The Effect of Leader Morning Negative Affect on Employee Afternoon Work Engagement

Authors: Zhang Yinpu, Wan Jin, Hu Ping, Hu Ping

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Abstract

Drawing upon the Emotions as Social Information (EASI) theory and motivational orientation theory, this study utilized experience sampling methodology to investigate the effects of leaders' negative emotional expression on employees' work engagement and the mediating role of goal orientation at both within-individual and between-individual levels. Experience sampling data were collected from 24 leaders and 109 employees across five workdays in one week, with two measurement points per day, and analyzed using multilevel structural equation modeling. The results indicated: (1) At the within-individual level, leaders' negative emotional expression in the morning negatively predicted employees' morning learning orientation and performance-prove orientation, while positively predicting their performance-avoidance orientation. Subsequently, learning orientation and performance-prove orientation positively predicted employees'afternoon work engagement, whereas performance-avoidance orientation negatively predicted afternoon work engagement; learning orientation, performance-avoidance orientation, and performance-prove orientation mediated the relationship between leaders'negative emotional expression and work engagement; (2) At the between-individual level, leaders' negative emotional expression negatively predicted employees' learning orientation and performance-prove orientation, and positively predicted their performance-avoidance orientation. Learning orientation and performance-prove orientation positively predicted work engagement; learning goal orientation and performance-prove orientation mediated the relationship between leaders' negative emotional expression and employees' work engagement. The study revealed divergent relationships between within-individual and between-individual levels, with an "emergent"effect of the "leader negative emotion—goal orientation—work engagement" pathway at the interpersonal level.

Full Text

The Impact of Leaders' Morning Negative Emotions on Employees' Afternoon Work Engagement

Abstract

Drawing on the Emotions as Social Information (EASI) theory and motivational orientation theory, this study employs an experience sampling methodology to explore the within-person and between-person effects of leaders' negative emotional expression on employee work engagement, as well as the mediating role of goal orientation. Using multilevel structural equation modeling to analyze data from 24 leaders and 109 employees over five workdays with two measurement points per day, we found: (1) At the within-person level, leaders' morning negative emotional expression negatively predicted employees' morning learning orientation and performance-prove orientation, while positively predicting performance-avoid orientation. Learning orientation and performance-prove orientation positively predicted afternoon work engagement, whereas performance-avoid orientation negatively predicted afternoon work engagement. Learning orientation, performance-avoid orientation, and performance-prove orientation mediated the relationship between leaders' negative emotional expression and work engagement. (2) At the between-person level, leaders' negative emotional expression negatively predicted employees' learning orientation and performance-prove orientation, while positively predicting performance-avoid orientation. Learning orientation and performance-prove orientation positively predicted work engagement. Learning orientation and performance-prove orientation mediated the relationship between leaders' negative emotional expression and employee work engagement. The study reveals different patterns across levels, with an "emergence" effect observed in the interpersonal "leader negative emotion—goal orientation—work engagement" pathway.

Keywords: leader negative emotion; goal orientation; work engagement; experience sampling method; within-person level; between-person level

1. Introduction

Previous research on leadership influence has predominantly focused on leadership behaviors. Recently, scholars have begun examining how leaders' emotions affect employees in organizational settings (Wang & Seibert, 2015; Liu, Song, Li, & Liao, 2017). While Western cultural contexts emphasize instrumental exchange between employees and leaders/organizations, Chinese "relationship-oriented society" emphasizes emotional exchange. Organizations serve not only as exchange venues but also as conduits for employees' emotional resources. Another characteristic of Chinese society is high power distance, where lower-power individuals are more susceptible to higher-power individuals' emotions. In organizations, employees' high dependence on leaders makes them particularly vulnerable to leader emotional influence, which exerts a non-negligible impact

on employee motivation and behavior. While leader positive emotions have constructive effects (Liu, Song, Li, & Liao, 2017), leader negative emotional expression triggers negative affective experiences and reduces positive behaviors such as work engagement (Wang & Seibert, 2015). Leader negative emotional expression leads employees to perceive lower organizational support and more adverse environments, thereby reducing work engagement (Jiang, Gu, Dong, & Tu, 2019). Given that employees' daily experiences vary, this study employs daily measurement to explore the impact and mechanisms of leader negative emotional expression on employee work engagement.

