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## Abusive supervision in commercial kitchens

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1 **Abusive Supervision in Commercial Kitchens: Insights from the Restaurant**

2 **Industry**

3

4 **Abstract**

5 This mixed-method study investigates how abusive supervision and bullying impact job  
6 satisfaction and turnover intentions among employees in an environment plagued by ingrained  
7 incivility: commercial kitchens. Underpinned by social learning theory, we draw from 832 survey  
8 responses and 20 in-depth interviews to explore the extent to which supervisory abuse and  
9 workplace bullying negatively impact employee perceptions of their working environment while  
10 also investigating positive alternatives therein (e.g., authentic leadership and encouragement of  
11 creativity). Results suggest that, despite day-to-day challenges posed by abusive leadership, a  
12 strong sense of camaraderie and passion for kitchen work stimulated a commitment to the job.  
13 Accordingly, the study concludes that the inherently creative nature of commercial kitchen work  
14 and the personalities of fellow staff played a significant role in retaining employees. It thus  
15 highlights the complexity of hospitality employee retention and suggests that a holistic  
16 understanding of both leadership dynamics and intrinsic motives is essential therein.

17 **Keywords:** abusive supervision; workplace bullying; commercial kitchens; turnover intentions;  
18 hospitality job satisfaction

19 **1. Introduction**

20 Leadership is core to shaping organizational outcomes within the commercial hospitality sector  
21 (Eluwole et al., 2022). Yet, while academics advocate for authentic styles of leadership that are  
22 enabling and supportive and which aim to empower employees (Deming & Johnson, 2021), the  
23 hospitality context remains ripe with tales of abusive leadership, where managers lead through  
24 punishment and instilling fear (Yu et al., 2020). Enabled by the prevalence of this extreme culture  
25 of abuse, bullying is also ingrained in many commercial culinary environments, with studies  
26 demonstrating the extent to which it has been considered normalized therein (Burrow et al., 2015;  
27 Gill & Burrow, 2018).

28 Per the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022), 352,021 people work within the US food service  
29 industry, making it one of the nation’s largest employer categories. However, the COVID-19  
30 pandemic aggravated the already-poor employer-employee relationships common across US  
31 hospitality, swelling turnover rates and making recruitment increasingly difficult (DeMicco & Liu,  
32 2021). Accordingly, Amankwaa et al. (2022) describe the hospitality sector’s current skill shortage  
33 as a ‘war on talent’. Indeed, turnover intention (employees’ thoughts about leaving the  
34 organization) across US hospitality exceeds that of comparable industries, necessitating high  
35 recruitment and training costs, posing a significant resource challenge for firms (Raza et al., 2021).  
36 Therefore, given the long working hours, irregular schedules, limited benefits, and ease of  
37 occupational movement symptomatic of hospitality employment, firms capable of retaining  
38 employees and reducing turnover may hold a significant advantage (Ariza-Montes, 2018).

39 However, despite the potential firm-level benefits associated with providing and  
40 maintaining a supportive working environment, many studies report on the bullying culture  
41 associated with commercial kitchen environments (Albors-Garrigos et al., 2020; Giousmpasoglou

42 et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2020; Meiser & Pantumsinchai, 2022). Further, studies have presented  
43 traumatic narratives from kitchen employees subject to such abuse (Burrow et al., 2015; Gill &  
44 Burrow, 2018; Giousmpasoglou et al., 2018). Yet, limited research has examined specific  
45 leadership styles deployed in kitchens and to the best of our knowledge, no study has tested and  
46 explored whether authentic and encouraging forms of leadership are more conducive to kitchen  
47 staff satisfaction and turnover intentions than the more traditional abusive management styles  
48 associated with the sector.

49 To fill this gap, we draw from social learning theory (SLT) to explore the leadership  
50 dynamics of commercial kitchens, identifying how management styles promote and/or undermine  
51 employee satisfaction and turnover intentions. We examine how positive, effective leadership  
52 promotes beneficial organizational outcomes through social learning, alongside the extent to which  
53 bullying and abuse weaken employees' perceptions of their working environment (stimulating  
54 leaving intentions). We also test whether enduring connections between managers and employees  
55 built on trust and respect (leader-member-exchanges or LMX) amplifies and/or undermines  
56 managerial leadership styles cognizant of the bullying and abuse evidenced across commercial  
57 hospitality (Chang et al., 2020).

58 In doing so, we provide practical implications for the hospitality industry on which  
59 leadership styles, training, and HR interventions can best support staff. Further, theoretically, we  
60 explore how perceptions and understanding of leadership in commercial kitchens is socially  
61 learned and to what extent enduring relationships associated with LMX can enhance the positive  
62 outcomes of leadership. Thus, we aim to answer the following research questions:

63 RQ1. How do positive versus negative styles of leadership and management effect the  
64 satisfaction and turnover intention of kitchen employees?

65 RQ2. What are the factors within a kitchen environment and culture that impact employees’  
66 satisfaction and turnover intentions?

67 To answer these RQs, we deploy convergent parallel mixed methods; combining  
68 quantitative (questionnaire) (RQ1) *and* qualitative (interview) methods (RQ2) to achieve more  
69 comprehensive insight into leadership styles and the overall working environment under  
70 investigation. Combined, these data sources provide comprehensive yet nuanced insight into how  
71 leadership styles and working environments impact employees’ turnover intentions within  
72 commercial kitchens. Consistent with SLT (Bandura & Hall, 2018), the convergent nature of this  
73 approach allows us “to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic” (Morse, 1991,  
74 p.122), offering a wide-ranging response to our research aim cognizant of the limited extant  
75 empirical basis.

## 76 **2. Literature Review**

### 77 ***2.1. Kitchen culture***

78 Commercial kitchens traditionally possess a vertical hierarchal structure, with strict rules and  
79 enforced discipline employed to monitor employees and ensure food quality (Giousmpasoglou et  
80 al., 2018; Lortie et al., 2023; Wellton et al., 2019). Academic literature considers this a stressful  
81 and uncomfortable working environment, underpinned by noise, raised voices, and high  
82 temperatures (Tongchaiprasit. & Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2016; Wellton et al., 2019), and  
83 characterized by heavy workloads, unsociable hours, time pressures, and psychological demands  
84 (Ariza-Montes, 2018; Ko, 2012). As such, food service hospitality is demanding, often associated  
85 with overwork, stress, and limited appreciation (Kang et al., 2010). Further, many head chefs  
86 within commercial kitchens have little desire (nor, indeed, the necessary training) to adequately

87 and effectively negotiate their newfound supervisory and/or managerial responsibilities as many  
88 continue to primarily value menu creation and cooking (Wellton et al., 2019).

89 Further, some celebrity head chefs have normalized a disregard for subordinates,  
90 romanticizing the harassment of kitchen staff (Meiser & Pantumsinchai, 2022). Commercial  
91 kitchens are often isolated, separated, and hidden spaces, allowing abuse to manifest itself behind  
92 closed doors, prompting scholars to describe kitchens as having an extreme culture of abuse  
93 (Burrow et al., 2015; 2022). This often punitive working environment is increasingly associated  
94 with bullying, mistreatment, and violence (Suhairom et al., 2019), disproportionately aimed at  
95 female and junior members of staff (Albors-Garrigos et al., 2020; Meiser & Pantumshinchai,  
96 2022). Unsurprisingly, Signal (2014) finds that chefs were significantly more likely to display  
97 verbal aggression and more hostile than the general population. Thus, Gill and Burrow (2018)  
98 discuss how kitchens are sustained by a combination of managerial threats and employee anxiety,  
99 with a culture of fear forcing workers to conform.

100 Accordingly, kitchen staff are often pushed to compete with one another to avoid  
101 punishment (Ariza-Montes, 2018). Bullying and harassment becomes part of the journey for  
102 younger members of staff who subsequently normalize such practices (Giousmpasoglou et al.,  
103 2022; Meiser & Pantumsinchai, 2022). Literature discusses how chefs romanticize personal abuse  
104 directed at themselves to build character, portray mental strength, demonstrate an ability to endure  
105 harsh environments, and work under pressure (Burrow et al., 2015; 2024), distinguishing  
106 themselves from colleagues perceived as emotionally or physically weak (Burrow et al., 2024).

