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Factors Affecting Supervisors' Use of Corrective Actions Following Poor Performance.

Wanda Ann Trahan  
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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Factors affecting supervisors' use of corrective actions following poor performance

Trahan, Wanda Ann, Ph.D.
The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1989
FACTORS AFFECTING SUPERVISORS’ USE OF CORRECTIVE ACTIONS FOLLOWING POOR PERFORMANCE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

Department of Psychology

by

Wanda Ann Trahan
B.S., Louisiana State University, 1985
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## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A. Interview Questions</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B. Corrective Action Measure</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C. Severity of Incident Measure</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D. Attribution Measure</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E. Leader Opinion Questionnaire</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F. Supervisor Intent Measure</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G. Corrective Action Effectiveness Rating</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H. Contextual Variables Measure</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I. Subordinate Likableness Measure</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1. Intercorrelation between Variables ................. 79
Table 2. Correlations between Variables and Corrective Action Severity ...................... 80
Table 3. Moderated Regression Results .................. 81
Table 4. Intercorrelation between Variables ................. 82
Table 5. Correlations between Variables and Corrective Action Severity ...................... 83
Table 6. Moderated Regression Results .................. 84
Table 7. Summary Table of Hypothesis Testing Results .......... 85
Table 8. Moderated Regression Results .................. 86
Table 9. Correlations between Attribution Measures and Corrective Action Severity ............. 87
Table 10. Moderated Regression Results .................. 88
Table 11. Moderated Regression Results .................. 89
List of Figures

Figure 1. Arvey and Jones' (1985) Model of Organizational Discipline ........................................... 90
Figure 2. Revised Model to be Tested in the Present Study ............................................................ 92
Figure 3. Moderating Effect of Initiating Structure Leader Style on the Relationship between Ability Attributions and Corrective Action Severity .................................................. 94
Figure 4. Moderating Effect of Initiating Structure Leader Style on the Relationship between Luck Attributions and Corrective Action Severity .................................................. 96
Figure 5. Moderating Effect of Hospital Disciplinary Policy on the Relationship between Ability Attributions and Corrective Action Severity .................................................. 98
Figure 6. Revised Model of Organizational Discipline ................................................................. 100
Abstract

The present study examined the relationships between supervisor, subordinate, and contextual variables and corrective action severity. Hypotheses were tested using questionnaire data from 103 nursing supervisors in 15 hospitals. Supervisors were asked to describe an incident of subordinate poor performance, indicate the corrective action used, then complete questions measuring incident severity, attributions, initiating structure and consideration leader styles, intent of the supervisor, effectiveness ratings of the corrective action, influence of contextual variables, and subordinate likableness. Analyses confirmed that severity of the incident of poor performance, supervisor attributions, and supervisor intent were related to corrective action severity. Also, corrective actions rated as more effective were used more frequently. Additional results indicated that the contextual variables disciplinary policy and upper management influence were significantly related to corrective action severity. Exploratory analyses investigated the effects of the attributional measures of effort, ability, task difficulty, and luck. Results revealed that initiating structure scores moderated the relationships between both ability attributions and corrective action severity and luck attributions and corrective action severity, while disciplinary policy influence moderated the relationship between ability attributions and corrective action severity. Finally, implications of the study for organizations and suggestions for future research are discussed.
Factors Affecting Supervisors’ Use of Corrective Actions Following Poor Performance

The purpose of the present study is to investigate corrective actions following poor performance. The study, using Arvey and Jones’ (1985) model of organizational discipline as a guide, proposes to determine what types of corrective actions are used by supervisors in organizational settings and some of the factors influencing those decisions. In addition, the present study proposes to examine whether decisions regarding corrective actions are related to attributions.

Punishment in Organizations

One aspect of a supervisor’s job involves dealing with subordinate poor performance. A likely option available to supervisors to deal with poor performance is discipline or punishment. Punishment as defined by Kazdin (1975) relates to "...the presentation of an aversive event or the removal of a positive event following a response which decreases the probability of that response" (p. 33-34). Arvey and Ivancevich (1980) stated that organizational psychologists do not favor punishment since it is thought that its use will lead to undesirable events, it is thought to be unethical, and it is said not to eliminate the undesirable behaviors. As a result of these beliefs, little attention has been given to punishment in organizational research. However, since most organizations do use punishment in order to affect the behavior of employees (Arvey & Ivancevich, 1980), research in this area is overdue. Finally, Arvey and Ivancevich (1980) as well as Wheeler (1976) argued that the question is not whether punishment is good or bad but how to use it in a corrective rather than authoritarian
manner to achieve a change in behavior.

Arvey and Jones' (1985) Model of Organizational Discipline

In agreement with Arvey and Ivancevich (1980), Arvey and Jones (1985) stated that punishment or discipline has not been given much attention by organizational psychologists. However, the authors contended that discipline serves many functions in an organization. For example, discipline can serve to directly control behavior, to give cues as to behaviors that are considered acceptable and unacceptable, and to create boundaries for the organization. Also, discipline can be used to maintain in-group/out-group relations with the supervisor.

Arvey and Jones (1985) presented a basic model of organizational discipline. The stages of the model, as seen in Figure 1 are: (1) perception of the behavior, (2) supervisory attributions, (3) choice of corrective action, and (4) employee perception and response to the action.

Briefly, the initial stage of the model involves the observation of some event or the occurrence of a rule infraction. In this stage, behavior of the subordinate can be perceived either directly or indirectly. Direct methods involve observation of the behavior by the supervisor while indirect methods involve indication by a third party report, supervisor observation of accidents or outputs, or the task not being successfully completed. Stage 2 occurs when the supervisor makes decisions regarding the cause of the behavior and the individual's responsibility for it. These supervisor attributions are proposed to
be affected by characteristics of the act, the subordinate, and the supervisor. Stage 3, based on the previous stages, entails the choice and application of the corrective action. Once again, Arvey and Jones (1985) propose that characteristics of the supervisor and subordinate affect the supervisor's choice of a tactic; however, contextual variables such as span of control and organizational policy are also hypothesized to influence tactic choice and application. The final stage of the model involves the perception of the corrective action by the subordinate, attributions to the cause of the action, and appropriate response. Once the corrective action is perceived as punishment and an attribution is made about its cause, the subordinate responds; it should be noted that this response is proposed to affect the subordinate, co-workers, and the organization. The focus of the present study is on corrective actions chosen and used by supervisors as well as factors affecting those decisions, or Stages 2 and 3 of Arvey and Jones' (1985) model. Therefore, these two stages will be discussed in greater detail.

Supervisor Attributions

Stage 2 of Arvey and Jones' (1985) model involves supervisory decisions regarding whether an infraction occurred and attributions to the cause of the act.

Much research on decisions following performance appraisal is based on Green and Mitchell's (1979) attributional model of leadership. The model states that leaders first determine the cause for a subordinate's performance. As a result of their understanding of the cause, leaders then respond with the appropriate supervisory action. Therefore, the model follows this basic pattern:
MEMBER BEHAVIOR → LEADER ATTRIBUTION → LEADER BEHAVIOR

Staw (1975), in his research on attributions to causes of performance, found support for an attributional hypothesis. In the study, subjects were found to have different stereotypes of high versus low performing groups; furthermore, these characteristics were attributed based only on the knowledge of group performance (no additional information about the groups was given). Also, Rothbart (1968) found that the use of punishment affects perceptions of worker motivation even when supervisors are allowed the choice between reward and punishment. Subjects were to administer incentives to a worker who performed poorly. The incentives, in the form of a promise of a monetary reward or a monetary punishment, were both available for the supervisor's use. Those using punishment were found to view employees as "not trying" more than those using rewards. It should be noted that although Rothbart (1968) did investigate punishment, the conclusions were drawn from information that was more correlational in nature rather than investigating punishment directly (Sims, 1980).

Discipline within an organization from an attributional perspective was examined to determine the relations between the dimensions of performance and perceived attributions with employee variables such as demographics, perception of supervisor's use of discipline, and satisfaction (Arvey, Davis, & Nelson, 1984). Perceived supervisory discipline factors were disciplinary style and degree of consistency and were found to be related to the general evaluation of the punishment system, application of the punishment system, and satisfaction with supervision. Also, three attributional elements or factors that employees perceived their supervisors used when applying
punishment were identified: consequences of the act and employee behavior, employee attitudes and pressure on the boss, and minority characteristics. Each of these factors was found to correlate significantly with supervisory satisfaction and the general evaluation of the punishment system. Finally, supervisory punishment behaviors, as reflected in employee perceptions of them, were strongly correlated with satisfaction with supervision and the evaluation of the organization punishment program but weakly correlated with overall job satisfaction and punishment history, grievances, and absences. From these results, it was inferred that differences exist among supervisors in their application of punishment which are related to subordinate satisfaction with supervision.