Emotional traits exhibit stability across time and situations, influencing individuals' judgments through perceptual processes and different response patterns (Lü, 2012). However, leader emotional states are influenced by time and context; traits alone cannot effectively predict behavior, necessitating attention to state-level characteristics in specific situations. Leader emotional expression represents the external manifestation of leaders' emotional reactions, reflecting a relatively transient emotional state observable through facial expressions, vocal tone, and activity levels.

Emotion is an expression of social relationships (Gooty, Gavin, & Ashkanasy, 2009), which determines that leaders' negative emotions affect employees' cognition and behavior (Wang & Seibert, 2015). Negative emotions, primarily including frustration, anger, and annoyance, contain complex social information and exert greater influence than positive emotions (Heerdink, van Kleef, Homan & Fischer, 2013). Therefore, this study focuses on leader negative emotional expression.

The Emotions as Social Information (EASI) model describes the social influence mechanisms of emotions. Emotions primarily affect interaction partners through emotional contagion and cognitive inference (Van Kleef, 2009). In leader-employee interactions, employees experience negative emotions through contagion from leaders' negative emotions, thereby reducing work engagement. Simultaneously, emotions provide not only self-state information but also information to interaction partners, influencing their cognition, attitudes, and behaviors. When employees perceive leaders' negative emotional expression, they sense lower organizational support and more adverse environments, experiencing psychological discomfort (Schaumberg & Flynn, 2012) and stress (Jarvis, 2017), which reduces work engagement. Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 1: Leader negative emotional expression negatively affects employee work engagement.

Goal orientation, a concept from achievement motivation research, refers to the degree to which individuals develop new skills, avoid appearing foolish or incompetent, and demonstrate developed skills. It possesses both trait-like and state-like characteristics (Beck & Schmidt, 2013). Emotions play an important role in goal orientation (Emmons & Kaiser, 1996). According to EASI theory, employees mimic leaders' negative emotions, generating negative affect

that negatively influences goal orientation. Additionally, leader negative emotional expression serves as social information that, through employees' cognitive processing, affects their goal orientation.

Motivational orientation theory posits that employees automatically process positive or negative stimuli closely related to work development, triggering approach-avoidance motivational orientations and corresponding cognitive and behavioral responses. Emotional stimuli activate compatible approach-avoidance reactions, eliciting employees' approach and avoidance motivational orientations. Approach orientation represents a state that reduces the distance between individuals and their environment, whereas avoidance orientation increases this distance. Approach and avoidance motivations activate corresponding behavioral patterns.

When engaging in goal orientation, employees anticipate potential gains and losses from actions, focusing more on immediate rather than future outcomes. According to motivational orientation theory, when facing leaders' negative emotions, employees automatically process this information, triggering avoidance motivation and adjusting their behavior to avoid immediate losses rather than engaging in uncertain learning that might yield future benefits. Because the potential outcomes of learning goal orientation occur in the distant future, their beneficial effects are discounted, further reducing expected utility. Therefore, when employees perceive adverse work environments, they reduce their expression of learning goal orientation (To, Fisher, & Ashkanasy, 2015). Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 2: Leader negative emotional expression negatively affects employee learning goal orientation.

According to EASI theory, leader negative emotional expression serves as negative, threatening feedback information closely related to employee development (To, Fisher, & Ashkanasy, 2015). Motivational orientation theory suggests that negative stimuli activate avoidance orientation, triggering avoidance behavior (Zheng et al., 2013). Avoidance motivation focuses on risks rather than potential development opportunities, emerging in the absence of emotional security and influencing individuals' approach-avoidance behaviors (Gable & Harmon-Jones, 2010). Moreover, emotions affect employees' motivation and expectancy (Seo, Bartunek & Barret, 2010), with negative emotions leading to lower subsequent goal-setting levels and strongly correlating with performance-avoid orientation (Cron, Slocum, & Vandewalle, 2005). Therefore, employees attend to and process information about leaders'negative emotional expression, generating avoidance motivation to prevent further losses and failures (Bradley, Codispoti, Cuthbert, & Lang, 2001). Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 3: Leader negative emotional expression positively affects employee performance-avoid orientation.

Leader negative emotional expression may also trigger employees' motivation to demonstrate skills. Employees may interpret leaders' negative emotions as

indicating problems with their own performance, prompting them to showcase skills to reverse the unfavorable situation rather than investing time and energy in uncertain learning (Beck & Schmidt, 2013).