107 Accordingly, and unsurprisingly, commercial kitchens are associated with burnout,  
108 turnover, and counter-productive misbehaviors as defence mechanisms against bullying and abuse  
109 (Kim et al., 2021; Yousaf et al., 2018). The industry's apparent disregard for kitchen staff is

110 surprising as hospitality staff and their expertise are one of the few sources of competitive  
111 advantage (Ariza-Montes, 2018) so retaining and satisfying these staff should be a key corporate  
112 objective. Recognizing this, academic literature has called for greater HR intervention  
113 (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2018; Wellton et al., 2019) and more supportive and positive working  
114 environments therein (Ariza-Montes, 2018; Kang et al., 2010). Yet, to the best of our knowledge  
115 no study has explored different leadership styles and the potential they have for improving kitchen  
116 culture and working conditions. Thus, by providing evidence for best practice leadership in a  
117 kitchen context, this study can provide greater underlying clarity in the hope of stimulating  
118 effective HR reform within the hospitality industry.

## 119 **2.2. Social learning theory (SLT)**

120 Social learning theory emphasizes relationships between observations and learning processes.  
121 Bandura and Hall (2018) suggest that observing the behaviors of others (and understanding the  
122 consequences of such behaviors) can encourage individuals to emulate them in similar  
123 circumstances. SLT, therefore, contends that an individual's behaviors are influenced by  
124 knowledge accrued through observation of the external world and interactions therein (Tang,  
125 2014). Thus, all behaviors are interlinked with our interactions and any resultant actions or events  
126 occurring thereafter. 'Reinforcement' is therefore core to SLT; an individual is more likely to adopt  
127 an observed behavior they perceive as being *rewarded* or positively reinforced. Likewise,  
128 penalized behaviors (negatively reinforced) are less likely to be imitated (Purwanto et al., 2021).

129 Given the intimate environments prevalent across hospitality, prior studies contend that  
130 employees observe and imitate their supervisors' negative behaviors via social learning, which  
131 may explain why undesirable, uncivil behavior continues to permeate the industry (Alexander et  
132 al., 2012). Simply, if behaviors typically considered harmful are rewarded with power, respect,

133 and formal leadership roles, the normalization of such behaviors helps to maintain ‘business as  
134 usual’, echoing SLT’s emphasis on positive reinforcement, even if that positive reinforcement is  
135 associated with rewarding negative traits (Men et al., 2020). This theorization underpins our study,  
136 informing the proposed conceptual model (Figure 1).

### 137 ***2.3. Abusive supervision and bullying***

138 Abusive supervision manifests in organizational settings when individuals holding  
139 leadership positions exploit their authority through ill treatment (Yu et al., 2020). Abusive  
140 supervision is characterized by practices that disturb the personal lives of employees, such as poor  
141 working conditions, low pay, and/or increased workloads with little recognition (Wu et al., 2021).  
142 The environment created by an abusive supervisor drives division, and the dyadic relationship core  
143 to effective leadership cannot, therefore, be maintained (Yu et al., 2020). Further, abusive  
144 supervision increases employee dissatisfaction and typically increases turnover (Tews & Stafford,  
145 2020). Employees who are not the target of abusive supervision may nevertheless exhibit fear  
146 when observing instances of abusive supervision, with this restricting creative participation in  
147 workplace tasks in the hope of remaining ‘below the radar’ (Wu et al., 2021).

148 Though often considered analogous to abusive supervision, bullying is characterized by  
149 greater targeting towards staff perceived as being ‘weaker’ (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2018).  
150 Bullying can involve practical jokes, pranks, violence, and aggression which aims to intimidate  
151 and embarrass (Cooper et al., 2017). Within commercial kitchens, the normalization of bullying  
152 as a socialization technique has been described as a necessary evil capable of improving intra-  
153 group cohesion (Alexander et al., 2012). Scholars have even romanticized bullying as a right of  
154 passage for kitchen staff, contending that those capable of surviving such harsh conditions emerge  
155 stronger and better-respected (Burrow et al., 2024; Meiser & Pantumisinchai, 2022).



156           However, bullying can drive a wedge between employees and supervisors, as the former  
157 favors staying out of sight of the latter (Özkan, 2021). The resultant workplace ostracism disturbs  
158 the integrated dynamics on which the survival of any hospitality organization depends (Zhao et  
159 al., 2021). In kitchen contexts, abusive supervision can also stimulate poor quality service (where  
160 employee effort and commitment are low) as an inherent emotional response to both the abusive  
161 supervisor in question and organizational failings that facilitate such bullying (Tews & Stafford,  
162 2020).

#### 163 ***2.4. Authentic leadership and encouraging creativity***

164           In contrast to abusive supervision, authentic leadership focuses on generating trust and active  
165 participation from subordinates (Deming & Johnson, 2021). Accordingly, an authentic leader is  
166 usually self-aware, trustworthy, and employee-centric; fostering an environment where creativity  
167 is valued (Miao et al., 2018). Per SLT, subordinates are likely to imitate the desired behavior of  
168 their leader (Bandura & Hall, 2018), and authentic leadership emphasizes provoking desired  
169 employee behaviors through positive gestures, facial expressions, and tone, alongside setting a  
170 good example (Karatepe et al., 2020). Authentic leadership ideologically considers the titular  
171 leader as a central organizing structure who, by exhibiting innovative skills and proper conduct,  
172 can provoke desired behaviors in employees (Karatepe et al., 2020).

173           This approach creates confidence between leader and subordinate, providing the latter the  
174 freedom to develop skills autonomously and creatively while contributing to organizational goals  
175 (Lyu et al., 2019). Thus, encouraging creativity is key to authentic leadership, emphasizing the  
176 importance of empowering staff to independently develop innovative ideas (Scott & Bruce, 1994;  
177 Tongchaiprasit & Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2016). Contextually, creative autonomy supported by  
178 authentic leadership should be fostered in commercial kitchens, where value is derived from

179 creativity manifest as new dishes, menus, flavours, storytelling, and innovative approaches to  
180 service (Vu et al., 2024). However leaders therein often act in ways which curtail the creative ideas  
181 of their subordinates, negatively impacting upon both the working environment and the potential  
182 success of the organization in-turn (Kang et al., 2010).

### 183 **2.5. Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory**

184 Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory contends that relationships between *leaders* and  
185 *followers* are dyadic (Buengeler et al., 2021). This suggests that how leaders interact with  
186 subordinates impacts how they work together to achieve organizational objectives. Hence, while  
187 the leader holds the dominant position, followers also play a role in maintaining working  
188 relationships (Chang et al., 2020). LMX can, therefore, be used to evaluate leaders' effect on  
189 employees, organizations, and other stakeholders.

190 LMX is the process through which leaders engage in activities that connect with employees  
191 (Martin et al., 2018), with an 'LMX perspective' centered on how such interpersonal relationships  
192 are built and maintained (Chang et al., 2020). Leaders/supervisors who establish strong  
193 relationships (underpinned by attention, trust, and support) with subordinates can benefit from  
194 employee satisfaction, dedication, enthusiasm, and commitment (Li et al., 2014). However, not all  
195 LMX are positive; leaders typically form two distinct types of relationships with subordinates,  
196 resulting in discrete sub-groups (Lu & Gursoy, 2023). Per LMX, the first (*'in-group members'*)  
197 comprises employees who have established close relationships with leaders within their  
198 organization and benefit from high levels of attention/support. Conversely, the second (*'out-group*  
199 *members'*) includes those with a detached relationship with organizational leaders, characterized  
200 by lower levels of attention/support (Lu & Gursoy, 2023).

201 Teng et al. (2020) contend that employees consider leadership as being ‘high quality’  
202 through two mechanisms: (1)increased interpersonal justice and (2)reduced stress. Each can be  
203 achieved via the absence of negative traits (e.g., misuse of power) or as an outcome of positive  
204 reinforcement techniques enacted by leaders. As such, abusive supervision destroys leader-  
205 employee relationships, disrupting the beneficial outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, dedication,  
206 commitment) desired from effective LMX (Yu et al., 2020). Accordingly, Agarwal (2019)  
207 observed that while LMX plays a positive, mediating role in shaping organizational environments,  
208 abusive supervision does the opposite.

209 Employees facing managerial bullies may either avoid them due to fear (Özkan, 2021) or  
210 engage in behaviors that harm the workplace, straining relationships with colleagues and/or  
211 customers (Wang et al., 2022). Per Balwant (2021), in commercial kitchens, supervising chefs may  
212 exhibit harsh behaviors by ridiculing and embarrassing subordinates/employees, resulting in a  
213 negative relationship between LMX and bullying, mainly affecting workers *and* customers, as  
214 opposed to organizational leaders (Liang & Yeh, 2019). This again highlights the top-down  
215 hierarchical nature of abusive supervision and workplace bullying within commercial hospitality.  
216 Thus:

217 **H1:**Abusive supervision has a direct negative relationship with LMX.

218 **H2:**Bullying has a direct negative relationship with LMX.