Typical Method. Most of the research on attributions in employment settings follows a similar method: subjects are presented, through vignettes, videos, or group work, with a situation of poor performance and are asked to make attributions and rate appropriate corrective actions for the performance through the use of questionnaires. The types of corrective actions vary from general actions (positive, negative) to more specific corrective actions (promotions, support, counseling, training, termination). It should also be noted that in most studies, subjects or supervisors are presented with information concerning performance (often they are told that the performance was poor) and are asked for their attributions and corrective actions. Following is a discussion of the research on actions taken following poor performance and factors affecting the choice of those actions.
**General Responses.** Research using vignettes and videos has found that supervisors tend to respond more negatively or punitively toward internally caused poor performance (Banks, 1976; Heerwagen, Beach, & Mitchell, 1985; Mitchell & Wood, 1980; Wood & Mitchell, 1981). In other words, the more that poor performance was attributed to the subordinate, the more the response was directed at the subordinate, while external attributions led to actions directed to the environment. Supervisors' responses were also found to be affected by variables such as similarity between supervisor and subordinate, subordinate work history, and the cost of responding. Banks (1976) found that supervisors were more inclined to punish a dissimilar trainee for poor performance which resulted in a reward bias toward similar (liked) employees and a punitive bias toward dissimilar (disliked) employees. In addition, Heerwagen et al. (1985) found that the cost of the solution affected supervisors' choices of a corrective action. Results indicated that low cost solutions (solutions that could be accomplished easily) were seen as more appropriate regardless of the attributions made. The authors concluded that it may be relatively simple to get supervisors to attend to environmental factors affecting performance; however, it may be more difficult to get them to use the appropriate action if the costs are high and a less costly internal action is available.

Groups have been used in lab research to examine supervisors' responses to poor performance. Again, results have indicated that supervisors respond negatively or punitively to poor performance (Gioia & Sims, 1986; Green & Liden, 1980; Mitchell & Kalb, 1982; Tjosvold, 1985).
Poor performance has been found to affect the interaction between supervisors and subordinates. Gioia and Sims (1986) investigated leader attributions and the verbal interaction between a leader and subordinate in a performance appraisal setting. They found that more punitive statements and punitive comparison statements were directed at the low performer. The interaction between the leader and subordinate was also longer in conditions of failure; however, this was found to work to the benefit of the subordinate. In conditions of poor performance, leaders asked "why" more, and attributions were more directed at the task rather than the subordinate. They concluded by stating that a supervisor who makes attributions solely from data on performance, as in the typical research in this area, is doing so in a deprived condition.

Experience with the task or job has been found to affect corrective action decisions (Mitchell & Kalb, 1982). Supervisors who were more experienced with a task tended to blame the environment and suggest changes in the environment more; however, no differences in salary deductions were found between experienced and inexperienced supervisors.

**Specific Responses.** As was previously stated, much of the research investigating supervisors' responses to poor performance is based on an attributional model of leadership. Most of these studies appear to be mainly concerned with leaders' attributions; therefore, when supervisory actions are obtained, they are usually in the form of general negative or positive responses. However, recent research has investigated the effects of poor performance on attributions and more specific responses such as training, punishment, support, monitoring,

Gender of the supervisor has also affected leaders' responses to poor performers. A study by Dobbins (1985) found that when responding to poor performance, men tended to use an equity mode, or differentiate between performers, and women tended to use an equality mode, or respond more equally to all cases of performance. For example, women gave the responses of support and punishment more equally than men. In other words, the author contended that women attended to factors such as the cause of performance or the stability of the cause less than men when responding. Dobbins (1985) concluded that the equality style could be problematic for an organization since corrective actions were chosen that were not related to the cause of performance. These actions, therefore, would not improve the performance of the subordinate.

A comparison of corrective action suggestions between supervisors and subordinates was made by Dobbins and Russell (1986a), using undergraduate subjects working in groups in a lab setting. For conditions of poor performance, both leaders and subordinates attributed the performance to the other. Furthermore, actions of punishment, training, and counseling were rated as more appropriate for low performance; however, supervisors rated punishment and training as more appropriate than subordinates. Therefore, supervisor and self ratings of corrective actions differed.
Interdependence between a supervisor and subordinate, or the degree a supervisor's rewards are contingent upon subordinate performance, affects supervisors' responses to poor performance. Ilgen et al. (1981), using groups in a clerical task, found that poor performers were given more negative feedback, were seen as less attractive interpersonally, received less pay, and were not chosen to work with the supervisor again. In conditions of high interdependence, supervisors recommended training and were more willing to work with the poor performer again. In addition, the poor performer received higher compensation than in conditions of low interdependence. Therefore, the more that a leader's rewards are dependent upon the subordinates' performance, the more lenient the leader's responses toward poor performance are.

Dobbins and Russell (1986b) also investigated the effects of liking on leaders' responses to poor performance. While liking did not affect attributions in a lab setting, it did affect supervisory actions (liked workers received more support and less counseling and punishment and termination suggestions). The second part of the study, conducted in a field setting, found that liking was associated with attributions and the actions of punishment and monitoring. The authors suggested that the difference in findings may be due to the cause of performance being more ambiguous in the field; therefore, leaders would be more inclined to draw on their liking.

Trahan and Dobbins (1988), using undergraduate groups in a lab setting, found that leaders were more likely to suggest training for poor performance in conditions of high interdependence to ensure better performance for the subordinate and greater rewards for the supervisor.
The authors also found that as ratings of liking increased, leaders increased performance ratings and decreased suggestions of training, punishment and terminations, and support. Liking of the poor performer did not affect attributions, suggesting that liking exerts a direct effect on corrective actions rather than an indirect effect through attributions. Therefore, while a leader may make the same attribution for the performance of a liked and a disliked worker, different corrective actions may be suggested based on liking for the subordinate.

**Criticisms.** As discussed previously, Gioia and Sims (1986) stated that conditions in which supervisors make attributions based on performance data and no other available information, such as those used by many studies, are lacking. Therefore, research is needed to determine the influence of factors in addition to performance on supervisor attributions and corrective actions. Additionally, findings from Trahan and Dobbins (1988) imply that those factors affecting decisions regarding punishment may do so directly rather than indirectly through attributions. Therefore, one purpose of the present study is to determine if attributions made by supervisors in actual organizations are related to corrective actions for a poor performing subordinate or if this relationship is moderated by other factors.

**Leader characteristics.** Arvey and Jones (1985) proposed that one of the factors that should affect supervisory attributions is supervisor characteristics, such as leadership style, perceptions of similarity to the subordinate, and personality, as well as sex, history, status, and ability. Podsakoff (1982) listed a series of variables that affect a supervisor's use of rewards and punishments.
These variables include contextual variables (span of control, task structure, organizational policy), subordinate behavior (performance level, sex, likableness), and supervisor characteristics (personality, sex, attributions). Similarly, O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) found that those supervisors who were more direct and had less difficulty with firing were more likely to use punishment for poor performance. Research concerned with supervisory actions following performance appraisal has tested many of these variables.

In the past, many investigations of leader style have used the factors consideration (employee orientation) and initiating structure (task orientation) which were identified by the Ohio State Studies (Fleishman, 1953; Kerr, Schriesheim, Murphy, & Stogdill, 1974). While enjoying popularity, this research has also spurred questions about its validity (Phillips & Lord, 1982; Phillips, 1984; Rush, Thomas, & Lord, 1977). These questions have focused on whether supervisor effectiveness as identified by the scales is a function of follower perceptions more than leader actions. However, these criticisms have been mainly directed at investigations of the influence of leader style on subordinate behavior and not on subsequent supervisory behaviors.

A second purpose of the present study is to determine the relationship of supervisor characteristics with the use of corrective actions. For example, the present study proposes to study the effects of such leader characteristics as leadership style on the use of corrective action.

Decision to Act

The third stage of Arvey and Jones' (1985) model of organizational discipline involves the decision to act and the choice of which
corrective action to use.

Factors affecting judgments and decisions regarding punishment were investigated by Rosen and Jerdee (1974). The factors included the influence of organizational harm from a rule violation and of individual characteristics on decisions of the severity of the problem and appropriateness of the corrective action chosen. The authors found that punishment given to the subject was more severe and more responsibility was attributed to that employee when the action caused greater harm to the organization. In addition, less severe punishments and less responsibility were attributed to employees with higher job status and creative talent. The authors concluded by noting that such inconsistent disciplinary actions could harm the trust and morale of the employees. Hinton and Barrow (1975) found that the reinforcements supervisors receive also influence the reinforcements they provide their subordinates. For example, when supervisors received positive reinforcement, they tended to use positive economic reinforcements on their subordinates. However, when the supervisor received negative reinforcements, they tended to respond with negative evaluative reinforcements. Findings from this study imply that positively reinforced supervisors may be more willing to use communication and positive reinforcements to deal with a poor performing employee rather than negative reinforcements.

Choice of tactic. In accordance with Podsakoff (1982), Arvey and Jones (1985) proposed that the choice of a tactic is influenced by elements such as contextual factors (the task, organizational policy, leader power, and span of control), supervisor characteristics (intent or goal, perceived effectiveness, and
consequences of the corrective action), and characteristics of the subordinate (power, likableness, and ingratiation). Landy and Farr (1983) noted that any of these decisions may be affected by conditions within the organization. For example, decisions regarding an employee's performance may be related to the presence/absence of funds or the current status of the organization (growing versus cutting back). These conditions can be regarded as substitutes for leadership (Kerr & Jermier, 1978). Another purpose of the present study is to determine those contextual factors that substitute or neutralize a supervisor's opportunity to choose a corrective action for subordinate poor performance as well as their amount of influence.