According to motivational orientation theory and EASI theory, employees worry about their image in leaders' eyes, generating defensive management motivation (Tuckey et al., 2002; Lang & Bradley, 2010; Xiang & Long, 2012). Additionally, employees perceive negative threatening information from leaders as potentially harmful, triggering self-protection motivation (Park et al., 2007; To, Fisher, & Ashkanasy, 2015). When leaders express negative emotions, employees feel they are in an unfriendly relationship, perceive lower organizational support, and reduce achievement motivation to avoid potential negative consequences. Therefore, leader negative emotional expression negatively affects employee performance-prove orientation.

Research indicates that leader negative emotional expression reflects problems in the work environment or employee deficiencies, causing employees to experience resistance and negative emotions at work. Consequently, they adopt controlled processing strategies, narrowing their thinking and behavior (Visser, van Knippenberg, van Kleef, & Wisse, 2013), avoiding aversive situations, acting more cautiously, and increasing vigilance against further negative events, thereby negatively affecting performance-prove orientation. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 4: Leader negative emotional expression negatively affects employee performance-prove orientation.

Work engagement represents a crucial pathway for organizations to create competitive advantage. It refers to a positive affective and motivational state related to work, comprising three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). When activated, work engagement leads to more positive behavior and higher job performance (Ouweneel, Le Blanc, Schaufeli, & van Wijhe, 2012).

In organizations, employees face complex task demands requiring continuous information processing and environmental adaptation, selecting and adjusting pursued goals. Goal orientation plays an important role in individual work engagement. Since work engagement is influenced by motivational states (To, Fisher, & Ashkanasy, 2015), examining the relationship between goal orientation and work engagement is essential.

Employees' goal orientation constitutes an important component of work motivation (Johnson, Shull, & Wallace, 2011) that predicts work engagement (To, Fisher, & Ashkanasy, 2015). Employees who want to succeed and achieve goals work with vigor and focus, fully immersing themselves in their work. Research demonstrates that learning goal orientation positively affects work engagement (Beck & Schmidt, 2013). Employees with high performance-avoid orientation are unwilling to process information deeply, as this may expose their incompetence; they avoid information processing and thus exhibit lower work engagement (Elliott & McGregor, 2001). Performance-prove orientation represents a desire to

demonstrate competence to others (DeShon & Gillespie, 2005), and thus high performance-prove orientation increases work engagement, facilitating ability demonstration. In summary, we propose:

Hypothesis 5: Learning goal orientation positively affects employee work engagement.

Hypothesis 6: Performance-avoid orientation negatively affects employee work engagement.

Hypothesis 7: Performance-prove orientation positively affects employee work engagement.

Integrating Hypotheses 1-7, we further predict the mediating role of goal orientation. Conservation of Resource (COR) theory posits that personal resources (e.g., time, emotion, attention) are limited, and individuals seek to protect and conserve these resources (Hobfoll, 1989). This theory explains the psychological mechanism from balance to imbalance between needs and resources, and back to balance. In the workplace, leaders' negative emotions convey information that reduces employees' perceived support and security from leaders and the organization, making work feel threatening, stressful, or otherwise negatively uncertain. This disrupts the balance of employees' daily emotional, attentional, and behavioral states, creating an imbalance between needs and supportive resources. Employees then adjust their goal orientation to balance their psychological state and achieve further balance through work engagement. Thus, individual resource status is an important factor influencing employees' goal orientation and work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Leader negative emotional expression makes employees perceive "unsmooth" or "difficult" circumstances, reducing self-efficacy and affecting goal orientation, thereby decreasing work focus. Research shows that leader negative emotional expression reflects work deficiencies, triggering performance-avoid motivation and reducing performance-prove and learning goal orientations, consequently decreasing work engagement (To, Fisher, & Ashkanasy, 2015). In summary, we propose:

Hypothesis 8: Learning goal orientation mediates the relationship between leader negative emotional expression and work engagement.

Hypothesis 9: Performance-avoid orientation mediates the relationship between leader negative emotional expression and work engagement.

Hypothesis 10: Performance-prove orientation mediates the relationship between leader negative emotional expression and work engagement.

