in the relationship, the employee is less motivated or able to engage in positive interactions with the partner and other family members," said Merideth Ferguson, PH.D., study co-author and assistant professor of management and

entrepreneurship at Baylor.

Organizations should encourage subordinates to seek support through their organization's employee assistance program or other resources (e.g., counseling, [stress management](#)) so that the employee can identify tactics or mechanisms for buffering the effect of abuse on the family, according to the study.

The study included 280 full-time employees and their partners. Fifty-seven percent of the employees were male with an average of five years in their current job; 75 percent had children living with them. The average age for the employee and the partner was 36 years. The average length of their relationship was 10 years. Of the respondents, 46 percent supervised other employees in the workplace, 47 percent worked in a public organization, 40 percent worked in a private organization, nine percent worked for a non-profit organization and five percent were self-employed. Of the partner group, 43 percent were male with 78 percent of these individuals employed.

Workers filled out an online survey. When their portion of the survey was complete, their partner completed a separate survey that was linked back to the workers'. The partner entered a coordinating identification number to complete his/her portion of the survey. The combined responses from the initial contact and the partner constituted one complete response in the study database.

Questions in the employee survey included; "How often does your supervisor use the following behaviors with you?" with example items being "Tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid," "Expresses anger at me when he/she is mad for another reason," "Puts me down in front of others," and "Tells me I'm incompetent."

Questions in the partner survey included; "During the past month, how

often did you . . ." feel irritated or resentful about things your (husband/wife/partner) did or didn't do" and "feel tense from fighting, arguing or disagreeing with your (husband/wife/[partner](#))."

More information: The article is available using this link:
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