Application. Following choice of a tactic, the supervisor applies the tactic chosen. According to the model, the application of the corrective action can be examined according to many dimensions: Timing, intensity, schedule, and visibility of the punishment. Similarly, Arvey and Ivancevich (1980) suggested that certain variables such as timing, intensity, schedule, and availability of alternatives be examined in relation to the use and effectiveness of punishment and corrective actions. Schmitt (1969) studied the effects of punishment under fixed and variable schedules. In an experimental setting, subjects were given a choice between two tasks which were both reinforced. Results indicated that under the fixed interval schedule, subjects learned to avoid the task being punished. Also, the larger the size of the penalty under the variable interval schedule, the more time subjects spent on the unpunished task. Therefore, the author concluded that in addition to the type of supervisory activity being used, the schedule under which it is being performed also needs to be
Overview of Present Study

Research on negative decisions based on performance appraisal is lacking in many areas. Many of the studies were conducted in deprived conditions or conditions in which the leader is only given data on performance. According to Gioia and Sims (1986), by closely supervising subordinates, leaders obtain a great deal of relevant information on which to base both attributions and supervisory actions. The use of vignettes and videos has shown that many variables significantly affect leaders' choice of actions; however, their generalizability is severely limited because of the conditions of the setting and the nature of the variables investigated. Therefore, more research is needed in actual organizations to test the findings from lab research. As a result of this limitation, a study is proposed to determine what corrective actions are used by supervisors in actual work settings as well as any factors or organizational constraints that affect their decisions (Figure 2).

Insert Figure 2 about here

Hospital nursing supervisors were used as subjects in the present study. Hospitals were chosen since large numbers of supervisors with similar jobs can be used while still obtaining a variety of actions and potentially influential factors. In addition, since they work closely with their nurses, nursing supervisors have the opportunity to observe behaviors and use corrective actions. Based on information identified in the interview stage (to be discussed in the method section) as well
as other variables suggested by Arvey and Jones (1985), the present study proposes to investigate the relationships of supervisor characteristics (leader style, intent, and perceived effectiveness of the corrective action), contextual factors (span of control, organizational disciplinary policy, and nursing shortage), and attributions with a leader's choice of a corrective action for the poor performance of a subordinate. More specifically, the present study proposes to examine the moderating effects of leader style and contextual factors on the relationship between attributions and corrective actions. Also, the relationship of subordinate likableness with supervisory attributions and corrective actions was studied.

Based on information gathered in the interview stage and discussed by Arvey and Jones (1985), the following hypotheses are made.

H1: Severity of the incident of poor performance will be related to corrective actions. Supervisors will use more severe corrective actions for more severe incidents.

H2: Attributions that a supervisor makes for the causes of poor performance will relate to the corrective actions used. Internal attributions for poor performance will be associated with more severe corrective actions and external attributions will be associated with less severe corrective actions.

H3: Supervisor consideration scores will be negatively related to severity of corrective actions while supervisor initiating structure scores will be positively related to severity of corrective actions.
H3a: The relationship between attributions and corrective action severity will be moderated by initiating structure and consideration leader style. Specifically, the relationship between attributions and corrective action severity will increase in strength as initiating structure decreases. The relationship between attributions and corrective action severity will increase in strength as consideration scores increase.

H4: The intent or goal of the supervisor will influence his or her choice of corrective actions. When the intent is to motivate the subordinate to perform better, less severe corrective actions will be chosen. However, when the intent is to indicate to the subordinate that his or her performance is not adequate and cannot be continued, the corrective action chosen will be more severe.

H5: Effectiveness ratings of corrective actions used will relate to their use. Those corrective actions rated as more effective will be used more frequently.

H6: Span of control or the number of employees supervised will be related to the use of corrective actions. Higher span of control will be related to the use of more severe corrective actions.

H7: A supervisor's choice of a corrective action will not be strongly related to attributions when influenced by contextual variables or substitutes.
H7a: The relation between attributions and corrective actions is moderated by the hospital's disciplinary policy. When the policy concerning corrective actions is rigid, it will substitute for supervisory decisions regarding corrective actions, and, therefore, the relation between attributions and corrective actions will be less than when the policy is flexible.

H7b: The relation between attributions and corrective actions will be moderated by upper management. When higher level supervisors are involved in the choice of a corrective action, the relation between the nursing supervisor's attributions and corrective actions used will be less than when the higher level supervisor is not involved.

H7c: The relation between attributions and corrective actions will be moderated by the availability of new employees. When supervisors are faced with a lack of availability of new employees, they will be more likely to choose less severe corrective actions despite the attributions made for performance.

H8: Liking for subordinates will be related to corrective actions. Supervisors will choose less severe corrective actions for liked subordinates than for disliked subordinates.

The study involved two phases, an interview phase and a questionnaire phase. The purpose of the interview phase was to determine the types of corrective actions used by nursing supervisors
for poor performing subordinates and factors they base their decisions on. The information gained in the first phase served as input to developing the questionnaire for Phase 2. The second phase was used to determine whether or not supervisors' choice of corrective actions is influenced by their attributions and other contextual factors. In the second phase, a questionnaire measuring the variables needed for addressing the hypotheses was administered to a larger sample of nursing supervisors.
Phase 1

Method

Subjects

The sample consisted of 20 nursing supervisors for the interview phase of the study. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Procedure

The author contacted the director of nursing of each hospital to obtain permission to conduct both phases of the study. The first stage of the study entailed interviewing nursing supervisors to determine the type of corrective actions they use for poorly performing subordinates and the factors they base their decisions on (Appendix A).

Results

Information gathered in the interview stage provided a list (and ranking in order of severity) of corrective actions used by supervisors. In addition, factors that influence their decisions regarding corrective actions were revealed. Based on the interview data, initial support was suggested for several hypotheses. For example, supervisors (N = 12) indicated that more severe corrective actions are used when the behavior is severe or harmful to the patient or nursing unit. Supervisors (N = 17) also stated that they try to determine the cause for the event (or make attributions in psychological parlance) before choosing corrective actions. Finally, some supervisors (N = 11) stated that a shortage of available employees leads them to choose less severe corrective actions in order to maintain that employee. Therefore, the factors to be investigated are: The severity of the poor performance, supervisor attributions regarding whether the subordinate was responsible for the action (based on
knowledge, track record, and personal problems that may interfere), the hospital's disciplinary policy, and the existence of a nursing shortage. In addition, factors suggested by Arvey and Jones (1985) that may influence choice of corrective actions that will be included in the study are: Leadership style, intent, perceived effectiveness, and subordinate likableness. Phase 2 will examine all the hypotheses more systematically.
Phase 2

Method

Procedure

The second stage of the present study involved use of a questionnaire to determine whether or not supervisors, in choosing corrective actions for poor performance, are influenced by their attributions. This phase also examined those factors that act as substitutes for the supervisor in determining corrective actions. Based on information identified in the interviews, a questionnaire was developed and sent to nursing supervisors in the same and additional hospitals. Demographic information about the supervisors, such as age, sex, experience, span of control, and tenure, was obtained. Next, supervisors were asked to describe the most recent incident in which a subordinate performed poorly and indicate the corrective action(s) used and the order of their use (Appendix B). Following this, supervisors answered questions concerning factors affecting this decision (severity of the poor performance; intent of the corrective action; influence of their immediate supervisor, the hospital disciplinary policy, and the nursing shortage). Also, supervisors answered questions regarding attributions for the cause of the poor performance and liking of the subordinate.

Following this, the supervisors were asked to describe the second most recent incident in which a subordinate performed poorly and to answer the same questions described above. Finally, supervisors completed items measuring leader style and effectiveness of corrective actions used.
Subjects

Surveys were mailed to 249 nursing supervisors from 15 hospitals in south Louisiana. Of these, 103 were completed, yielding a response rate of 41%. The sample consisted of 96 females and 7 males. Regarding level of education, there were 87 Registered Nurses, 15 Master's level, and 1 Ph.D. Furthermore, their average age was 38.77 with an average tenure of 8.31 years with the hospital.

Measures

Corrective action severity. As previously discussed, a list of corrective actions and ranking in order of severity were obtained in the interview phase of the present study. In the questionnaire phase, supervisors were asked to indicate the corrective action(s) used and the order of their use. Therefore, the severity of the most recent corrective action used by the supervisor was used in the analyses as the corrective action severity measure.

Severity of the incident. Three items on a 7-point Likert-type scale measured severity of the poor performance incident (Appendix C). Items covered the impact on patient care and coworkers and the nursing unit, in addition to a comparison to other incidents of poor performance. Coefficient alphas were calculated to be .71 for the first incident and .77 for the second incident.

Supervisor attributions. A six item 7-point Likert-type scale, similar to that constructed by Dobbins and Russell (1986a) and a 5-item scale, based on the interview phase, measured supervisory attributions for subordinate poor performance (Appendix D). Coefficient alphas were calculated to be .20 for the first incident and
.43 for the second incident, indicating that the internal consistency of the measure, using the original eleven items, was unacceptable. Furthermore, inspection of the correlation matrix of attribution items revealed that many of the correlations were low and/or negative. Therefore, because of low inter-item correlations and in order to increase the reliability of the measure, one item that measured the extent that the cause of the incident of poor performance was internal was selected to be used in the analyses.