2. Methodology

This study employs experience sampling methodology to examine leader emotions and goal orientation from a state perspective. Previous research has primarily focused on trait-level, between-person characteristics of leader emotions and goal orientation, yet both constructs exhibit strong state-like properties

(Beck & Schmidt, 2013; Van Kleef, van den Berg, & Heerdink, 2015). Leader emotions frequently display state-like characteristics, serving as a dynamic force that transitions employees from one work state to another (Zhang et al., 2017). Particularly during leader-employee interactions, employees perceive different leader emotions depending on the triggering causes and contexts. Goal orientation also possesses state-like properties; employees' goal orientation varies across specific situations and changes over time (Beck & Schmidt, 2013). However, previous research has inadequately examined antecedents of state goal orientation. Studies show that positive performance feedback increases learning orientation and reduces performance-avoid orientation (Senko & Harackiewicz, 2005), indicating that goal orientation relates not only to individual differences but also to the timing and reasons for skill development, demonstration, and avoidance. Therefore, longitudinal methods are needed to investigate the state-like patterns of goal orientation.

This approach provides more ecologically valid evidence for the impact of leader negative emotions on employee work engagement and further clarifies the role of goal orientation in understanding employee work engagement.

This study employs multilevel analysis, an underutilized approach, to examine relationships among leader emotions, goal orientation, and work engagement at both between-person and within-person levels. Analyzing "between-person" versus "within-person" relationships from a trait-state perspective enriches theoretical explanations of leader negative emotional expression, goal orientation, and work engagement, helping organizations create work scenarios with desired perceptions and characteristics (Beck & Schmidt, 2013). This represents a promising yet underdeveloped research perspective (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011). The study reveals that performance-avoid orientation exhibits different relationships across levels.

We collected data using experience sampling methodology (ESM), which involves repeatedly collecting individuals' momentary assessments of life experiences over short periods (Bolger & Laurenceau, 2013; Zhang, Luo, & Shi, 2016). ESM reduces recall bias and controls for general individual tendencies, thereby more accurately reflecting employees' psychological experiences and behaviors in situational contexts. Its key feature is collecting individuals' immediate reactions—including emotions, perceptions, attitudes, and evaluations—at multiple time points.

The sample comprised employees from two Beijing-based companies in computer technology and educational services, primarily business and technical service personnel. We first contacted company leaders to explain the research purpose and requirements. After obtaining support, operations managers coordinated scheduling across departments. Researchers and operations managers established specific survey procedures, assigned numbers to participating leaders and employees, and required that participating employees have worked with their current leader for at least six months.

To ensure confidentiality and accuracy, researchers distributed paper questionnaires on-site and collected them immediately. Before the formal survey, we collected basic demographic variables. Then, starting Monday, at designated time points each workday, team leaders distributed numbered questionnaires to employees, which researchers collected after completion, checking for completeness to enhance trust in confidentiality. Over five workdays, employees evaluated leader emotional expression and their own goal orientation at 10:30 AM, while leaders evaluated employee work engagement at 4:00 PM.

Initially, 130 employees and 30 leaders participated, with 650 questionnaires distributed. We excluded 3 questionnaires with uniform responding, 1 with less than 80% completion, 1 from an employee who withdrew, and 145 blank questionnaires from 20 employees absent due to shift work, business trips, or leave. The final sample included 109 employees providing 496 valid questionnaires. This sample size meets general ESM requirements of 50-200 participants and 400-3000 data points (Zhang, Luo, & Shi, 2016). Among the 109 participants, 31 were male (28.44%) and 78 female (71.56%); mean age was 32.07 (SD = 9.15), with 58 aged 30 or younger (17.54%), 37 aged 31-40, and 14 over 40 (maximum age 68). Seventy-six participants (69.72%) held bachelor' s degrees or higher; 54 (49.54%) had 4+ years of tenure; 72 (66.06%) had worked with their current leader for one year or more, with the remaining 37 having at least six months.

Because data were collected on-site with immediate completeness checks, data integrity exceeded 99%. For occasional missing item responses, we substituted the arithmetic mean of adjacent data points.

We used established scales published in international journals. English scales were translated into Chinese following translation-back-translation procedures. Several master' s students completed the questionnaire, and we revised wording based on their feedback to ensure clarity and fluency. All items except demographic variables used 5-point scales ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree" or "almost never") to 5 ("strongly agree" or "extremely").

Leader Negative Emotional Expression: Following Wang and Seibert (2015) and adapting measurement timing for this study, we asked: "Since yesterday' s survey until now, how often have you felt your leader was [frustrated, angry, anxious, annoyed] at work?" We measured leader negative emotional expression using four discrete emotion items. Although researchers propose various models of emotion structure (e.g., Watson & Tellegen, 1985), different structures capture common psychological features of positive and negative emotions in social interaction (Seo, Barrett, & Bartunek, 2004). Therefore, we averaged the discrete leader negative emotional expression items. Cronbach' s ranged from 0.75 to 0.84.