219 Conversely, authentic leaders behave in an open, trustworthy manner that enhances  
220 relationships with employees (Deming & Johnson, 2021). Authentic leaders provide adequate  
221 support to subordinates and ultimately lead by example (Karatepe et al., 2020). These leaders are  
222 considered honest and caring, fostering high-quality LMX. Similarly, encouraging subordinates to  
223 approach tasks creatively can foster positive environments, promoting a connection between

224 employees and supervisors. (Miao et al., 2018). Thus, leaders who prioritize creativity,  
225 collaboration, and feedback from subordinates can facilitate a workplace underpinned by  
226 interactions enhanced by positive, high-quality LMX (Powers et al., 2020). Therefore:

227 **H3:**Authentic leadership has a direct positive relationship with LMX.

228 **H4:**Encouragement of creativity has a direct positive relationship with LMX.

## 229 **2.6. Job satisfaction**

230 Job satisfaction refers to the overall attitude an individual holds towards their employment,  
231 underpinned by their daily experience and the perceived benefits and drawbacks associated with  
232 employment (Zhang et al., 2023). Within hospitality, it is crucial to prioritize employee job  
233 satisfaction as success is contingent upon having attentive and accommodating employees who  
234 deliver high-quality service to customers (Zhang et al., 2023).

235 Working conditions within commercial kitchens often determine job satisfaction (Díaz-  
236 Carrión et al., 2020), with managerial initiatives capable of shaping how employees evaluate their  
237 jobs (Dorta-Afonso et al., 2023). Research suggests that employee-supervisor relationships are  
238 crucial to determining job satisfaction (Alegre et al., 2016), with the misuse of power by  
239 organizational leaders found to increase dissatisfaction rates among employees (Buengeler et al.,  
240 2021). Hospitality employees who experience abusive behavior from supervisors feel undervalued,  
241 leading to job dissatisfaction (Pan et al., 2018). Such employees typically experience increased  
242 psychological stress, further reducing job satisfaction (Lee & Hwang, 2021). Employees who face  
243 workplace bullying tend to experience higher levels of stress, which can negatively impact job  
244 performance (Buengeler et al., 2021). Desrumaux et al. (2018) found victims of workplace  
245 bullying are more likely to suffer burnout and experience job dissatisfaction. Thus:

246 **H5:**Abusive supervision has a direct negative relationship with job satisfaction.

247 **H6:**Bullying has a direct negative relationship with job satisfaction.

248 Conversely, Bryan and Vitello-Cicciu (2022) indicate that authentic leadership styles  
249 positively affect job satisfaction. Leaders who encourage and support their employees create  
250 positive, satisfying workplaces (Dorta-Afonso et al., 2023). Such leaders can foster motivation and  
251 empowerment among employees, contributing to higher levels of satisfaction (Du et al., 2022).  
252 Further, employees encouraged to engage in creative approaches to autonomous working are more  
253 likely to experience job satisfaction (Zhang et al., 2023). Thus:

254 **H7:**Authentic leadership has a direct positive relationship with job satisfaction.

255 **H8:**Encouragement of creativity has a direct positive relationship with job satisfaction.

## 256 **2.7. Turnover intention**

257 Turnover intention indicates the likelihood that an employee may voluntarily leave their job  
258 soon. It does not necessarily mean they *will* leave employment but is instead concerned with  
259 whether they have thought about doing so (Wang et al., 2020). Significant costs are involved when  
260 recruiting and training new employees (Park & Min, 2020), but turnover can also have indirect  
261 outcomes for remaining employees, such as declining performance, attitudes, and motivation (Han,  
262 2020). Therefore, it is strategically advantageous for organizations to limit employee turnover  
263 intentions, particularly within hospitality, where turnover rates are generally higher than in other  
264 sectors (Raza et al., 2021).

265 Chen and Wang (2019) find that abusive supervision and incivility increase stress and  
266 turnover intentions for kitchen employees. When employees experience abusive supervisory  
267 behaviors, they may develop negative perceptions of themselves and their working environment,  
268 which can encourage them to consider leaving the organization (Bani-Melhem et al., 2021).  
269 Similarly, Samnani (2021) found that individuals exposed to workplace bullying reported

270 increased intentions to quit. Accordingly, hospitality industry studies suggest bullying directly  
271 impacts employee turnover intentions (Tews & Stafford, 2020). Therefore:

272 **H9:**Abusive supervision has a direct positive relationship with turnover intention.

273 **H10:**Bullying has a direct positive relationship with turnover intention.

274 Effective leadership is one of the most significant factors stimulating commitment to an  
275 employer (Teng et al., 2020). Literature suggests that authentic leadership styles improve retention  
276 rates, decreasing turnover intentions (Bryan & Vitello-Cicciu, 2022). Employees are motivated by  
277 leaders who encourage and promote creativity and feel positively challenged by their jobs, again  
278 reducing turnover intentions (Teng et al., 2020). Leaders who inspire, empower, and intellectually  
279 stimulate employees face lower turnover rates (Lee & Hwang, 2021). This is strengthened when  
280 leader-employee relationships are better regulated (Haggard & Park, 2018), as positive working  
281 relationships help employees feel supported, reducing turnover (Amankwaa et al., 2022). Studies  
282 demonstrate that job satisfaction reduces turnover intentions (Du et al., 2022), with Park and Min  
283 (2020) contending that job satisfaction is the strongest factor in reducing turnover among  
284 hospitality industry employees. Therefore:

285 **H11:**Authentic leadership has a direct negative relationship with turnover intention.

286 **H12:** Leaders ' encouragement of creativity has a direct negative relationship with turnover  
287 intention.

288 **H13:**LMX has a direct negative relationship with turnover intention.

289 **H14:**Job satisfaction has a direct negative relationship with turnover intention.

## 290 **2.8. Mediating role of LMX**

291 LMX measures the extent to which a leader positively connects with and provides supportive  
292 resources to subordinates (Martin et al., 2018). Thus, in-line with SLT, through the efforts made

293 by a manager, employees learn positive behaviours and may seek to emulate them (Bandura &  
294 Hall, 2018) meaning an active and observable managerial presence is capable of stimulating  
295 positive organizational outcomes (Sluss & Thompson, 2012). Close connections and relationships  
296 between employees and supervisors can amplify positive, effective leadership styles as employees  
297 learn the benefits and rewards associated with such practices (Luo et al., 2016). This support is  
298 often reciprocated by employees who may choose to stay with an organization irrespective of other  
299 perceived drawbacks (Du et al., 2022). Employee turnover intention decreases when leaders  
300 promote growth through personal encouragement (Estiri et al., 2018).

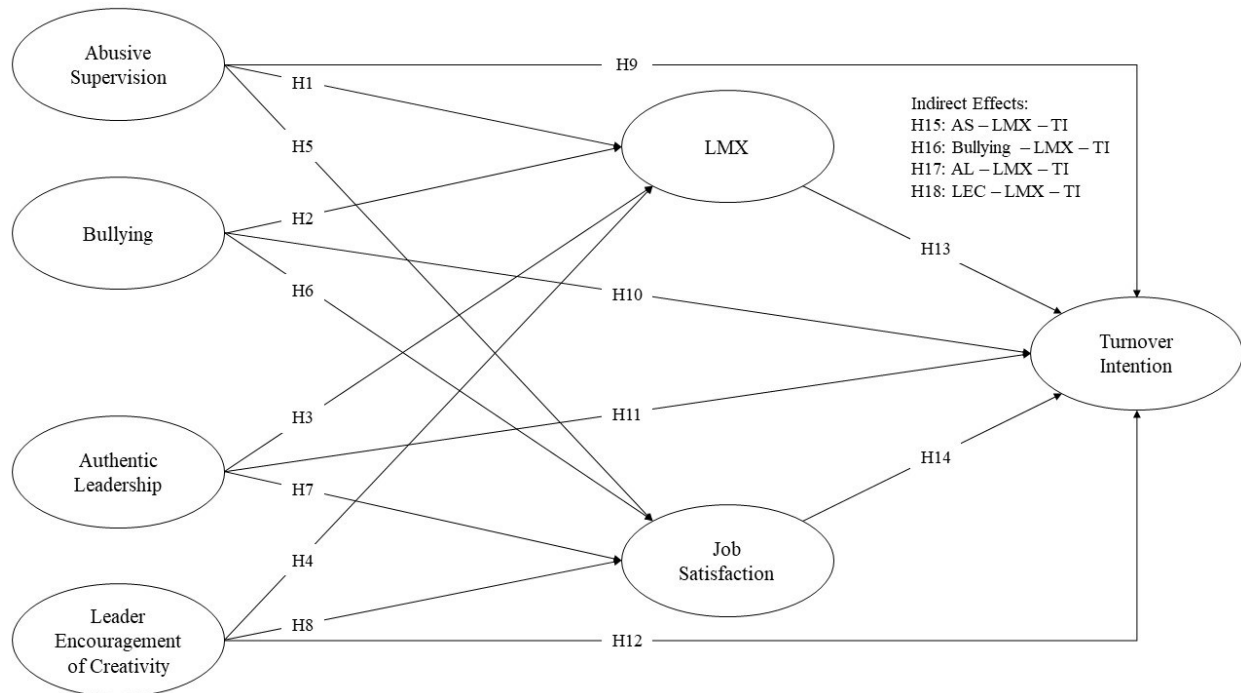
301 LMX also reduces power distance within such hierarchical relationships (Li et al., 2014),  
302 providing perceived professional and psychological safety (Estiri et al., 2018). Employees may  
303 socially learn that they have support from key management figures and thus may be able to  
304 overcome bullying by other managers, resulting in decreased turnover intentions (Du et al., 2022).  
305 Accordingly, Wu et al. (2021) found that exploitative leadership styles damage LMX as it  
306 undermines the trust associated with the positive social learning process, resulting in negative  
307 organizational outcomes. However, Wu et al. (2021) also contend that LMX can mitigate the  
308 detrimental impacts of abusive supervision. Therefore, as LMX amplifies the support offered by  
309 managers, we propose:

310 **H15:**LMX mediates the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intention.