**Leader style.** The Leader Opinion Questionnaire (Fleishman, 1953) was used to measure the consideration and initiating structure leadership styles of supervisors (Appendix E). Coefficient alphas ranging from .70 to .80 have been reported (Schriesheim & Kerr, 1974). Coefficient alphas for initiating structure and consideration were calculated on these data to be .77 and .71, respectively.

**Intent.** Intent of the supervisor for choosing a specific corrective action was measured by two 7-point Likert-type scales, assessing the extent to which the intent in using the corrective action is to inform the subordinate about acceptable behavior or deliver a consequence for poor performance (Appendix F). Coefficient alphas for both the first and second incidents of poor performance were .65 and .70, respectively.

**Effectiveness.** The effectiveness of the corrective actions used, based on whether the corrective actions lead to improved subordinate performance and improved conditions in the nursing unit, was measured using two 7-point Likert-type scales (Appendix G).
Coefficient alphas for the two incidents of poor performance were .58 and .68 respectively.

Contextual factors. The influence of contextual factors on choice of corrective actions was measured using three items. The factors identified in the interview stage (disciplinary policy, upper management, nursing shortage) were each assessed using a 7-point Likert-type scale (Appendix H).

Subordinate likableness. A six-item scale for liking was developed from two items using seven-point Likert-type scales, similar to those constructed by Wilhelm (1988), and four additional items, similar to those constructed by Dockery and Steiner (1988) (Appendix I). The items, measuring the extent to which supervisors like their subordinate personally and the probability that they would choose their subordinate as a friend outside of work, have had reported coefficient alphas of .84 (Wilhelm, 1988) and .86 (Dockery & Steiner, 1988). Coefficient alphas for the first and second incidents of the present study were calculated to be .80 and .91, respectively.

Analysis

The relationships between severity, intent, subordinate likableness, effectiveness, and attributions and corrective actions for subordinate poor performance were analyzed using correlational and regression analysis, as appropriate. Also, the relationships of leadership style and the contextual factors with attributions and corrective actions were analyzed using moderated regression analysis.
Results

Interrelationships among Variables

As previously mentioned, the interview phase of the present study identified several variables whose associations with corrective action severity were to be investigated. These variables are: Severity of the incident, attributions, leader style, intent of the supervisor, ratings of effectiveness, span of control, contextual variables (disciplinary policy, upper management, nursing shortage), and subordinate likableness. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and variable intercorrelations.

Insert Table 1 about here

Correlation and Moderated Regression Analyses

In order to test Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 in the present study, Spearman rank-order correlation analyses were conducted. Table 2 provides the correlations for the relationships between the variables identified in the interview stage of the present study and the corrective action severity measures.

Insert Table 2 about here

Hypotheses 3a, 7a, 7b, and 7c proposed that the relation between supervisor attributions for poor performance and corrective action severity would be moderated by each of the variables of leader style (initiating structure and consideration) and contextual variables (hospital disciplinary policy, upper management, and nursing shortage).
In order to test these hypotheses, separate moderated regression analyses were conducted by regressing corrective action severity onto the proposed moderated variable, attributions, and the cross-product of the two variables. A significant beta weight for the cross-product indicated a moderating effect (Cohen & Cohen, 1975). Table 3 presents the results of these analyses.

Insert Table 3 about here

Severity of incident. Hypothesis 1 predicted that severity of the incident of poor performance would be related to corrective action severity. Analyses indicated that this relationship was significant ($r_s = .53, p<.001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Therefore, more severe incidents of subordinate poor performance were related to the use of more severe corrective actions by the supervisor.

Attributions. Hypothesis 2 proposed that supervisor attributions would be associated with corrective action severity; that is, more internal attributions were expected to relate more to severe corrective actions. However, the attributions made by the supervisor for the causes of poor performance did not significantly correlate with corrective action severity, failing to support Hypothesis 2.

Leader style. Hypothesis 3 proposed that high initiating structure leader style scores would be related to more severe corrective actions, while high consideration leader style scores would be related to less severe corrective actions. Neither the initiating structure nor consideration leader style was found to be significantly correlated with corrective action severity; therefore, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.
Hypothesis 3a proposed that attributions would be more strongly related to corrective action severity when consideration scores were high, while the relation between attributions and corrective action severity would be less strong when initiating structure scores were high. Two separate moderated regression analyses revealed that neither the beta weights for Initiating Structure X Attributions nor the Consideration X Attribution interactions were significant (see Table 3), failing to support Hypothesis 3a.

**Intent.** Correlation analyses supported Hypothesis 4. The intent of the supervisor was found to be significantly related to corrective action severity ($r_s = .28$, $p<.01$). More severe corrective actions tended to occur when the intent of the supervisor was to deliver the subordinate a consequence for poor performance rather than to motivate the subordinate to perform better.

**Effectiveness.** Hypothesis 5 proposed that corrective actions rated as more effective were used more frequently. To test this hypothesis, the frequency to which each corrective action was used was determined across supervisors. Then the average effectiveness for each corrective action was determined. Finally, the frequencies of use and mean effectiveness scores were correlated, yielding an $r = .36$, ns. Results indicated that greater effectiveness ratings for corrective actions were not related to more frequent use, failing to support Hypothesis 5.

**Span of control.** Hypothesis 6 proposed that the span of control of the supervisor would be related to the severity of the corrective action chosen. However, the analysis indicated that this hypothesis was not supported.
Contextual variables. Correlations between the contextual variables of hospital disciplinary policy, upper management, and nursing shortage and corrective action severity were calculated to determine if there were any significant relationships. The discipline policy of the hospital was found to be significantly correlated with corrective action severity ($r_g = .41, p<.001$). Therefore, the more that the discipline policy dictated the response to the incident of poor performance, the more severe were the corrective actions used. Second, the influence of upper management was not found to be significantly correlated with corrective action severity. Finally, the existence of a nursing shortage was not found to significantly relate to the severity of corrective actions used.

Hypotheses 7a, 7b, and 7c proposed that each of the contextual variables would moderate the relationship between supervisor attributions and corrective action severity. These analyses were tested using moderated regression analyses, and results are presented below (refer also to Table 3).

Hypothesis 7a predicted that the relationship between attributions and corrective action severity would be stronger when the hospital disciplinary policy was not very influential in the choice of a corrective action rather than stringent. The moderated regression analysis indicated that the Discipline Policy X Attribution interaction was not significant; therefore, Hypothesis 7a was not supported.

Hypothesis 7b proposed that when upper management was not involved in dealing with the poor performance incident, the relationship between attributions and corrective action severity would be stronger than when upper management was very involved. No significant Upper Management X
Attribution interaction was found, failing to support Hypothesis 7b.

Hypothesis 7c predicted that when an availability of nurses existed, the relation between attributions and corrective action severity would be stronger than when a shortage of nurses existed. However, moderated regression analyses revealed no significant Nursing Shortage X Attribution interaction, failing to support Hypothesis 7c.

**Subordinate likability.** Hypothesis 8, which proposed that likable subordinates would receive less severe corrective actions than dislikable subordinates, was not supported. Therefore, supervisor liking for the subordinate was not significantly related to the severity of the corrective action used.

**Summary**

In summary, the analyses provided support for Hypotheses 1 and 4. More severe corrective actions were related to more severe incidents of poor performance and the supervisor intent to deliver a consequence to the subordinate. Finally, correlation analyses indicated that the discipline policy of the hospital was significantly related to corrective action severity; when the discipline policy was more influential in the choice of a response to the incident of poor performance, more severe corrective actions were used. The second set of data obtained in the questionnaire were analyzed in the same manner to serve as a replication and check of the previous results. The results are discussed below.

**Analyses of Second Poor Performance Incident**

**Interrelationships among Variables**

Correlations between the variables of interest were conducted. Descriptive statistics and variable intercorrelations are presented in
Correlation and Moderated Regression Analyses

Correlation analyses were conducted to test Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 proposed in the present study. Table 5 provides the correlations between the variables identified in phase 1 of the experiment and corrective action severity.

Also, in order to test Hypotheses 3a, 7a, 7b, and 7c, moderated regression analyses were conducted. The results are presented in Table 6.

Severity of incident. Analyses showed that severity of the incident was significantly related to corrective action severity ($r_s = .48$, $p<.001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Therefore, more severe incidents of poor performance were related to the use of more severe corrective actions.

Attributions. Severity of corrective actions was significantly correlated with supervisor attributions for the cause of the poor performance ($r_s = .23$, $p<.05$), providing support for Hypothesis 2. Attributions which were more internal or directed toward
the subordinate rather than external were related to more severe corrective actions.

**Leader style.** The leader styles of initiating structure and consideration were not found to be significantly correlated with severity of corrective actions, failing to support Hypothesis 3. Separate moderated regression analyses revealed that neither the Initiating Structure X Attribution nor Consideration X Attribution interactions were significant predictors of corrective action severity; therefore, Hypothesis 3a was not supported.

**Intent.** Analyses indicated that the intent of the supervisor in choosing the particular corrective action was significantly related to corrective action severity ($r_g = .27, p<.01$), lending support to Hypothesis 4. When the intent of the supervisor was to have the nurse "pay" for the results of the behavior, more severe corrective actions were used.

