

The Effectiveness and Mechanisms of Leader Anger in the Workplace: A Postprint

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Date: 2019-08-13T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

Leader anger, as one of the most common and readily perceived negative emotions in the workplace, exerts significant influence on work relationships, behaviors, and performance. However, existing literature presents considerable controversy regarding whether leader anger impedes or facilitates leadership effectiveness, leaving the questions of why and under what conditions leader anger impacts leadership effectiveness inadequately addressed. Building upon a review of the conceptual origins and characteristic features of workplace leader anger, this study clarifies the effectiveness of workplace leader anger from a dual-edged perspective encompassing both negative and positive effects, elucidates the dual-path mediating mechanism underlying workplace leader anger effectiveness based on the Emotions as Social Information (EASI) theory, and analyzes the boundary conditions of leader anger effectiveness across three levels: individual, team, and organization. Future research should further expand in areas including the conceptualization and structural measurement of workplace leader anger, antecedents and consequences of events, mediating mechanisms, contextual factors, research methodologies, and research levels.

Full Text

Preamble

Effectiveness and Mechanism of Leader Anger in the Workplace

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Abstract: Leader anger, as one of the most common and readily perceived negative emotions in the workplace, significantly influences work relationships, behaviors, and performance. However, existing literature presents considerable

controversy regarding whether leader anger hinders or promotes leadership effectiveness, and the questions of why and under what conditions leader anger impacts effectiveness remain unclear. This paper reviews the conceptual origins and characteristics of workplace leader anger, clarifies its effectiveness from a dual-edged perspective encompassing both negative and positive effects, explains the dual-path mediating mechanisms underlying its effectiveness based on Emotion as Social Information Theory, and analyzes boundary conditions at the individual, team, and organizational levels. Future research should further expand investigations into the conceptualization and measurement of workplace leader anger, its antecedents and consequences, mediating mechanisms, contextual factors, research methodologies, and levels of analysis.

Keywords: workplace; leader anger; effectiveness; dual-path transmission mechanism; boundary conditions

1 Research Background

Leader anger represents one of the most common and easily perceived negative emotions in workplace settings (Shao, 2018), defined as an anger expression directed toward others or entities following an appraisal of immoral behavior and an intention to correct erroneous perceptions (Gibson & Callister, 2010). Negative workplace events frequently trigger leader anger, which is often communicated to subordinates through nonverbal behaviors such as facial expressions, tone of voice, speech rate, and body language, exerting significant influence on work relationships, behaviors, and performance (Thiel, Connelly, & Griffith, 2012; Eberly & Fong, 2013; Van Kleef, 2014). In recent years, leader anger has garnered increasing attention in leadership research examining leader-subordinate interactions (Wang, Restubog, Shao, Lu & Van Kleef, 2018).

The literature remains divided on whether leader anger hinders or promotes leadership effectiveness, with contradictory findings across studies (Wang et al., 2018). Traditional perspectives generally support the view that leader anger produces destructive performance outcomes, such as decreased performance, perceived injustice, dissatisfaction, counterproductive work behavior, and leadership ineffectiveness (Lindebaum, Jordan, & Morris, 2016). However, this negative-effect view has increasingly faced challenges (Lindebaum & Fielden, 2011), with some research arguing that leader anger can enhance performance (Chi & Ho, 2014; Stickney & Geddes, 2016; Lebel, 2017) and serves as an indispensable tool for problem-solving and reducing workplace misconduct (Pfeffer, 2010). While scholars have made valuable explorations into the effectiveness of workplace leader anger and recognized its importance in shaping leadership outcomes (Wang et al., 2018), clear explanations for these inconsistent effects remain lacking (Van Knippenberg & Van Kleef, 2016). Moreover, previous research has predominantly examined how leader anger reduces effectiveness by influencing subordinates' negative emotions from an affective reaction perspective (Van Kleef et al., 2009), yet few studies have unpacked the "black box" of leader anger effectiveness from alternative theoretical lenses, and systematic the-

oretical integration is insufficient. Furthermore, current research has primarily tested leader anger effectiveness in performance contexts (Gooty, Connelly, Griffith, & Gupta, 2010), raising questions about whether this effectiveness varies across different situations (Van Knippenberg & Van Kleef, 2016). Evidently, international research has yet to clarify why and under what conditions leader anger influences effectiveness, while domestic theoretical and empirical research on this topic remains virtually nonexistent.

Therefore, a comprehensive review of workplace leader anger effectiveness and its mechanisms is warranted. Accordingly, this paper first reviews the conceptualization of workplace leader anger, then analyzes its effectiveness from both negative and positive perspectives. Next, drawing on Emotion as Social Information Theory, we reveal the transmission mechanisms underlying the dual effects of workplace leader anger through affective reactions and inferential processing. We then systematically review boundary conditions at the individual, team, and organizational levels. Finally, we propose future research directions to provide practical recommendations for subsequent studies. This paper makes important theoretical contributions by clarifying the sources of controversy surrounding leader anger effectiveness and deepening understanding of how and when leaders' anger expressions can enhance or diminish effectiveness, thereby broadening research perspectives on leaders' negative emotions. Practically, this research offers insights for leaders to effectively utilize anger expression strategies to improve efficacy while minimizing potential negative consequences.