311 **H16:**LMX mediates the relationship between bullying and turnover intention.

312 **H17:**LMX mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and turnover intention.

313 **H18:**LMX mediates the relationship between encouragement of creativity and turnover  
314 intention.



315  
316 **Figure1: Conceptual Model**

317

318 **3. Methods**

319 Convergent parallel mixed methods were adopted. This amalgamation of quantitative and  
 320 qualitative methods offers subtle insight into the phenomena under consideration as “the researcher  
 321 collects and analyses both quantitative and qualitative data during the same phase of the research  
 322 process...then merges the results into an overall interpretation” (Creswell & Clark, 2017, p.77).  
 323 This strategy was suitable herein as it enabled us to test how positive and negative leadership styles  
 324 affect employee satisfaction and turnover intentions through quantitative surveys (RQ1), while  
 325 also allowing us to explore the factors present within commercial kitchens that can shape employee  
 326 satisfaction and turnover intentions in their own words through qualitative interviews (RQ2).

327 **3.1. Study 1 (Quantitative): Conceptual model testing**

328 **3.1.1. Data collection**



329 Following internal Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, a survey was created using  
330 Qualtrics and distributed using Amazon Mechanical Turk in 2022, as utilized successfully across  
331 extant hospitality research. Such online third-party panels are extensively used in hospitality  
332 research to gather self-reported data from employees or consumers with diverse demographic  
333 backgrounds and geographical locations (Farmaki et al., 2022). Using non-probability sampling,  
334 the study included individuals who were 18+ and had worked in a commercial kitchen (restaurant,  
335 catering, cafe, etc.) in the USA for at least 6 months. Males and females were eligible to contribute  
336 to the research, with participation voluntary throughout. *The following special populations were*  
337 *not able to participate: (1)Adults unable to consent, (2)Pregnant women, and (3)Prisoners.* There  
338 were two unique attention check questions placed therein. Completed questionnaires were  
339 screened to ensure data quality; questionnaires failing attention check(s) were discarded. The final  
340 dataset included 832 responses (Characteristics: Table 1).

341 **Table1: Demographic Profile (Study 1)**  
342

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	581	69.8
Female	251	30.2
Total	832	100
Age		
18-19		
20-29	1	0.1
30-39	336	40.4
40-49	352	42.3
50-59	39	4.7
60-69	11	1.3
Total	832	100
Education		
High School/GED	72	8.6
Some College	126	15.1
2-year college degree	79	9.5
4-year college degree	382	45.9
Master's degree	163	19.6
Doctoral degree	5	0.6

	Frequency	Percentage
Professional degree	4	0.5
Total	832	100
Income		
<\$20,000	112	13.5
\$20,000-\$29,999	172	20.7
\$30,000-\$39,999	144	17.3
\$40,000-\$49,999	138	16.6
\$50,000-\$59,999	97	11.7
\$60,000-\$69,999	49	5.9
\$70,000-\$79,999	53	6.4
\$80,000-\$89,999	23	2.8
\$90,000+	44	5.3
Total	832	100
Race		
Black/African American	92	11.1
Asian	228	27.4
Native American	29	3.5
White/Caucasian	407	48.9
Hispanic	64	7.7
Other	12	1.4
Total	832	100

343

344

345 *3.1.2. Measures*

346 All items deployed were adapted from extant literature. Abusive supervision was measured

347 via five items borrowed from Tepper (2000). The authentic leadership measure (8 items) was

348 adapted from Xu et al. (2017). Leader encouragement of creativity (5 items) was adapted from

349 Scott and Bruce (1994). LMX was measured via seven items borrowed from Graen and Uhi-Bien

350 (1995). Job satisfaction was measured with three items adapted from Fu and Deshpande (2014).

351 Bullying (four sub-scales: psychological, sexual, verbal, and devaluing) was measured with 21

352 items borrowed from Alexander et al. (2012). Turnover intention (4 items) was borrowed from Fu

353 and Deshpande (2014).

354 *3.1.3. Analytical approach*

355 Partial Least Squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to test the  
356 conceptual model. Wetzels et al. (2009, p.190) contend, “model complexity does not pose as severe  
357 a restriction to PLS path-modeling as to covariance-based SEM since PLS path-modeling at any  
358 moment only estimates a subset of parameters”. It is thus appropriate for formative, reflective, and  
359 higher-order models (Hair et al., 2021) and can deal with data characterized by normal *and* non-  
360 normal distributional properties. Our model is complex, non-normal (skewness and/or kurtosis >  
361 /+ 3), and comprised of reflective and higher-order constructs. SmartPLS4.0 was used to test the  
362 conceptual model; nonparametric bootstrapping was examined with 833 cases, with 5000  
363 subsamples randomly generated.

## 364 **3.2. Quantitative Results and Discussion**

### 365 *3.2.1. Measurement model*

366 The measurement model was calculated by analyzing construct reliability, convergent  
367 validity, and discriminant validity for first-order reflective variables (Hair et al., 2021). Reliability  
368 of first-order constructs was assessed using composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha$ ).  
369 CR and  $\alpha$  exceeded 0.70, confirming reliability (Table 2). We also evaluated convergent and  
370 discriminant validity for first-order constructs (Taheri et al., 2020). First, square roots of average  
371 variance extracted (AVE) for all first-order scales surpass all other cross-correlations for the PLS  
372 model (Table 3). Second, all AVE values surpass 0.50. Third, all factor loadings were >0.60, with  
373 significant *t*. Finally, following Henseler et al. (2015), heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlation  
374 (HTMT) was applied. HTMT values for first-order constructs were <0.85 (0.29-0.61), verifying  
375 discriminant validity. Higher-order constructs were confirmed via weights of first-order  
376 constructs, significance of weights, and multicollinearity (Becker et al., 2012) (Table 2). Weights  
377 of underlying dimensions to their respective higher-order constructs were significant, and all

378 variance inflation factors (VIF) were <5 (Hair et al., 2021). There is no evidence of  
 379 multicollinearity. First-order constructs (psychological, sexual, verbal, devaluing) of the higher-  
 380 order bullying construct are uncorrelated. The measurement model was established.

381 **Table2: Measurement Model Assessment**  
 382

Construct/Items	Loading <sup>***</sup>	Weights <sup>***</sup>
<b>Abusive supervision</b> (CR=0.81;α=0.78;AVE=0.52)		
I cannot remember him/her ever using this behavior with me	0.72	
He/she very seldom uses this behavior with me	0.77	
He/she occasionally uses this behavior with me	0.78	
He/she uses this behavior moderately often with me	0.82	
He/she uses this behavior very often with me	0.80	
<b>Authentic leadership</b> (CR=0.80;α=0.82;AVE=0.51)		
Ridicules me	0.81	
Tells me my thoughts/feelings are stupid	0.78	
Gives me the silent treatment	0.77	
Puts me down in front of others	0.79	
Invades my privacy	0.77	
Reminds me of my past mistakes and failures	0.78	
Does give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort	0.76	
Blames me to save himself/herself embarrassment	0.72	
<b>Leader encouragement of creativity</b> (CR=0.81;α=0.79;AVE=d0.51)		
Breaks promises he/she makes	0.73	
Expresses anger at me when he/she is mad for another reason	0.77	
Makes negative comments about me to others	0.78	
Is rude to me	0.82	
Does not allow me to interact with my co-workers	0.77	
<b>LMX</b> (CR=0.77;α=0.80;AVE=0.54)		
Do you know where you stand with your boss...do you usually know how satisfied your boss is with what you do?	0.72	
How well does your boss understand your job problems and needs?	0.77	
How well does your boss recognize your potential?	0.76	
Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/her position, what are the chances that your boss would use his/her power to help you solve problems in your work?	0.77	
Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your boss has, what are the chances that he/she would “bail you out,” at his/her expense?	0.76	
I have enough confidence in my boss that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so?	0.77	