**Effectiveness.** Although not hypothesized, effectiveness ratings were significantly related to corrective action severity ($r_g = -.32, p<.01$). Ratings of greater effectiveness were related to less severe corrective actions. The correlation between frequencies of use of corrective actions and mean effectiveness scores was calculated. Results indicated that those corrective actions rated more effective were used more frequently ($r = .63, p<.05$), supporting Hypothesis 5.

**Span of control.** The supervisor's span of control was not significantly correlated with corrective action severity. Thus, Hypothesis 6 was not supported.
Contextual variables. The contextual variables hospital disciplinary policy, supervisor influence, and nursing shortage were correlated with corrective action severity to determine if there were any significant interrelationships. The discipline policy of the hospital was found to be significantly correlated with corrective action severity ($r_s = .31, p < .01$). Therefore, more severe corrective actions were related to greater influence of the discipline policy in choosing the correct response to the incident of poor performance. Second, the influence of upper management was also significantly correlated with corrective action severity ($r_s = .36, p < .001$); more influence of upper management in responding to the incident related to the use of more severe corrective actions.

Finally, the influence of a nursing shortage was not found to correlate with corrective action severity.

Hypothesis 7a, proposing that the hospital disciplinary policy would be a moderator of the attribution - corrective action relationship, was not supported.

The moderating effect of upper management influence on the relationship between attributions and corrective action severity, as stated in Hypothesis 7b, was not supported.

Finally, Hypothesis 7c, proposing the moderating effect of a nursing shortage on the relationship between attributions and corrective action severity, was also not supported.

Subordinate likableness. Analyses indicated that supervisor liking for the subordinate was not significantly related to corrective action severity. Therefore, the supervisor's liking of a subordinate did not relate to the use of less severe corrective actions, failing to
support Hypothesis 8.

Summary

Table 7 presents a summary of results of the analyses for both the first and second incidents of poor performance.

In summary, Hypotheses 1, 2, 4, and 5 were supported in the replication. Overall, both tests provided support for Hypotheses 1 and 4, which proposed that greater corrective action severity would be associated with more severe incidents of poor performance and with the supervisor intent to have the subordinate "pay" for the behavior rather than to motivate the subordinate to perform better. Furthermore, correlation analyses revealed a significant, although nonhypothesized, relationship between hospital disciplinary policy and corrective action severity. The analyses from the second incident of poor performance also supported Hypothesis 2 which proposed that more severe corrective actions would be related to internal rather than external attributions for the cause of the incident of poor performance. Also, corrective actions which were rated as more effective were used more frequently. Finally, analyses from the second incident of poor performance also indicated a nonhypothesized link; the influence of upper management in responding to the incident of poor performance was significantly correlated with corrective action severity.

Exploratory Analyses

After testing the hypotheses proposed in the present study, additional relationships were investigated among the variables.
identified in the interview phase of the study.

**Supervisor Attributions**

To begin, the relationships between supervisor attributions and the other variables were of interest because of the amount of past research in the area of attribution theory in addition to the suggested relations of variables with supervisor attributions made by Arvey and Jones (1985). These correlations can be found in Tables 1 and 4.

From Table 1, one of the nine variables was significantly correlated with the attribution measure. Severity of the behavior was positively related to supervisor attributions ($r = .24, p<.05$); more severe incidents were associated with internal rather than external attributions.

From Table 4, only one of the nine measures was significantly correlated with supervisor attributions. Effectiveness ratings were negatively and significantly correlated with attributions ($r = -.29, p<.01$). Therefore, these results indicate that less internal attributions were related to higher ratings of corrective action severity.

The original analyses conducted in the present study supported Hypotheses 1 and 2 which proposed that severity of the incident of poor performance and attributions would be related to corrective action severity. The correlation analyses discussed above also indicated that severity of the incident of poor performance was significantly related to attributions. These findings suggest that the combination of supervisor attributions and severity of the incident may have a greater effect on corrective action severity than either variable alone.
Therefore, moderated regression analyses were conducted to determine if severity of the incident of poor performance moderated the relationship between attributions and corrective actions. Table 8 presents the results of the analyses.

No significant Severity of incident X Attribution interaction was found for ratings of either the first or second incident of poor performance.

**Ability, Effort, Task Difficulty, and Luck Attributions**

A second set of exploratory analyses involved the attribution measure. As previously discussed, Hypothesis 2 proposed that attributions would correlate with corrective action severity: Internal attributions would relate to more severe corrective actions while external attributions would relate to less severe corrective actions. In order to obtain further information about the relationship between attributions and corrective action severity, additional analyses were conducted using the four attribution items measuring effort, ability, task difficulty, and luck separately. It should be noted that the use of these four items is similar to Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Reed, Rest, & Rosenbaum's (1972) conceptualization of attributions, dividing them into the same four factors. In addition, this use of the factors is logical and may explain low inter-item correlations between the attribution items used in the present study since, for example, a supervisor may attribute the cause of poor performance to lack of
subordinate effort while not "blaming" the lack of ability of the subordinate, the difficulty of the task, or the subordinate's good or bad luck for the poor performance. Similarly, a supervisor may attribute subordinate poor performance to the difficulty of the task while not attributing the cause to any of the three other factors. Therefore, exploratory analyses were conducted to determine the relation of each of these to corrective action severity.

Table 9 presents correlations between the four attribution measures and corrective action severity for ratings of the first and second incidents of poor performance. Results indicated that effort attributions and corrective action severity were the only significantly related variables, occurring only in ratings of the first incident ($r_s = .24, p<.05$). Therefore, attributions to greater lack of subordinate effort were related to more severe corrective actions.

Hypotheses 3a, 7a, 7b, and 7c proposed that initiating structure and consideration leader style scores, and the influences of hospital disciplinary policy, upper management, and nursing shortage would moderate the relationship between attributions and corrective action severity. Therefore, moderated regression analyses were conducted to determine if leader style scores (initiating structure and consideration) and contextual variables (disciplinary policy, upper management, and nursing shortage) moderated the relationships between
effort, ability, task difficulty, and luck attributions and corrective action severity.

Table 10 presents the results of the analyses testing whether supervisor scores on initiating structure or consideration moderated the relationship between attributions and corrective actions.

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Insert Table 10 about here
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Analyses of ratings of the first incident of poor performance revealed two moderated effects. Results indicated significant Initiating Structure X Ability ($p < .05$) and Initiating Structure X Luck ($p < .05$) interactions. To better understand the nature of the interaction, figures were constructed for each using procedures outlined in Cohen and Cohen (1975). To begin, the beta weights for the moderating variable, attribution measure, and cross-product from the regression results were used to write a linear equation. Next, high and low scores on the initiating structure measure were obtained by using the mean score and then adding or subtracting one standard deviation from it to obtain high and low scores. These scores were then substituted, one at a time, into the equation to obtain two linear equations. Finally, these linear equations were each graphed.

Inspection of Figure 3 indicates that the relationship between ability attributions and corrective action severity is greater when supervisor initiating structure score is high rather than low. Figure 4 reveals that for low supervisor initiating structure scores, the relationship between luck attributions and corrective action severity is stronger than when scores are high.
Therefore, these results indicate that when supervisor initiating structure scores are high, there is a stronger relation between greater supervisor attributions regarding lack of subordinate ability and more severe corrective actions. When initiating structure scores are low, there is a stronger relation between attributions to bad luck and more severe corrective actions.

Insert Figure 3 about here

Insert Figure 4 about here

Analyses of the ratings of the second poor performance incident provided no significant interaction terms. Therefore, neither supervisor initiating structure nor consideration scores moderated the relationships between attribution measures and corrective action severity.

Table 11 presents results of the moderated regression analyses testing the moderation of attributions and corrective action severity by the influence of the contextual variables of disciplinary policy, upper management, and nursing shortage.

Insert Table 11 about here

No significant interactions occurred in the moderated regression analyses using the hospital disciplinary policy. Analyses of ratings of the second incident of poor performance revealed a significant
Discipline Policy X Ability interaction (p<.05). Figure 5 presents a graphic representation of this moderated effect.

As demonstrated in the figure, the relationship between ability attributions and corrective action severity is greater when the influence of the hospital discipline policy is high. Therefore, attributions to lack of subordinate ability are more strongly related to the use of severe corrective actions when the discipline policy is highly influential in the choice of the corrective action. No other significant interactions were found in the analyses of the moderating effect of disciplinary policy on the relationship between the attribution measures and corrective action severity.

No significant interactions were found in the first incident analyses of the moderating effect of upper management on the relationship between attribution measures and corrective action severity. Analyses of the second incident of poor performance also revealed no significant interactions.

Moderated regression analyses for the first and second incidents of poor performance revealed no significant interaction terms; therefore, the influence of a nursing shortage was not a significant moderator of the relationships between the attribution measures and corrective action severity.

