

Study: Workplace abuse can trickle down

A Georgia State University study suggests supervisors who believe they've been unjustly treated might vent their resentment by abusing their duties.

Researchers found that supervisors engage in more abusive behavior when they perceive their employer is using unfair decision-making to allocate valued resources.

For example, if a company doesn't seem neutral or respectful when distributing benefits and other attractive incentives, the boss may become rude, assign blame, or publicly ridicule those that report to him or her.

The Georgia State scientists say perceived company injustices can lead a supervisor into depression and that can translate into strategic abuse.

"Specifically, perpetrators tend to abuse subordinates who come across as weak and vulnerable -- subordinates who project the image that they are unlikely to fight back," they explain.

The study is published in the spring issue of Personnel Psychology.

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