How would you characterize your working relationship with your boss?	0.85	
<b>Bullying: Higher-order</b>		
<b>Psychological: First-order</b> (CR=0.80; $\alpha$ =0.80; AVE=0.51;VIF=2.35)		0.43
Social exclusion from co-workers or work group activities	0.77	
Hint or signals from others that you should quit	0.70	
Physical abuse/threats of physical abuse	0.71	
Silence or hostility as a response to your questions or attempts at conversations	0.72	
Neglect of your opinions/views	0.74	
'Funny' surprises	0.74	
Devaluing of your 'rights' and opinions with reference to your age	0.71	
Exploitation at work, such as private errands	0.74	
Reactions from others because you work too hard	0.77	0.39
<b>Sexual: First-order</b> (CR=0.78; $\alpha$ =0.81;AVE=0.55;VIF=2.21)		
Unwanted sexual advances	0.78	
Unwanted sexual attention	0.76	
Offending telephone calls/written messages	0.75	
Devaluing of your 'rights' and opinions with reference to your gender	0.81	
<b>Devaluing: First-order</b> (CR=0.80; $\alpha$ =0.80;AVE=0.53;VIF=3.11)		0.32
Ordered to do work below your pay grade	0.77	
Deprived of responsibility or work tasks	0.79	
Devaluing of your work and efforts	0.81	
<b>Verbal: First-order</b> (CR=0.77; $\alpha$ =0.79;AVE=0.53;VIF=3.31)		0.27
Ridicule/insulting/teasing	0.77	
Gossip/rumors about you	0.79	
Repeated offensive remarks about you/your private life	0.77	
Verbal abuse	0.78	
Repeated reminders about your blunders	0.80	
<b>Job satisfaction</b> (CR=0.82; $\alpha$ =0.80;AVE=0.56)		
I frequently think about quitting this job	0.76	
I am satisfied with the activities I perform every day	0.77	
Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job.	0.78	
<b>Turnover intention</b> (CR=0.78; $\alpha$ =0.81;AVE=0.52)		
How likely is it that you will actively search for another job with a different company in the next year?	0.81	
How likely is it you will actively search for another job within the next year?	0.77	
If you happened to learn that a good job was open in another company, how likely is it that you would actively pursue it	0.78	
How likely is it that you will be with this workplace five years from now?	0.73	

383 **Note:**\*\*\*= $p < 0.001$

384  
385  
386

**Table3: Correlation Matrix**

	AS	AL	LEC	JS	TI	PB	SB	VB	DB	LMX
AS	<b>0.72</b>									
AL	0.34	<b>0.71</b>								
LEC	0.31	0.34	<b>0.71</b>							
JS	0.53	0.51	0.43	<b>0.73</b>						
TI	0.61	0.23	0.51	0.54	<b>0.71</b>					
PB	0.03	0.43	0.57	0.60	0.52	<b>0.74</b>				
SB	0.23	0.51	0.50	0.44	0.41	0.37	<b>0.72</b>			
VB	0.11	0.43	0.46	0.53	0.54	0.33	0.45	<b>0.72</b>		
DB	0.53	0.47	0.60	0.08	0.38	0.47	0.51	0.32	<b>0.74</b>	
LMX	0.54	0.60	0.43	0.11	0.51	0.21	0.37	0.11	0.56	<b>0.72</b>

387 **Note:**Abusive supervision(AS);Authentic leadership(AL);Leader encouragement of  
388 creativity(LEC);Job satisfaction(JS);Turnover intention(TI);Psychological bullying(PB); Sexual  
389 bullying (SB);Verbal bullying(VB);Devaluing bullying(DB).**Bolded** (diagonal) are square root of  
390 AVE.

391

392 *3.2.2. Structural model: Key findings*

393 Before assessing hypothesized relationships, effect sizes ( $f^2$ ), standardized root mean square  
394 residual (SRMR), and normed fit index (NFI) were evaluated. SRMR was 0.061, below the  
395 suggested value (SRMR<0.08). NFI was acceptable (0.92) (NFI>0.90) (Henseler et al., 2016).  
396 Cohen’s  $f^2$  indicates 0.01 for small, 0.06 for medium, and 0.14 for large effects within PLS-SEM  
397 (Khalilzadeh & Tasci, 2017). Direct paths indicate medium or large effects. The model explains  
398 28% (LMX), 34% (job satisfaction), and 41% (turnover intention).

399 Abusive supervision (H1: $\beta$ =-0.21; $t$ -value=7.23; $p$ <0.001) and bullying (H2: $\beta$ =-0.28; $t$ -  
400 value=7.98; $p$ <0.001) negatively influence LMX. Authentic leadership (H3: $\beta$ =0.35; $t$ -  
401 value=12.87; $p$ <0.001) and leader encouragement of creativity (H4: $\beta$ =0.32; $t$ -  
402 value=17.04; $p$ <0.001) positively influence LMX. Abusive supervision (H5: $\beta$ =-0.24; $t$ -  
403 value=7.01; $p$ <0.001) and bullying (H6: $\beta$ =-0.21; $t$ -value=6.90; $p$ <0.001) negatively influence job  
404 satisfaction. Authentic leadership (H7: $\beta$ =0.31; $t$ -value=12.11; $p$ <0.001) and leader encouragement  
405 of creativity (H8: $\beta$ =0.26; $t$ -value=10.19; $p$ <0.001) positively influence job satisfaction. Abusive

406 supervision (H9: $\beta=0.33$ ;  $t$ -value=12.06;  $p<0.001$ ) and bullying (H10: $\beta=0.22$ ;  $t$ -  
407 value=9.32;  $p<0.001$ ) positively influence turnover intention. Authentic leadership (H11: $\beta=0.41$ ;  $t$ -  
408 value=19.11;  $p<0.001$ ) and leader encouragement of creativity (H12: $\beta=-0.32$ ;  $t$ -  
409 value=20.01;  $p<0.001$ ) negatively influence turnover intention. LMX (H13: $\beta=-0.32$ ;  $t$ -  
410 value=20.01;  $p<0.001$ ) has a direct negative influence on turnover intention. Finally, job  
411 satisfaction (H14: $\beta=-0.27$ ;  $t$ -value=6.11;  $p<0.001$ ) also negatively influenced turnover intention.

### 412 3.2.3. Indirect effects

413 Bootstrapping analysis was deployed to identify the significance of indirect effects, drawing  
414 from  $t$ -values and confidence intervals (CI). Results indicate abusive supervision indirectly  
415 influences turnover intention through LMX (indirect effect=0.27;  $t$ -value=11.51;  $p<0.001$ ;  
416 CI=[0.23,0.35]). As the direct effect is significant, LMX mediates the relationship between abusive  
417 supervision and turnover intentions (confirming **H15**).

418 Findings also indicate bullying indirectly influences turnover intention through LMX  
419 (indirect effect=0.22;  $t$ -value=8.27;  $p<0.001$ ; CI=[0.18,0.30]). Since the direct effect is significant,  
420 LMX mediates the relationship between bullying and turnover intention (confirming **H16**).  
421 However, findings indicate authentic leadership does not indirectly influence turnover intention  
422 through LMX (indirect effect=0.07;  $t$ -value=1.85; *non-significant*). Thus, **H17** was rejected.  
423 Similarly, authentic leadership did not indirectly influence turnover intention via LMX (indirect  
424 effect=0.08;  $t$ -value=1.12; *non-significant*), rejecting **H18**.

### 425 3.2.4. Quantitative results discussion

426 Hospitality literature suggests leadership, positive *or* negative, impacts employee perceptions  
427 of LMX and job satisfaction (Yu et al., 2020). Findings herein indicate negative forms of  
428 leadership, including abusive supervision and bullying, have a direct negative relationship with

429 commercial kitchen employees' perceptions of LMX, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions.  
430 Following SLT, abusive supervision challenges the basic premise of LMX, which is to foster  
431 interpersonal relationships through mutually beneficial exchanges within the organization (Chang  
432 et al., 2020). This study draws upon a Western context to extend extant research (Chen & Wang,  
433 2019) in demonstrating that workplace incivilities (abusive supervision, bullying) stimulate  
434 dissatisfaction and turnover. Devaluing and verbal forms of bullying are more common in culinary  
435 hospitality than in other service-based environments (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2018), but our  
436 findings also note the significant negative effect of psychological and sexual bullying on employee  
437 outcomes (satisfaction, turnover intentions).