Summary. In summary, results of correlation analysis revealed that the only significant correlation was between effort attributions and corrective action severity. Additionally, results of
the moderated regression analyses indicated that supervisor initiating
structure leader style moderated the relationship between ability
attributions and corrective actions and between luck attributions and
corrective actions. Furthermore, the influence of the hospital
disciplinary policy moderated the relationship between ability
attributions and corrective actions.
Discussion

The following section discusses results of the present study by first presenting an overview of findings regarding the hypothesized relationships between the variables identified in the interview phase and corrective action severity. A discussion of findings of the exploratory analyses will follow. Next, limitations of the study followed by theoretical and applied implications will be discussed. Finally, suggestions for future research will be presented.

Results of the Analyses of Hypothesized Relationships

Hypothesis 1, which proposed that more severe incidents of poor performance (in terms of its impact on patient care and the nursing unit) would be related to more severe corrective actions, was supported in analyses of ratings of both the first and second incidents of poor performance. These results are in accordance with those of Rosen and Jerdee (1974), which indicated that more severe punishment and more internal attributions were given to a subject when the incident of poor performance caused greater organizational harm.

Results of analyses of the relationship between supervisor attributions for the cause of poor performance and corrective action severity supported Hypothesis 2 only in the second poor performance incident ratings. More internal attributions were related to more severe corrective actions, which corresponds to past research findings (e.g., Mitchell & Wood, 1980; Wood & Mitchell, 1981). Therefore, the more that the cause of poor performance was attributed to the subordinate, the more severe was the corrective action used.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that high initiating structure leader style scores would be related to more severe corrective actions while high
consideration leader style scores would be related to less severe corrective actions. However, analyses in both the first and second incidents provided no support for the hypothesis. These results do not correspond with those of O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) who found that supervisors who were more direct and had less trouble firing subordinates were more likely to use punishment. One explanation for the difference in results is that the characteristics assessed in the present study (initiating structure and consideration) may not directly correspond to the directness assessed by O'Reilly and Weitz (1980). Therefore, while directness may relate to corrective action use, task and employee orientation may not. In addition, Hypothesis 3a suggested that leader style scores would moderate the relationship between supervisor attributions and corrective action severity. Moderated regression analyses revealed that the relationship between attributions and corrective action severity was neither moderated by levels of initiating structure leader style nor consideration, failing to support Hypothesis 3a.

Analyses of ratings of both the first and second incidents of poor performance supported Hypothesis 4. These results support suggestions of both Arvey and Jones (1985) and Podsakoff (1982) regarding the relationship between leader intent in choosing a corrective action and corrective action severity. Therefore, more severe corrective actions were related to the supervisor's intent to deliver a consequence for the poor performance rather than to the intent to motivate the subordinate to perform better.

Hypothesis 5 proposed that effectiveness ratings of corrective actions used would be related to the frequency of their use. More
Hypothesis 5 proposed that effectiveness ratings of corrective actions used would be related to the frequency of their use. More specifically, it was hypothesized that corrective actions rated as more effective would be used more frequently. This was supported in analyses of the second poor performance incident. Also, correlation analyses of the second poor performance incident indicated that higher ratings of corrective action effectiveness were related to less severe corrective actions. Therefore, less severe corrective actions were viewed by the supervisors as leading to improved patient care and relations within the nursing unit.

Hypothesis 6, suggesting that the span of control would be related to corrective action severity, was not supported. Therefore, the relationship between the number of subordinates under the supervisor and severity of corrective actions used, as suggested by Arvey and Jones (1985), was not found. Podsakoff (1982) proposed that as span of control increases, less time is spent with subordinates and more severe corrective actions are used in response to poor performance. One possible reason for the unsupported hypothesis in the present study may be found in the population used. In addition to their administrative duties, nursing supervisors are also directly involved in patient care, regardless of their span of control. As a result, more time may be spent with subordinates, and, therefore, no difference in corrective action severity would result.

Supporting suggestions made by Podsakoff (1982) and Arvey and Jones (1985), contextual variables were found to relate to corrective action severity. Correlation analyses in ratings of both the first and second
incident indicated that the influence of the hospital disciplinary policy was significantly correlated with corrective action severity; the more the policy influenced the choice of a corrective action, the more severe the corrective action used. Also, results indicated that the influence of upper management was significantly related to corrective action severity. Therefore, the more involved upper management was in dealing with the incident of poor performance, the more severe the corrective action used; however, this result was found only in analysis of the second incident of poor performance. Hypotheses 7a, 7b, and 7c proposed that the relationship between supervisor attributions and corrective action severity would be moderated by the influence of the hospital disciplinary policy, upper management, and nursing shortage, respectively. Moderated regression analyses indicated that none of these contextual variables moderated the attribution-corrective action severity relationship; however, this may be a result of the low reliability of the attribution measure. Thus, investigations of these relationships should be continued in future studies.

Hypothesis 8 proposed that likable subordinates would receive less severe corrective actions than dislikable subordinates; however, this was not supported in analyses of either the first or second incident of poor performance. Therefore, liking for a subordinate did not relate to a supervisor's choice of a corrective action. These results do not correspond to those of Dobbins and Russell (1986b) and Trahan and Dobbins (1988) who found a significant negative relationship between subordinate likableness and use of corrective actions. The difference in results may be due to the measures used. The present study used a
six-item scale to indicate subordinate likableness. In addition, the
reliabilities of the measure used in the present study were found to be
high. However, both Dobbins and Russell (1986b) and Trahan and Dobbins
(1988) used a single likableness rating. Therefore, the present study
may have used a stronger measure of likableness, resulting in different
findings. The discussion of the results from exploratory analyses will
offer further clarification concerning subordinate likableness.

Results of Exploratory Analyses

Based on findings from past research in attribution theory and
suggested relationships with supervisor attributions made in Arvey and
Jones' (1985) model, analyses were conducted to explore the
relationships between the variables tested in the present study and
supervisor attributions. Results indicated that in the first rating of
poor performance incidents, supervisor attributions were correlated with
severity of the incident; more severe incidents were related to more
internal attributions for the cause of the incident of poor performance.
This result again corresponds to those of Rosen and Jerdee (1974) which
concluded that more severe punishments were given and more internal
attributions were made when the incident of poor performance was severe
or caused greater organizational harm. However, severity of the
incident was not found to moderate the relationship between supervisor
attributions and corrective action severity.

Finally, the replication also revealed a significant negative
correlation between effectiveness ratings and attributions; more
internal attributions were related to less effective ratings of the
corrective action used. For example, if a supervisor made internal
attributions, or attributions to lack of subordinate ability, the corrective actions used by the supervisor may not affect the subordinate's performance. Therefore, effectiveness ratings of the corrective action would be low.

Based on results of supported and nonsupported hypotheses in the present study and findings from exploratory analyses regarding attributions, a revised model is presented in Figure 6. As can be seen from the figure, corrective actions are related to severity of the incident, supervisor attributions, intent, and effectiveness ratings, and the contextual variables of discipline policy and upper management. In addition, supervisor attributions are related to severity of the incident. Therefore, many of the relationships suggested by Arvey and Jones (1985) were supported.

One final set of exploratory analyses were conducted using the four separate attribution measures. Results from these analyses revealed that supervisor initiating structure moderated the relationship between ability attributions and corrective action severity. Supervisor initiating structure also moderated the relationship between luck attributions and corrective action severity. The relationship between attributions to lack of ability and severity of corrective actions was found to be greater when supervisor initiating structure scores were high. In other words, supervisors who are more task-oriented respond with more severe corrective actions when they attribute poor performance
to lack of subordinate ability than do supervisors who are less task-oriented. Second, the relationship between attributions to bad luck and severity of corrective actions was found to be greater when supervisor initiating structure scores were low. Thus, supervisors who were more task-oriented respond with less severe corrective actions when poor performance is attributed to bad luck than do low task-oriented supervisors. Taken together, these results suggest that supervisors with greater task emphasis tended to be more affected by subordinate inability to complete the task, resulting in more severe corrective actions. Also, task-oriented supervisors may be more aware of the task itself as well as the external environment that may affect task performance. Therefore, attributions to bad luck would result in the use of less severe corrective actions.

Finally, the relationship between ability attributions and corrective action severity was moderated by the influence of the hospital disciplinary policy. Inspection of this effect revealed that the relationship between attributions of lack of ability and more severe corrective actions was stronger when the disciplinary policy was highly influential in determining how to respond to the poor performance incident.

Limitations

Several limitations of the present study should be noted. To begin, the present study used only supervisor self-report measures. Additional measures of the variables obtained from, for example, upper management, peers, or subordinates would provide a check on the supervisors' ratings regarding the extent to which their perceptions of
the incident of poor performance correspond to others'.

The second limitation involves the attribution measure. As stated earlier, in order to increase the internal consistency of the measure, only two of the items were used. Despite the difficulties encountered, results from the interview phase indicating that supervisors do make attributions to the cause of performance when deciding what corrective action should be used suggests that further research in the area of attributions and corrective actions is warranted.

Finally, an additional limitation is inherent in the use of correlation and regression analyses, namely the notion of causality. Causality cannot be inferred from the correlational analyses; the results suggest areas where experimental research might prove fruitful.

Applications

Results of the present study have implications for both theory and applied areas. The present study tested a portion of Arvey and Jones' (1985) model of organizational discipline. Also, as seen in the literature, research in this area is overdue. Results from the present study indicate that variables such as severity of the incident, supervisor intent, attributions, in addition to contextual variables such as disciplinary policy and upper management are related to corrective action severity.