Goal Orientation: We used VandeWalle' s (1997) 13-item three-dimensional scale developed for work contexts: 5 items for learning orientation, 4 for performance-avoid orientation, and 4 for performance-prove orientation. We

contextualized the measurement: "So far today, I have sought opportunities to develop skills and knowledge," "So far today, I have tried to avoid performing poorly," and "So far today, I have wanted to prove my abilities to others." Cronbach' s ranged from 0.87 to 0.89 for learning orientation, 0.83 to 0.89 for performance-avoid orientation, and 0.77 to 0.86 for performance-prove orientation.

Work Engagement: We used the 9-item brief version developed by Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2016), measuring vigor, dedication, and absorption. We time-bound the items: "So far today, this employee worked with vigor" and "So far today, this employee was immersed in work." Cronbach' s ranged from 0.93 to 0.95.

Control Variables: At the within-person level, we controlled for frequency of employee-leader contact. Since self-efficacy relates to goal orientation fluctuations (Jagacinski, Kumar, Boe, Lam, & Miller, 2010), we controlled for self-efficacy effects on goal orientation.

Self-Efficacy: We used the 10-item Chinese version of Schwarzer, Mueller, and Greenglass' s (1999) General Self-Efficacy Scale (e.g., "If I try hard enough, I can always solve problems"). Cronbach' s ranged from 0.79 to 0.90.

We conducted statistical analyses using SPSS 21.0 and Mplus 7.0. First, we performed confirmatory factor analysis in Mplus 7.0 to examine discriminant validity. Then we used SPSS 21.0 to calculate reliability and intercorrelations. Finally, we used Mplus to test relationships at within-person and between-person levels.

We employed Mplus 7.0 to analyze multilevel structural equation models (MSEM), examining relationships across levels. Because our data were nested within individuals, violating the independence assumption of single-level SEM, MSEM allowed us to decompose day-level data into within-person and between-person components, potentially revealing different patterns across levels (Vancouver, Thompson, & Williams, 2001; Preacher, Zyphur, & Zhang, 2010). Following Preacher et al.' s recommendations, we decomposed between-person and within-person relationships by centering within-person data (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998). Specifically, we aggregated within-person state variables (e.g., leader negative emotional expression, goal orientation, work engagement) to the between-person level by computing each individual' s mean, and obtained within-person variation by computing deviations from these means (Beck & Schmidt, 2013).

[Figure 1: see original paper]

Therefore, we analyzed: (1) the effect of day-level leader negative emotional expression on daily within-person work engagement; (2) the effect of individual mean levels of emotional expression on the trait component of work engagement (between-person); and (3) the mediation of the relationship between leader negative emotional expression and work engagement by goal orientation (learning,

performance-avoid, and performance-prove) at both levels. Figure 1 illustrates the within-person and between-person mediation model of goal orientation in the day-level relationship between leader emotion and work engagement, showing the 1-1-1 design at Level 1 (Preacher, Zyphur, & Zhang, 2010).

Before hypothesis testing, we examined the proportion of variance at between-person and within-person levels (Hulsheger, Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013). As shown in Table 1 , the ICC1 for leader negative emotional expression was 0.26, indicating that 26% of variance resided between persons and 74% within persons, supporting the treatment of leader emotion as both trait and state and justifying multilevel analysis. Table 1 also shows that learning orientation, performance-avoid orientation, and performance-prove orientation are suitable for MSEM analysis.

3. Results

Internal consistency coefficients (ICC1), means, standard deviations, and within-person and between-person correlations appear in Table 1. ICC1 reflects within-person fluctuation and between-person stability, justifying multilevel hypothesis testing.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Cronbach' s Internal Consistency Coefficients

Variable	Day level	Cronbach' s	ICC(1)	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Leader negative emotional expression	0.93-0.95	-0.29**	0.33**	-0.53**	0.44**					
2. Learning goal orientation	0.87-0.89	-0.28**	0.14*	0.35**						
3. Performance-avoid orientation	0.83-0.89	0.33**	-0.13**	-0.27**	0.21**					

Variable	Day level	Cronbach's	ICC(1)	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
4. Performance prove orientation	0.77-0.86	-0.43**	0.17**	- 0.17**	0.36**					
5. Work engagement	0.75-0.84	-0.41**	0.31**	- 0.24**	0.35**					