438         Thus, while literature primarily focuses on negative aspects of leadership and workplace  
439 incivility, two positive leadership-related constructs herein (authentic leadership; and  
440 encouragement of creativity) stimulated positive relationships with commercial kitchen  
441 employees' perceptions of LMX, job satisfaction, and lower turnover intentions. This is consistent  
442 with LMX theory, confirming the relevance of its foundational role in shaping this study. Findings  
443 also support SLT by demonstrating that support from leaders has an influence on producing  
444 desirable outcomes within commercial kitchens (Tang, 2014), including higher LMX and job  
445 satisfaction. Further, findings confirm inverse relationships between LMX and job satisfaction and  
446 turnover intentions (Park & Min, 2020).

447         This study also explored the mediating impact of LMX on relationships between the four  
448 leadership-related antecedents and turnover intentions. Interestingly, these relationships were only  
449 supported by two negative leadership constructs (abusive supervision; and bullying). Hence, LMX  
450 mediated the relationships between abusive leadership, bullying, and turnover intentions among  
451 kitchen employees. This is consistent with the idea that, although detrimental in isolation, a breach



452 of the dyadic contract between supervisor and employee intensifies the negative outcomes of  
453 abusive supervision and bullying.

454 Curiously, mediating relationships were not supported for the positive leadership-related  
455 constructs, and LMX did not mediate the relationships between authentic leadership,  
456 encouragement of creativity, and turnover intentions. Chen and Wu (2017) concluded that LMX  
457 mediated the relationship between transformational leadership (another desirable form of  
458 leadership) and turnover intentions among Taiwanese hotel employees. However, this was not the  
459 case among our commercial kitchen employees in the US. Although positive and negative  
460 supervisor and leader behaviors are established antecedents of hospitality industry turnover  
461 intentions (Park & Min, 2020), LMX did not strengthen relationships between positive behaviors  
462 and turnover intentions. This contradicts the basic principle of LMX, where the exchange  
463 relationship amplifies the positive efforts of a supervisor (Du et al., 2022). Alas, as Collins (2010)  
464 argues, the precise nature of the relationship of LMX with turnover intent remains “equivocal”  
465 (p.737).

#### 466 **4. Study 2 (Qualitative) Employee narratives**

467

##### 468 **4.1. Methods**

###### 469 *4.1.1. Sample and procedures*

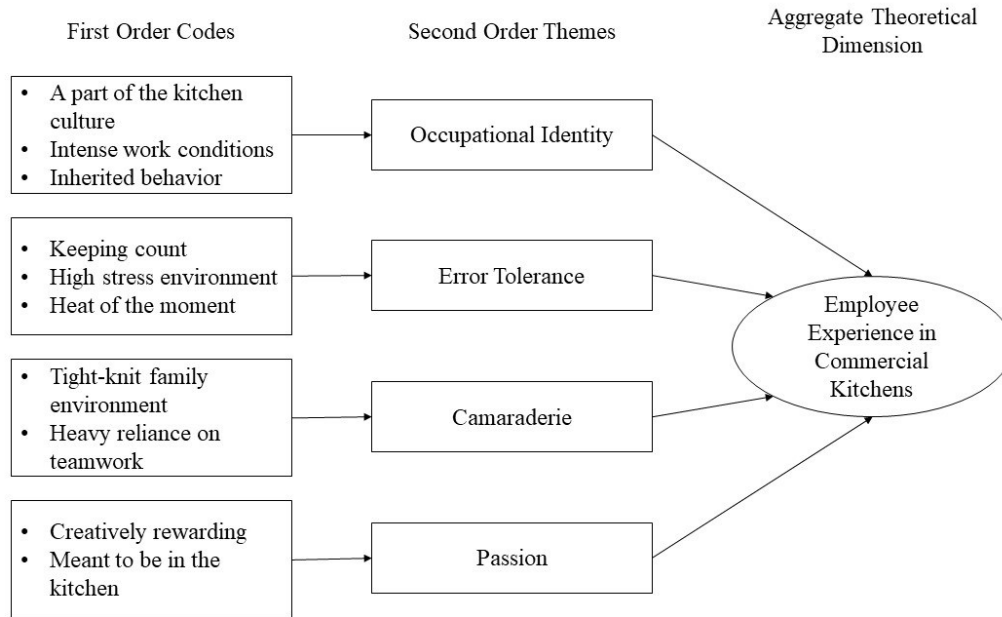
470 Qualitative data were collected in 2023 via interviews with commercial kitchen employees  
471 to gain a deeper perspective of their experiences working therein. A purposive sample was  
472 recruited using a snowball technique via industry connections. Participants employed in  
473 commercial kitchens (restaurants, catering, cafes, etc.) in the U.S. for at least six months were  
474 recruited to allow for adequate tenure. Males and females were eligible to participate. The  
475 following special populations were not able to participate: (1)Adults unable to consent,

476 (2)Pregnant women, and (3)Prisoners. Overall, 20 participants contributed to the qualitative phase;  
477 all were 18+ (24-55 years old); 12 participants identified as female, and 8 were male.

478 Interviews were semi-structured, “enabling flexible probing that facilitated deeper  
479 exploration of concepts/issues raised by participants” (Herington et al., 2013, p.70). This facilitated  
480 rich qualitative responses (Manoharan et al., 2014). Open-ended questions relating to culture in  
481 commercial kitchens were included. Follow-up questions were added regarding workplace  
482 satisfaction, turnover intentions, and social learning processes to address RQ2. After gaining  
483 consent from participants, each was encouraged to illustrate responses with examples from their  
484 workplace. Each interview was recorded and transcribed by the researchers for analysis verbatim.  
485 Interviewers took notes during interviews to validate the transcribed data.

486 Qualitative data were coded using Gioia et al.’s (2013) approach, as it is a “holistic  
487 approach to inductive concept development” (p.17). This method is used across hospitality  
488 research for theoretical development from inductive research while maintaining qualitative rigor  
489 (Taheri et al., 2020). As Gioia et al. (2013) recommend, analysis commenced with first-order  
490 coding, focusing on informant-centric items, including quotes such as, “*If it’s just one mistake I*  
491 *made they’re very quick to forgive and forget.*” This process prioritized individual participant  
492 experiences (Taheri et al., 2021).

493 Next, first-order codes were organized into second-order theory-centric themes. This axial  
494 coding process grouped related first-order codes into sub-categories nested within broader themes.  
495 For example, the quote from the previous step was part of the “*error tolerance*” second-order code.  
496 The data analysis process was non-linear to facilitate constant comparative analysis to  
497 systematically uncover similarities and differences in the qualitative data. **Figure 2** demonstrates  
498 the coding framework.



499  
500 **Figure2: Qualitative Data Structure**

501 **4.2. Results and Discussion**

502 As outlined in **Figure 2**, four themes specific to employee experiences within commercial kitchens  
503 emerged from the qualitative study: abuse under stress; error tolerance; camaraderie; and passion  
504 for the job.

505 **4.2.1. Abuse under stress**

506 Research acknowledges that abusive supervision and bullying remain an unfortunate by-product  
507 of the intense environment that characterizes commercial kitchen culture (Alexander et al., 2012;  
508 Giousmpasoglou et al., 2018). Equally, there is consensus among participants that the excessive  
509 workload of the commercial kitchen puts pressure on employees of all levels, with bullying  
510 considered a normal practice, unlike in other workplaces. Therefore, only employees who are  
511 passionate about their work can endure the harsh conditions underpinned by abuse from managers  
512 and colleagues:

513           *“If this isn’t your passion in your life, then you’re in the wrong place because it’s a*  
514           *really hard place to work. If this is your passion, go for it. If not, it’ll be complete hell*  
515           *for somebody who doesn’t enjoy cooking.”(N2-F-25)*

516 Our findings emphasize this, suggesting that contextual factors and conditions core to culinary  
517 hospitality environments in stimulating abusive behaviors, with a consensus that aspiring kitchen  
518 workers must accept the hostile, competitive, and often adversarial approach to leadership and  
519 interpersonal relationships therein (Moreo et al., 2023). Yet some go beyond simply encouraging  
520 others to accept abusive behavior as an industry norm, instead making excuses for their role in  
521 maintaining a hostile environment. Here, emphasis is placed on contending that, within  
522 commercial kitchens, abusive behavior should be considered the inevitable outcome of service-  
523 related stress, particularly during busy periods:

524           *“Somewhere along the way, there has been a cultural backlash against this whole*  
525           *tough, mean, chef thing...no one wants to be that guy anymore. But when push-comes-*  
526           *to-shove...a really stressful situation...that’s not necessarily what happens.”(N5-M-*  
527           *35)*

528 Thus, while participants were reluctant to go so far as to consider yelling and abuse as positive  
529 behaviors (Alexander et al., 2012), many nevertheless felt it was something everyone accepted as  
530 they had socially learned that such behavior was inevitable in the high-pressure commercial  
531 kitchen context.