With regard to applied significance, the present study identified factors such as incident severity, attributions, supervisor intent, and contextual variables that affect a supervisor's decision of which corrective action to use. This information will be helpful to supervisors to help them understand and be aware of those factors
influencing or biasing their decisions. Supervisors may already consciously attend to factors such as incident severity and upper management and discipline policy influences on their choice of corrective actions. However, supervisors also need to be aware of the influence of attributions and intentions as well as their possible biasing effects on corrective action decisions. For example, intentions to deliver a consequence to the subordinate were shown to be related to the use of more severe corrective actions. Because of the influence of this factor, supervisors need to take caution in assessing their intentions before choosing actions for poor performance. These results may also be beneficial to upper management personnel. The present study indicated those factors that were related to corrective action severity. Administrators can use information from this and future studies to create and/or revise procedures regarding corrective action use in order to ensure that it is based more on factors regarding the act rather than, for example, supervisor or subordinate characteristics.

Finally, as previously stated, the present study investigated an area in which research is overdue. Furthermore, the study was developed and conducted using input from actual supervisors; making findings directly applicable to them. Therefore, the present study is a response to the need brought forth by Banks and Murphy (1985) of closing the gap between researchers and practitioners.

**Future Research**

While the present study provides some support for the Arvey and Jones (1985) model, research is needed to test the additional suggested relationships which were not presently tested. For example, the
relationship between corrective actions and subordinate response needs to be examined. Research in this area should be of particular interest to practitioners.

Second, a replication of the present study in organizations other than hospitals is needed to determine if these results generalize to other settings or are particular to hospital settings.

Third, additional research is needed in the development of attribution measures and the investigation of the relations of effort, ability, task difficulty, and luck to corrective actions.

Finally, since Arvey and Jones (1985) stated that their model was constructed to stimulate research in the area and was not intended to be complete, research involving additional interviews in various settings as well as statistical tests of the variables need to be conducted. For example, the variables tested in the present study should continue to be investigated. Also, additional interviews of supervisors may reveal other variables of concern to supervisors that have not yet been suggested.

Conclusion

In conclusion, corrective actions have both psychological and financial costs for employees and organizations; however, failure to terminate, punish, or train poor performing employees will lead to continued poor performance (Ilgen, Mitchell, & Frederickson, 1981). Also, incorrect corrective actions have been shown to lead to problems; therefore, choosing the most appropriate action is crucial. Results from the present study demonstrate that factors such as severity of the incident, upper management, and hospital disciplinary policy influence
supervisor choice of corrective actions. The results also indicated that factors such as supervisor attributions and intent influence corrective action decisions. In addition, attributions and supervisor intent may bias supervisors when deciding how to respond to subordinate poor performance. For example, if a supervisor intends to make a subordinate pay for their behavior, a more severe corrective action may be used, than would usually be used. Therefore, findings from the study imply that supervisors need to be aware of these factors that may bias their decisions. As a result, research in the area of corrective actions will lead to greater understanding of the process by both supervisors and subordinates.
References


Appendix A

Interview Questions
1. What is your job title?

2. What are the duties of your job?

3. How many people do you directly supervise?

4. List all of the things that you have done when an employee of yours performs poorly. Describe each.

5. Rank order these actions you just listed in order of most to least severe.

6. Are there any actions that you use more than others?

7. Are there any actions that other supervisors in the hospital use that you do not?

8. When you are deciding how to react to your employee's poor performance, what things do you think about and consider?

9. Does the hospital have a policy on employee performance and how you should respond to it? Is it flexible/rigid?

10. Do you use a formal performance evaluation system? How often? If not, please describe.

11. What categories do you rate your employees on?

12. What influence does this performance evaluation instrument have on your decisions about how to react to poor performance?

13. Which of these usually comes first: the poor performance evaluation or your actions towards an employee's poor performance?

14. How does the economic condition affect your response to employee poor performance?
Appendix B

Corrective Action Measure
Think about the last time that you had to discipline one of your employees. Please describe that incident briefly, including what led to the incident, the incident itself, and what happened afterwards, and then answer the following questions about that incident and the employee it concerned.

1. Indicate the corrective actions used with the employee. If you used more than one, please indicate the order in which they were used (1=first action, 2=second action, etc.).

- [ ] talk to the employee/informal counseling or caution
- [ ] verbal conference or warning
- [ ] written conference or warning/letter of reprimand
- [ ] coach the employee on the unit
- [ ] provide in-services or additional classes for the employee
- [ ] have the employee use employee assistance programs
- [ ] transfer the employee to a different position or unit
- [ ] intervene in the situation/send the employee home immediately
- [ ] put the employee on probation
- [ ] hold back a percentage of the employee’s merit raise
- [ ] suspend the employee without pay
- [ ] terminate
Appendix C

Severity of Incident Measure
Please answer the following questions based on the incident you described by circling the appropriate response.

a. How severe was the impact of this poor performance on patient care?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all            Somewhat                Very Severe

b. How severe was the impact of this poor performance on coworkers or the nursing unit?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all            Somewhat                Very Severe

c. Compared to past incidents of poor performance, how severe was this incident?
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Not at all            Somewhat                Very Severe
Appendix D

Attribution Measure
Instructions: Think about the cause or causes that explain the performance of your employee. The items below ask your impressions or opinions about possible causes. Circle the number that represents your feelings concerning the causes of the employee's performance.

a. To what extent was the nurse's performance caused by the lack of effort of the nurse?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Very Little Moderately Very Much

b. To what extent was the nurse's performance caused by the lack of abilities of the nurse?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Very Little Moderately Very Much

c. To what extent was the nurse's performance caused by the difficulty of what he/she was doing at the time?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Very Little Moderately Very Much

d. To what extent was the nurse's performance caused by bad luck?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Very Little Moderately Very Much

e. To what extent was the nurse's performance caused by factors internal to the nurse, such as personality, attitudes, abilities, motivation, etc.?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Very Little Moderately Very Much

f. To what extent was the nurse's performance caused by factors external to the nurse such as a difficult task, unclear instructions, poor leadership, etc.?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Very Little Moderately Very Much

g. To what extent was the nurse's performance consistent with past performance? (i.e., their track record)?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Very Little Moderately Very Much
h. To what extent was the nurse's performance caused by his/her lack of knowledge?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Very Little  Moderately  Very Much

i. To what extent was the nurse's performance influenced by the situation in the unit at the time (For example, was there anything else going on in the unit that interfered with performance)?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Very Little  Moderately  Very Much

j. To what extent was the nurse's performance influenced by any personal problems that may have interfered with the job?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Very Little  Moderately  Very Much

k. To what extent was the nurse's performance caused by the lack of training or orientation by the hospital of the nurse?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Very Little  Moderately  Very Much
Appendix E

Leader Opinion Questionnaire
PLEASE NOTE:

Copyrighted materials in this document have not been filmed at the request of the author. They are available for consultation, however, in the author's university library.

These consist of pages:

67 - 70
Appendix F

Supervisor Intent Measure
Think about why you chose to use the most recent action you indicated above.

a. Did you choose the corrective action:

<p>| | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to inform the nurse about how acceptable his/her behavior was</td>
<td>to give the nurse a consequence for his/her behavior</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

b. Did you choose the corrective action:

<p>| | | | | | | |</p>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to give the nurse feedback on his/her behavior</td>
<td>to have the nurse &quot;pay&quot; for results of his/her behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

Corrective Action Effectiveness Rating
Think back to the first incident you described.

1. How effective was the corrective action(s) you used in the first incident? For example, did your actions lead to improved performance of the employee?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>4</th>
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<td>Very Ineffective</td>
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<td>Very Effective</td>
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</table>

2. How effective was the corrective action(s) you used in the first incident on the nursing unit as a whole? For example, did your actions lead to improved performance or conditions in the unit?

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<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Very Effective</td>
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Appendix H

Contextual Variables Measure
To what extent were the following factors influential in your decision of which corrective action to use? (Circle the appropriate response)

a. Your immediate supervisor

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<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Very Influential</td>
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b. Nursing shortage

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Influential</td>
<td>Somewhat Influential</td>
<td>Very Influential</td>
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c. Hospital Disciplinary Policy

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<th>7</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Very Influential</td>
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Appendix I

Subordinate Likableness Measure
a. How much do you like this subordinate as a person?

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<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Very Much</td>
<td></td>
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b. How probable is it that you would have this subordinate as a friend outside of work?

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Very probable</td>
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c. How much did you like or dislike the nurse?

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<td>Liked</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Much</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Very Much</td>
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</table>

d. I'd like to get to know the nurse.

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<tr>
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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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e. The nurse was easy to get along with.

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f. I'd like to be friends with the nurse.

<table>
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### Table 1
**Intercorrelation between Variables**

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<th>7b.</th>
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*Coefficient alpha values for the measures are located on the diagonal.