Note: Above diagonal = between-person correlations (N = 109); below diagonal = within-person correlations (N = 496). ICC(1) = intraclass correlation. p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.*

Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper] presents the path structural equation model and unstandardized multilevel path coefficients tested in this study. The model fit was good: $^{2}(7) = 13.69$, p = 0.13; RMSEA = 0.03, CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.97; SRMR(between) = 0.02; SRMR(within) = 0.03. A nested model removing the direct path from leader negative emotional expression to work engagement yielded: $^{2}(8) = 27.21$, p = 0.001; RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.94; TLI = 0.84; SRMR(between) = 0.05; SRMR(within) = 0.05, $\Delta^{2} = 13.52$, Δdf = 1. These results indicate that removing the direct path significantly worsened model fit.

Hypothesis 1 stated that leader negative emotional expression negatively affects work engagement. As Figure 2 shows, this hypothesis was supported at both within-person and between-person levels. In daily work, when individuals experienced higher leader negative emotions, work engagement was lower (= -0.17, p = 0.002, 95% CI [-0.26, -0.08]). Individuals who generally experienced higher leader negative emotions showed lower work engagement (= -0.23, p = 0.007, 95% CI [-0.37, -0.09]).

Hypothesis 2 proposed that leader negative emotional expression negatively affects learning goal orientation. As Figure 2 shows, this hypothesis was supported at both levels. When employees experienced more leader negative emotional expression, they reported lower learning goal orientation (within-person: = -0.21, 95% CI [-0.29, -0.14]). Individuals who generally experienced more leader negative emotional expression reported lower learning goal orientation (between-person: = -0.23, 95% CI [-0.33, -0.12]).

Hypothesis 3 proposed that leader negative emotional expression positively affects performance-avoid orientation. This hypothesis was supported only at the within-person level: when employees experienced more leader negative emotional expression than usual, they reported higher performance-avoid orientation (= 0.32, 95% CI [0.24, 0.40]). Individuals who generally experienced more

leader negative emotional expression also reported higher performance-avoid orientation (= 0.27, 95% CI [0.15, 0.40]).

Hypothesis 4 proposed that leader negative emotional expression negatively affects performance-prove orientation. This hypothesis was supported at both levels: within-person (= -0.32, [-0.39, -0.24]) and between-person (= -0.46, [-0.59, -0.34]).

Hypothesis 5 stated that state learning goal orientation positively affects work engagement. As Figure 2 shows, this hypothesis was supported at both levels. In daily work, when individuals experienced higher learning goal orientation, work engagement was higher (= 0.16, p = 0.001, 95% CI [0.08, 0.23]). Individuals with generally higher learning goal orientation showed higher work engagement (= 0.28, p = 0.007, 95% CI [0.11, 0.45]).

Consistent with Hypothesis 6, state performance-avoid orientation negatively correlated with work engagement, but this was supported only at the within-person level. When employees experienced higher performance-avoid orientation, work engagement was lower (= -0.12, p = 0.002, 95% CI [-0.18, -0.06]). The negative effect of generally higher performance-avoid orientation on work engagement was not supported (= -0.07, p = 0.41, 95% CI [-0.21, 0.07]).

Finally, Hypothesis 7 proposed that state performance-prove orientation positively affects work engagement, supported at both levels. When individuals experienced higher performance-prove orientation, work engagement was higher (= 0.18, p = 0.002, 95% CI [0.09, 0.28]). Individuals with generally higher performance-prove orientation showed higher work engagement (= 0.21, 95% CI [0.06, 0.36]).

3.2.4 Mediating Effects of Goal Orientation

Hypotheses 8-10 proposed that goal orientation mediates the relationship between leader negative emotional expression and work engagement. As Figure 2 shows, at the between-person level, leader emotional expression had significant indirect effects on work engagement through learning goal orientation (= -0.07, p = 0.03) and performance-prove orientation (= -0.10, p = 0.03). At the within-person level, leader emotional expression had significant indirect effects through learning goal orientation (= -0.03, p = 0.002), performance-avoid orientation (= -0.04, p = 0.01), and performance-prove orientation (= -0.06, p = 0.002). Therefore, Hypotheses 8 and 10 were supported, with learning and performance-prove orientations partially mediating the relationship. Hypothesis 9 was not supported.