#### 532 4.2.2. *Error tolerance*

533           Weinzimmer and Esken (2017, p.5) introduced error tolerance, defining it as “the conditions  
534 that exist within an organization that allows organizational members to take risks, pursue  
535 innovative solutions, and develop superior knowledge without fear of repercussions for making

536 mistakes.” A shared understanding of error tolerance means all employees hold common  
537 perceptions regarding attitudes to *and* acceptability of mistakes (Wang et al., 2020). Participants  
538 indicated that during service, low error tolerance can reinforce abusive behaviors:

539 *“It’s typically constructive criticism if done after service. But if it’s during service, it*  
540 *won’t be so constructive, just snippy and unpleasant”(N8-M-26).*

541 Accordingly, our findings echo extant research which contends that when employees make errors,  
542 they feel psychologically vulnerable (Wang et al., 2022). Some raised concerns surrounding the  
543 extent to which mistakes were recorded by supervisors, fearing repeated mistakes could lead to  
544 dismissal, irrespective of stress experienced during service:

545 *“If you mess up down the line with something else your leaks might come up. Even if*  
546 *you don’t repeat the same mistake...It’s like there’s a tally. There can be four*  
547 *completely unrelated mistakes, but someone knows there are four of them.”(N3-F-36)*  
548 *“...You’re only as good as your last service.”(N18-M-49)*

549 While participants indicated there was a degree of error tolerance in their working environment,  
550 many contended that (relative to the high-intensity setting) this is low, with even small mistakes  
551 likely to be remembered by supervisors for later chastisement. This can have organizational  
552 drawbacks as higher error tolerance encourages creativity and more positive employee attitudes  
553 toward failure situations without fear of punishment.

#### 554 4.2.3. *Camaraderie*

555 Despite widespread discussion of abuse and error intolerance amongst participants, when  
556 asked about intentions to leave, most raised the familial nature of working within intense, high-  
557 pressure hospitality settings and how this reduced leaving intentions:

558 *“It’s a tight-knit family. And that’s kind of what keeps me emotionally*  
559 *invested...making good friends along the way.”(N15-F-27)*

560 Robinson et al. (2014) describe such feelings as ‘worker rhetoric,’ whereby hospitality workers  
561 embrace familial commitment and camaraderie but that such feelings are often forlorn and self-  
562 defeating due to challenging working conditions:

563 *“There’s camaraderie in the kitchen...when you’re working side-by-side with*  
564 *somebody for 10-hours a day, you become friends...they keep you going.”(N6-F-55)*

565 Thus, friendship, family, and a sense of duty can be found in challenging hospitality environments  
566 where employees support each other with the emotional strain of the job (Robinson et al., 2014).

#### 567 4.2.4. *Passion*

568 When provided with the opportunity to speak openly about the kitchen working environment  
569 and their role therein, participants repeatedly expressed the value they placed on the work itself:

570 *“A lot of chefs work for the rush. It’s an adrenaline rush to stand there and just keep*  
571 *cooking.”(N5-M-35)*

572 *“It’s rewarding when you do things right...You were on the line and you kill it.”(N14-*  
573 *F-26)*

574 Participants also expressed how their passion meant they were unable to leave their job:

575 *“It’s a creative outlet. It’s an I can do this better and harder and longer than you*  
576 *outlet...It’s a place to get your crazy out. There are so many insane people in kitchens.*  
577 *We’re a certain ilk...We need speed...the heat...the challenge...and to produce*  
578 *beautiful food.”(N7-F-48)*

579 Previous studies (McGinley et al., 2020) show passion for work can increase organizational  
580 commitment and reduce turnover intention. Yet, participants herein did not discuss passion as a

581 pull factor but as a factor that prevented them from leaving their work, as they felt the positive  
582 feelings they got from their work would not be possible elsewhere. This also aligns with the well-  
583 identified and documented characteristics of kitchen environments, where employees have long  
584 adjusted to the dysfunctionalities and non-normative behavior in exchange for creative fulfillment  
585 (Burrow et al., 2024; Moreo et al., 2023).

## 586 **5. Conclusions**

587 This mixed-method study assessed relationships among leadership influences, LMX, job  
588 satisfaction, and turnover intentions for commercial kitchen employees, underpinned by SLT.  
589 Workplace bullying, gender stereotyping, and discrimination are issues of concern across the  
590 hospitality industry (Xiong et al., 2022), with many studies in this area examining workplace  
591 bullying and abusive supervision but rarely addressing how it manifests in the relationship between  
592 kitchen staff and supervisors. This study advances literature on negative leadership traits, including  
593 workplace bullying and abusive supervision within the commercial kitchen context. Our findings  
594 deepen the reach of hospitality literature, as back-of-house culture is unique in that negative  
595 experiences are accepted (even expected), but seldom reported (Roh et al., 2023).

596 Further, our qualitative phase extends existing literature by highlighting the factors shaping  
597 day-to-day commercial kitchen work, providing researchers with comprehensive insight into the  
598 challenges associated with employment therein. Echoing previous studies, we find that kitchen  
599 workers remain under significant pressure and abuse continues to be normalized, limiting  
600 creativity and increasing staff turnover. Findings also revealed that the pressures faced by kitchen  
601 workers are exacerbated by fluid and obfuscated perceptions of error tolerance. Thus, while the  
602 abusive behavior experienced by kitchen workers differs from that typically encountered in other  
603 workplaces, our results can also be applied to various service industries, with themes emerging

604 from our findings suggesting that much of the abuse suffered therein stems from a fundamental  
605 disinterest in tackling workplace inequality, injustice, and disrespect.

### 606 ***5.1. Discussion***

607 The integration of both phases of our study reveal crucial insights into the dynamics of leadership,  
608 workplace environment, and employee outcomes within commercial kitchens. The quantitative  
609 study primarily focused on the impact of leadership styles on employee perceptions, job  
610 satisfaction, and turnover intentions. Consistent with existing literature, findings indicated that  
611 abusive supervision and bullying negatively affect employees' perceptions of LMX, job  
612 satisfaction, and turnover intentions (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2020). These negative  
613 behaviors challenge the foundational principles of LMX theory by undermining the mutual  
614 exchange between supervisors and employees (Chang et al., 2020).

615 Additionally, while positive leadership styles (e.g., authentic leadership; encouraging  
616 creativity) were associated with favorable outcomes, the mediating role of LMX in these  
617 relationships was not supported. This suggests the influence of positive leadership on turnover  
618 intentions may be mediated by factors beyond the supervisor-employee relationship. However,  
619 there remains little scholarship exploring positive leadership styles within commercial kitchens  
620 (Moreo et al., 2023). Nevertheless, interview respondents mentioned traits such as providing  
621 constructive criticism, displaying trust, having a positive attitude, and promoting a team  
622 environment as indicative of 'good leadership'.

623 The qualitative study thus provided deeper insights into the contextual factors shaping  
624 employee experiences. The findings highlighted prevalent themes such as abuse under stress, low  
625 error tolerance, camaraderie, and passion for the job. Despite the challenges posed by abusive  
626 behaviors and low tolerance for errors, employees expressed a strong sense of camaraderie and



627 passion for their work, which contributed to their commitment to staying on the job. Notably, the  
628 qualitative findings suggested that it was not merely the encouragement of creativity by leaders  
629 but rather the inherently creative nature of the work and the personalities of kitchen staff that  
630 played a significant role in retaining employees. This insight underscores the importance of  
631 intrinsic and social motives in influencing employee retention, potentially explaining why LMX  
632 did not mediate the relationship between positive leadership styles and turnover intentions.

633 Integrating these findings, it becomes evident that while leadership styles exert a significant  
634 influence on employee perceptions and outcomes, the unique contextual factors within commercial  
635 kitchens, such as the creative nature of work and camaraderie among staff, also play crucial roles.  
636 This highlights the complexity of employee retention in hospitality and suggests that a holistic  
637 understanding incorporating both leadership dynamics and intrinsic motives is essential for  
638 devising effective retention strategies. Moreover, the qualitative findings underscore the need for  
639 further exploration of how intrinsic and social factors interact with leadership behaviors to shape  
640 employee outcomes, offering avenues for future research in this area.