*p<.05

**p<.01

***p<.001
Table 2
Correlations between Variables and Corrective Action Severity

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<td>2. Attributions</td>
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<td>3. Leader style</td>
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<td>5. Effectiveness</td>
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<td>10. Subordinate likableness</td>
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*p<.05  
**p<.01  
***p<.001
Table 3
Moderated Regression Results

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<th>Corrective Action Severity&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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<td>2. Consideration * Attributions</td>
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<td><strong>Contextual Variables</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td>3. Nursing Shortage * Attributions</td>
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</table>

<sup>a</sup>Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients.

*<sup>p</sup><.05
**<sup>p</sup><.01
***<sup>p</sup><.001
Table 4
Intercorrelation between Variables

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<td>43.11</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>-.13782</td>
<td>-.04897</td>
<td>-.19785</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Intent</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.29464**</td>
<td>.11569</td>
<td>.02231</td>
<td>.02790</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Effectiveness</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>9.54</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>-.19849</td>
<td>-.29388**</td>
<td>-.06364</td>
<td>-.15811</td>
<td>-.08840</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Span of control</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>64.13</td>
<td>80.23</td>
<td>-.04955</td>
<td>.01595</td>
<td>-.03911</td>
<td>-.06794</td>
<td>.16127</td>
<td>-.00441</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7a. Disc. policy</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>.18778</td>
<td>.00915</td>
<td>.10683</td>
<td>-.17096</td>
<td>.17366</td>
<td>-.02245</td>
<td>.10711</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7b. Upper mgt.</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>.23591*</td>
<td>.06391</td>
<td>-.18160</td>
<td>.05343</td>
<td>.09337</td>
<td>-.32649**</td>
<td>-.07222</td>
<td>.33535**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7c. Nurse shortage</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>.06970</td>
<td>.08931</td>
<td>.02397</td>
<td>-.11279</td>
<td>.38303***</td>
<td>-.07345</td>
<td>.22737*</td>
<td>-.06301</td>
<td>.23535*</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Likableness</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>25.71</td>
<td>7.70</td>
<td>-.09060</td>
<td>-.18669</td>
<td>-.05121</td>
<td>-.13036</td>
<td>-.20017*</td>
<td>.32773**</td>
<td>-.07614</td>
<td>.11724</td>
<td>-.03743</td>
<td>.00288</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Coefficient alpha values for the measures are located on the diagonal.

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001
Table 5
Correlations between Variables and Corrective Action Severity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Corrective Action Severity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Severity of incident</td>
<td>.48416***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Attributions</td>
<td>.23180*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Leader style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. initiating structure</td>
<td>.00754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. consideration</td>
<td>-.01825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Intent</td>
<td>.26930**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Effectiveness</td>
<td>-.32372**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Span of control</td>
<td>.06161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Disciplinary policy</td>
<td>.31402**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Upper management</td>
<td>.35784***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Nursing shortage</td>
<td>-.01327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Subordinate likableness</td>
<td>-.12669</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001
Table 6
Moderated Regression Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Corrective Action Severity$^a$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader Style</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Initiating structure * Attributions</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Consideration * Attributions</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contextual Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Discipline Policy * Attributions</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Upper Management * Attributions</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Nursing Shortage * Attributions</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients.

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>First Incident</th>
<th>Second Incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Relation of severity of incident to corrective action severity</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Relation of attributions to corrective action severity</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Relation of initiating structure and consideration scores to corrective action severity</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a. Moderating effects of initiating structure and consideration scores on attribution - corrective action severity relationship</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Relation of supervisor intent to corrective action severity</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Corrective actions rated more effective used more frequently</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Relation of span of control to corrective action severity</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7a. Moderating effect of disciplinary policy on attribution - corrective action severity relationship</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7b. Moderating effect of upper management on attribution - corrective action severity relationship</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7c. Moderating effect of nursing shortage on attribution - corrective action severity relationship</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Relation of subordinate likableness to corrective action severity</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictor Variables</td>
<td>Corrective Action Severity[^a]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Incident</td>
<td>Second Incident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity of incident * Attributions</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^a]: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients.

* *p<.05
** *p<.01
*** *p<.001
Table 9
Correlations between Attribution Measures and Corrective Action Severity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Corrective Action Severity</th>
<th>First Incident</th>
<th>Second Incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td></td>
<td>.23886*</td>
<td>.12439</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td></td>
<td>.09752</td>
<td>.17642</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task Difficulty</td>
<td></td>
<td>.04749</td>
<td>-.10203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luck</td>
<td></td>
<td>.04239</td>
<td>-.11644</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001
Table 10
Moderated Regression Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Corrective Action Severity&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>First Incident</th>
<th>Second Incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiating Structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Initiating structure * Effort</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Initiating structure * Ability</td>
<td>.06*</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Initiating Structure * Task Difficulty</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Initiating Structure * Luck</td>
<td>-.13*</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consideration</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Consideration * Effort</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Consideration * Ability</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Consideration * Task Difficulty</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Consideration * Luck</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients.

*<sup>p</sup><.05  **<sup>p</sup><.01  ***<sup>p</sup><.001
Table 11  
Moderated Regression Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Corrective Action Severity$^a$</th>
<th>First Incident</th>
<th>Second Incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Policy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Disciplinary Policy * Effort</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Disciplinary policy * Ability</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Disciplinary Policy * Task Difficulty</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.12</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Disciplinary Policy * Luck</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upper Management</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Upper Management * Effort</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Upper Management * Ability</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.15</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Upper Management * Task Difficulty</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>-.02</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Upper Management * Luck</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.17</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nursing Shortage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Nursing Shortage * Effort</td>
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<td>-.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nursing Shortage * Ability</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Nursing Shortage * Task Difficulty</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Nursing Shortage * Luck</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients.

*p<.05
**p<.01
***p<.001
Figure Caption

Figure 1. Arvey and Jones' (1985) model of organizational discipline.
**Figure Caption**

*Figure 2.* Revised model to be tested in the present study.
Figure 3. Moderating effect of initiating structure leader style on the relationship between ability attributions and corrective action severity.
CORRECTIVE ACTION SEVERITY

ABILITY ATTRIBUTIONS

high initiating structure
+++++++ low initiating structure
Figure 4. Moderating effect of initiating structure leader style on the relationship between luck attributions and corrective action severity.
CORRECTIVE ACTION SEVERITY

LUCK ATTRIBUTIONS

_____ high initiating structure
++++++ low initiating structure
Figure Caption

Figure 5. Moderating effect of hospital disciplinary policy on the relationship between ability attributions and corrective action severity.
CORRECTIVE ACTION SEVERITY

ABILITY ATTRIBUTIONS

-- high discipline policy influence
+++++ low discipline policy influence
Figure Caption

Figure 6. Revised model of organizational discipline.
Vita

Personal Data

Wanda A. Trahan
Department of Psychology
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
(504) 388-8745

Education

1985  B.S.  Louisiana State University  Psychology
1987  M.A.  Louisiana State University  Psychology
1989  Ph.D. Louisiana State University  Psychology


Dissertation: Factors affecting supervisors' use of corrective actions following poor performance.

Professional Experience

1985-1986. Teaching Assistant to A.G. Young, Ph.D., and R.C. Mathews, Ph.D.
Duties: Supervised the laboratory portion of an introductory experimental psychology course and graded classwork. Also worked as a teaching assistant during the summer semester for other professors grading classwork.

1986-1987. Research Assistant to Irving M. Lane, Ph.D.

1987-1989. Instructor, Louisiana State University. Introduction to Experimental Statistics. This course gives students an introduction to basic statistics, including descriptive statistics, t-tests, correlations, and analysis of variance.
Duties: Preparing and presenting lectures and developing and grading exams.

Duties: The practicum provided experience in team industrial/organizational consulting. Projects included the construction and validation of ability tests for the purpose of career counseling, the application and
follow-up of a survey-feedback technique in a hospital, and the assessment of turnover in an organization based in Baton Rouge followed by examining the selection procedure of that organization. This project entailed interviewing and surveying employees for the development of a structured interview system and weighted application blank and validation of their current selection inventory.

Supervisor: Dirk D. Steiner, Ph.D.
Gregory H. Dobbins, Ph.D.
Irving M. Lane, Ph.D.

Manuscripts under review


Manuscripts in progress


Presentations


Professional Affiliations

Academy of Management
American Psychological Association
Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Inc.
Southeastern Psychological Association
Southern Management Association

Awards and Honors

Phi Beta Kappa
Phi Kappa Phi
Alpha Lambda Delta

Teaching Interests

Teaching interests include areas of Industrial/Organizational Psychology such as personnel selection, performance appraisal, motivation, leadership, and organization development, as well as areas of management and experimental statistics.

Research Interests

Performance Appraisal: Sex effects in performance appraisals; corrective actions following negative or poor performance; investigating actual corrective actions used by supervisors to determine those organizational variables that influence or may substitute for the supervisor's decisions.

Attribution Theory and Leadership: Effects of subordinate likableness and closeness of supervision on attributions and corrective actions given for poor performance; attributional model for the area of training.

Turnover: Effect of feedback characteristics on intention to turnover.

Equity Theory: Factors affecting pay allocation decisions; the effects of economic conditions and organizational policies on leaders' distribution decisions and subsequent corrective actions.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Wanda Ann Trahan

Major Field: Psychology

Title of Dissertation: Factors Affecting Supervisors' Use of Corrective Actions Following Poor Performance

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:
August 25, 1989