Table 2. Indirect Effects

Indirect Effect	B	95% CI
Between-person effects		

Indirect Effect	B	95% CI
Leader negative emotion → Mean state MGO → Work engagement	-0.07*	
Leader negative emotion → Mean state AGO → Work engagement		
Leader negative emotion → Mean state PGO → Work engagement	-0.10*	
Within-person effects		
Leader negative emotion → Centered state MGO → Work engagement	-0.03*	
Leader negative emotion → Centered state AGO → Work engagement	-0.04*	
Leader negative emotion → Centered state PGO → Work engagement	-0.06*	

+p < 0.1, p < 0.05, **p < 0.01,** *p < 0.001. MGO = Mastery goal orientation; AGO = Performance-avoid orientation; PGO = Performance-prove orientation.*

[Figure 2: see original paper]

Finally, we tested two important control variables. As Table 3 shows, controlling for goal orientation traits at the between-person level did not significantly affect results; all path coefficients (direction and significance) remained unchanged. At the within-person level, controlling for self-efficacy did not significantly alter within-person relationships, though the between-person effect of learning goal orientation on work engagement became non-significant while maintaining its direction.

Table 3. Control Effects of Alternative Variables

Path	Employee-leader contact frequency	Self-efficacy
Leader negative emotion → Learning goal orientation	-0.22*(0.04)	-0.23**(0.06)

Path	Employee-leader contact frequency	Self-efficacy
Leader negative emotion → Performance-avoid orientation	0.32**(0.05)	0.27**(0.08)
Leader negative emotion → Performance-prove orientation	-0.31**(0.05)	-0.46**(0.08)
Learning goal orientation → Work engagement	0.16**(0.05)	0.28**(0.10)
Performance-avoid orientation → Work engagement	-0.12**(0.04)	-0.07(0.09)
Performance-prove orientation → Work engagement	0.18**(0.06)	0.21**(0.09)

+p < 0.1, p < 0.05, **p < 0.001.*

4. Conclusion and Discussion

Based on EASI theory and motivational orientation theory, this study extends research on day-level effects of leader negative emotional expression on employee work engagement and its mechanisms. Results show:

At the within-person level, leader negative emotional expression negatively affects learning goal orientation and performance-prove orientation, while positively affecting performance-avoid orientation. Learning and performance-prove orientations positively affect work engagement, whereas performance-avoid orientation negatively affects work engagement. Goal orientation mediates the relationship between leader negative emotional expression and employee work engagement.

At the between-person level, we found that individuals who generally experienced more leader negative emotional expression did not report higher performance-avoid orientation in the "leader negative emotion—performance-avoid orientation—work engagement" pathway. This suggests that performance-avoid orientation and work engagement may be influenced by daily leader negative emotional expression rather than effects lasting beyond one day. Daily leader negative emotional expression predicts performance-avoid orientation and work engagement above general predictive levels, indicating that this influence is based on daily individual differences rather than between-person differences. Previous research found that performance-avoid motivation primarily occurs at the between-person level (Beck & Schmidt, 2013). Future research should continue exploring the contextual conditions for performance-avoid orientation.

4.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes three main theoretical contributions. First, using ESM and multilevel analysis, we examined relationships among leader negative emotional expression, goal orientation, and work engagement at both between-person and within-person levels. We found that the "leader negative emotion—performance-avoid orientation—work engagement" relationship differed significantly across levels, demonstrating an "emergence" or contextual effect (Zhang et al., 2016). At the between-person level, employees' performance-prove orientation was 14% higher than at the within-person level, further supporting emergence effects.

Second, we treated leader negative emotional expression as an independent concept rather than embedding it within leadership behaviors. This approach captures richer information about employees' perceived leader negative emotional expression, providing a more comprehensive understanding of its impact on employees' goal motivation and work engagement. While charismatic and transformational leadership research acknowledges leader emotion effects (Johnson, 2009; Wang, Chen, & Li, 2015), emotional information from facial expressions and other channels has received insufficient attention. By focusing directly on leader negative emotional expression, we identify its effects on employee goal

orientation and work engagement and the mediating role of goal orientation.

Third, we examined leader emotion effects from an interactive perspective. Previous research examined how employees'own emotions affect goal orientation and work engagement; we investigated how leader negative emotional expression affects employees from a work context perspective, particularly its important role in leader-employee interactions. We examined effects through both emotional contagion and informational pathways, extending leadership emotion research while validating EASI theory.

4.2 Practical Implications

These results have important management implications. First, raise awareness of leader emotion management. When interacting with employees, leaders must recognize that their emotions significantly affect employee attitudes and behaviors. Because employees are particularly susceptible to leader emotions, leaders should consider employee reactions and adjust their emotional expression according to expectations. Leaders need to identify their emotions and their effects, consciously managing both their own and employees' emotions to create positive work atmospheres that motivate employees and enhance performance.