## 641 ***5.2. Theoretical implications***

642 While there has been a significant increase in academic studies into how commercial  
643 kitchen environments impact employees therein (Lin et al., 2023), there is a lack of research  
644 focusing on the positive leadership attributes that can impact employees' attitudes and behaviors.  
645 This study extends hospitality literature by assessing the relationships between positive leadership  
646 traits, including authentic leadership and encouragement of creativity, LMX, job satisfaction, and  
647 kitchen employee turnover intentions. Results indicate that authentic leadership and  
648 encouragement of creativity are significant antecedents to lowering turnover intentions among  
649 commercial kitchen employees. Although all hypothesized mediating relationships were not

650 supported, and LMX did not strengthen relationships between positive leadership behaviors and  
651 turnover intentions herein, the findings remain valuable. The relationship between LMX and  
652 turnover intention has been found to be inconclusive (Collins, 2010), and our results supplement  
653 this debate.

654 Further, this is the first study to examine the effects of applying SLT to specifically explore  
655 the leadership dynamics of a commercial kitchen. As SLT suggests, employees' (and then  
656 supervisors') behaviors are influenced by what they see around them as accepted behaviors. As  
657 commercial kitchen culture is rampant with varying levels of abuse and bullying (Roh et al., 2023),  
658 applying SLT is critical in understanding the prevalence and acceptance of such behaviors. Abuse  
659 and bullying is sometimes considered a "rite of passage" that has been learned by observation and  
660 passed down the hierarchy to preserve it (Alexander et al., 2012).

661 Additionally, the nature of supervisory behavior also has an impact on commercial kitchen  
662 employees' turnover intentions (Roh et al., 2023). Our findings reveal the power and authority  
663 executive chefs wield serves as a significant cause of friction in the kitchen and that this can lead  
664 to elevated turnover levels among employees (Roh et al., 2023). Identifying ways to promote low  
665 turnover is critical for the hospitality industry due to high staff attrition rates (Moreo et al., 2023).  
666 The results also indicate that managers should encourage the creative nature of kitchen work and  
667 the creative personalities of kitchen workers to prevent kitchen staff from leaving. Despite stating  
668 that intrinsic and social motivations play an important role in retaining employees, this does not  
669 reduce the abuse/authentic leadership problem to a minor issue. Perhaps this is why LMXs do not  
670 mediate authentic leadership, the promotion of creativity, or employee turnover.

671 Finally, our qualitative phase extends extant literature by identifying themes that  
672 summarize employees' lived experiences. These themes provide a deeper understanding of the

673 motivations of commercial kitchen employees in selecting (and maintaining) their career choices  
674 despite negative experiences therein. Findings suggest that although commercial kitchen  
675 environments tend to be high-stress, with bullying and abuse largely normalized (Roh et al., 2023),  
676 intrinsic occupational passion and satisfaction can make a difference. Yet, there were negative  
677 undertones to participants' discussion of passion and camaraderie. While these themes  
678 demonstrate motivations for remaining with an employer, they are not framed positively through  
679 authentic and creative leadership, but as necessary coping mechanisms to overcome the pressures,  
680 long hours, and people they were working alongside. Overall, through SLT, our study shows the  
681 spiraling outcomes of negative leadership. Where abuse and bullying are prevalent, employees  
682 learn to distance themselves from managers, forming detached relationships to the detriment of  
683 LMX. This perpetuates negative working conditions, pressures, and coping mechanisms as  
684 employees socially learn, accept, and adopt negative leadership styles underpinned by the  
685 structural conditions of the sector (Kitterlin et al., 2016).

### 686 ***5.3. Practical implications***

687 We detailed negative leadership characteristics, including workplace bullying and abusive  
688 supervision, in the context of commercial kitchens. Our research shows that commercial kitchens  
689 (often referred to as "back-of-house") differs from other workplaces thanks to a rigid hierarchical  
690 chain and culture of blunt communication. Our respondents contended that bullying is common  
691 and it is normal for supervisors to be rude to subordinates (Alexander et al., 2012). Although abuse  
692 and bullying are deployed as teaching/training tools and disciplinary mechanisms in some  
693 commercial kitchens, these negative behaviors distort employees' perceptions of the environment  
694 and increase their intentions to quit. Since commercial kitchens are high-stress, physical  
695 workplaces, many restaurant owners and/or managers are unfortunately not in a position to solve

696 these problems. Restaurant groups choose not to fire culinary leaders to protect their reputation,  
697 ingraining bullying therein. However, communication problems and abusive behavior must be  
698 corrected internally. Although some researchers suggest improving internal communication using  
699 workplace surveys, formal complaint procedures, and anonymous suggestions, this is insufficient  
700 to change entrenched behaviors in commercial kitchens. Therefore, we recommend detailed  
701 policies and legal and organizational liability for commercial kitchens, similar to other  
702 organizations.

703         Second, the culture of each commercial kitchen is unique. Yet, many employees, from senior  
704 to junior staff, have negative experiences of bullying and abusive supervision. These negative  
705 leadership characteristics are accepted and even expected but rarely reported. Since this  
706 atmosphere of fear and anxiety among employees can be reduced under the leadership of HR,  
707 negative leadership behaviors should be examined on-site rather than waiting for negative  
708 behaviors to be reported. HR can collaborate with *behavior analysts* and develop online training  
709 packages to teach empathy to all levels of kitchen staff. Behavior analysts use three behavioral  
710 modification techniques: modifying, encouraging, and shaping individuals' behavior (Cherry,  
711 2022), with studies suggesting that associations, reinforcement, and punishment can improve  
712 human behavior. As failure to address negative leadership behaviors in the workplace can result  
713 in problems spreading through social media and negatively impacting the organization's brand,  
714 we suggest it is better to work with experts to modify problematic behaviors and encourage more  
715 adaptive responses.

716         Third, camaraderie and passion are critical for employees hoping to successfully deal with  
717 highly stressful kitchen environments, and each serves as a coping mechanisms in the face of such  
718 challenges. However, their importance is overlooked in discussions about how best to manage the

719 stress of commercial culinary hospitality. Yet, negative leadership behaviours, such as autocracy  
720 or micromanagement, can undermine team morale and suppress individual passion. When leaders  
721 are focused on output and efficiency they neglect to foster a supportive, inspiring work  
722 environment. Further, some chefs and kitchen managers may not be aware of the positive impact  
723 that camaraderie and passion can have on stress management and overall performance. Without  
724 understanding the benefits, they may not prioritize fostering these aspects of workplace culture.

725 Fourth, despite challenges born from negative leadership in high-stress kitchen environments,  
726 participating employees developed resilient coping mechanisms and fostered positive dynamics  
727 among themselves. It is important to highlight how camaraderie and passion can serve as effective  
728 ways for kitchen employees to deal with stressful situations and the consequences of negative  
729 leadership. For example, cooking can be a deeply creative pursuit, and for many kitchen employees  
730 it serves as a therapeutic outlet for expressing themselves amid the stress of the job. Channelling  
731 their passion into culinary creations can allow them to find moments of happiness and fulfilment,  
732 offsetting the negative effects of abusive leadership. Accordingly, the shared passion for cooking  
733 can serve as a unifying force among kitchen employees. This common interest fosters a sense of  
734 purpose and camaraderie, helping individuals stay motivated and connected in challenging  
735 circumstances.

736 Finally, while camaraderie and passion can help employees cope with highly stressful kitchen  
737 environments and negative leadership behaviours, their manifestation may depend on various  
738 factors including the perspective of intra-organizational policy makers, the focus of organizational  
739 policies, and the cultural context of the culinary industry. The industry has a long-standing  
740 tradition of prioritizing endurance and resilience, significantly impacting upon workplace morale  
741 and performance, and often deifying high-stress environments as a rite of passage. Such industry

742 norms may overshadow the importance of emphasizing camaraderie and passion in policy  
743 discussions.

#### 744 **5.4. Limitations**

745 While this study extends extant understanding of abusive supervision, bullying, and turnover  
746 intentions within commercial kitchens, it remains limited. First, relationships tested herein may be  
747 affected by a combination of liability, emotional distress, transparency, kitchen working cultures,  
748 gender, and legal action, with each capable of shaping employees' perspectives of the antecedents  
749 and impacts of abusive supervision within the commercial kitchen context. Second, future studies  
750 should consider the role of other contextual variables, such as employee misbehavior, in shaping  
751 leader-employee relationships. Third, this study focused on US commercial hospitality. Future  
752 studies could apply our model in other contexts to deepen extant understanding of abusive  
753 supervision across the hospitality industry more generally. Finally, findings from the qualitative  
754 study should be empirically tested to find a "breaking point" between where the passion to be a  
755 chef stops being enough and the negativity associated with abusive behaviors becomes 'too much'.

756 **Disclosure statement**

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