Second, increase awareness of employee goal orientation management. Employees adjust their learning, performance-prove, and performance-avoid orientations when perceiving leader negative emotional expression because they sense environmental problems and threats. Guiding employees to process leader negative emotions cognitively can produce goal orientations more conducive to work engagement.

Third, create environments that foster work engagement. We can enhance work engagement through goal orientation by ensuring supportive and secure work contexts that promote desired goal orientations. For example, leaders should express positive emotions during interactions, maintain harmonious work environments, and provide supportive mechanisms such as open communication channels and feedback systems to facilitate desired goal orientations and increase work engagement.

4.3 Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations. First, our data show correlational relationships between leader negative emotional expression and goal orientation. Although we theoretically posit causal relationships, we cannot establish causality from these data. For example, both variables might be caused by other factors. While supplementary analyses ruled out some alternatives, future research should examine leader negative emotional expression as a cause of specific goal orientations in more controlled settings.

Second, leader negative emotion measurement. We used PANAS items relevant to workplace settings. Previous emotion research often used experimental meth-

ods. Our employee-rated leader negative emotion data may differ from previous research and could be subject to perception and social desirability biases. Future research should integrate leader and employee ratings.

Third, we did not examine employee interpersonal sensitivity as a moderator. Employees' susceptibility to others' influence relates to their interpersonal sensitivity. Future research should integrate motivational orientation theory and sensitivity theory to better understand how leader emotional information affects employee motivation and behavior.

Fourth, leader emotional information effects on employee impression management motivation. Cross-cultural research shows Western individuals emphasize self-focus, while Eastern individuals are more influenced by impression management motives. In Eastern organizations, employees may be more affected by impression management motivation, suggesting a direction for future research.

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How Does Leader' s Negative Emotional Displays in the Morning Affect Employee' s Work Engagement in the Afternoon? —An Application of Experience Sampling Method

Abstract

Researchers have traditionally focused on leadership behaviors, but recently began examining how leaders' emotions affect employees. In organizations, employees' high dependence on leaders makes them susceptible to leader emotions. Emotions as Social Information (EASI) theory describes how emotions influence observers through inferential processes and affective reactions. We proposed that leader negative emotional displays trigger employees' negative experiences and reduce work engagement. Motivational orientation theory suggests employees process job-related stimuli, triggering mastery, performance-avoid, and

performance-prove goal orientations. We proposed that leader negative emotional displays negatively affect mastery and performance-prove orientations while positively affecting performance-avoid orientation, with goal orientations further predicting work engagement. Thus, goal orientation mediates the leader emotion-work engagement relationship.

Using experience sampling methodology over five workdays, employees rated leader negative emotional displays and their goal orientation at 10:30 AM; leaders rated employee work engagement at 4:00 PM. We obtained 496 matched questionnaires from 109 employees and 24 leaders. Leaders distributed numbered questionnaires each workday, which researchers collected after 30 minutes, checked for completeness, and excluded uniform responding.

Results: At the within-person level, morning leader negative emotional displays negatively affected mastery and performance-prove orientations, positively affected performance-avoid orientation, with mastery and performance-prove orientations positively predicting afternoon work engagement and performance-avoid orientation negatively predicting it. Mastery, performance-avoid, and performance-prove orientations mediated the relationship. At the between-person level, leader negative emotional displays negatively affected mastery and performance-prove orientations and positively affected performance-avoid orientation. Mastery and performance-prove orientations positively predicted work engagement and mediated the relationship. The "leader negative emotion—performance-avoid orientation—work engagement" pathway differed significantly across levels, suggesting emergent processes.

Contributions: First, we found emergence effects—state performance-avoid orientation emerged only at the within-person level. Second, we treated leader negative emotional expression as an independent concept, providing comprehensive understanding of its effects on goal motivation and work engagement. Third, we demonstrated interactive effects of leadership emotions on employees through both contagion and informational pathways, extending EASI theory.

Practical Implications: Leaders must manage their emotional expression awareness, as employees are particularly susceptible. Creating supportive, secure work environments through positive emotional expression and open communication channels can foster desired goal orientations and enhance work engagement.

Keywords: leader's negative emotional displays; goal orientation; work engagement; within-person level; between-person level; experience sampling method (ESM)

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.