2.1 The Origin of Leader Anger

As a rapidly developing research topic in management and psychology, "anger" has rich philosophical and ethical origins. Dominant perspectives in the literature include ethical, cognitive, moral, and modern views (Sorial, 2017). From an ethical perspective, anger's roots trace back to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle, 1995), which emphasizes that virtuous individuals express anger at the right time, in the proper way, and toward appropriate matters, with injustice serving as the key trigger. The cognitive school views anger as a cognitive emotion arising from judgments of being wronged, playing an important ethical role (Blackburn, 1998). The moral perspective (Jesse Prinz, 2007) posits that moral emotions emerge in contexts related to moral behavior, promoting either violation or compliance with moral rules. Moral anger may arise when unfairness occurs or individual rights are violated. The modern view (Sorial, 2017) emphasizes the complexity of moral anger, which helps identify injustice, motivates others to take action to alleviate unfairness or correct wrongdoing, and plays a role in public political spheres.

2.2 The Connotation of Workplace Leader Anger

Early anger research primarily originated in psychology, with representative scholars including Averill (1982), Biaggio and Maiuro (1985), Hoffman (1989),

Berkowitz (1994), Dahlen and Deffenbacher (2001), Lerner and Keltner (2001), Harmon (2004), and Chakravarti (2014). These scholars argue that anger is a motivation-related subjective negative emotion triggered by frustration (real or imagined), threats, or immorality, involving cognitive desires to terminate negative stimuli and potential aggressive intentions. Subsequent research has defined anger from motivational and moral perspectives, extending psychological anger to the workplace domain, with contributions from Hareli, Rafaeli and Parkinson (2008), Carver and Harmon-Jones (2009), Gibson and Callister (2010), and Lindbaum and Geddes (2016). They view anger as a socially structured emotion stemming from goal obstruction or perceived threats, or triggered by violations of moral standards. It represents a negative emotion involving responsibility appraisals of others' or entities' immoral behavior and correction of erroneous perceptions, modifiable by cultural and organizational norms. Scholars have not yet reached consensus on the structure and measurement of leader anger. Early research treated anger as unidimensional (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), while later studies emphasized multidimensional features, such as five dimensions (Siegel, 1986), four dimensions (Novaco, 1994), and six dimensions (Spielberger, 1999). However, workplace anger measurement still primarily relies on anger scales from psychology, which were developed using children, college students, and psychiatric patients as samples.

Understanding these developmental origins provides a rich theoretical background for comprehending workplace leader anger. We argue that workplace leader anger has three main characteristics: (1) Anger is a more specific basic emotion and a typical negative emotion (Waldman, Balthazard, & Peterson, 2011), comprising state anger and trait anger. State anger encompasses relatively brief emotional experiences ranging from annoyance to intense anger, accompanied by physiological-cognitive reactions and behavioral tendencies (Glomb, 2002), emphasizing that emotions result from person-environment interactions and generate sequential behavioral responses over time (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Trait anger, often triggered by situations, represents a long-term negative emotion accumulated through more frequent and intense state anger (Spielberger, 1999). However, previous workplace leader anger research has primarily focused on state anger. (2) Leader anger is typically accompanied by body language and observable by others. Leaders at different hierarchical levels can be anger expressers, but regardless of who expresses it, the "core essence" should remain the same. That is, leader anger is context- and culture-dependent (Gibson & Callister, 2010), contains strong cognitive, motivational, and behavioral intention components (Potegal, Stemmler, & Spielberger, 2010), serves social functions and interpersonal effects (Hareli, Rafaeli, & Parkinson, 2008), and is goal-driven while guiding individual action (Callister, Geddes, & Gibson, 2017). (3) Leader anger is characterized by uniqueness and recognizability, triggered by a series of antecedent events such as unfair treatment, violation, goal obstruction (Gibson & Callister, 2010), and violations of competence and morality (Wang et al., 2018). Leader anger can also have one or multiple receivers, such as specific organizational foci,

institutions, entities, social systems, targets, or events.

3.1 Negative Effects of Workplace Leader Anger on Leadership Effectiveness

Traditional perspectives on workplace leader anger effectiveness generally support the view that leader anger leads to negative outcomes, emphasizing that stronger anger intensity produces more negative consequences (Gibson, Schweitzer, Callister, & Gray, 2009). Research has confirmed that leader anger triggers aggression, violence, and harassment (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Kassinove, 2016), reduces team performance (Connelly & Ruark, 2010), and decreases subordinates' perceptions of leadership effectiveness (Waldman et al., 2011; Stickney & Geddes, 2014). For example, angrily handling problems creates perceptions of leaders as disagreeable, aggressive, and bullying, particularly when work progress is unsatisfactory (Tepper & Henle, 2011). Leader anger reduces employee job satisfaction or employees' acceptance of leader influence (Glomb, 2002). Anger also signals a leader's harsh demeanor, especially when facing serious problems without controlling one's temper. For instance, during crises, leader anger is often less welcomed by subordinates (Madera & Smith, 2009). Additionally, leader anger's negative effects manifest in damaging superior-subordinate status relationships, easily escalating to bullying behavior, and significantly predicting low task performance and high counterproductive work behavior (Tepper & Henle, 2011). However, empirical results on the relationship between leader anger and performance remain inconsistent (Shockley, Ispas, Rossi, & Levine, 2012) and require further examination. Recent empirical research has extended workplace leader anger to abusive supervision and work-family balance domains. For example, Mawritz, Folger, & Latham et al. (2014) collected 215 leader-subordinate dyads from finance, insurance, banking, food service, retail, education, and health industries in the northeastern and midwestern United States, finding that leader anger positively influenced abusive supervision. Ahmed, Eatough, and Ford (2018) tested the effects of negative emotions (including anger) on work-family interference and work-family enrichment using 145 U.S. participants and 176 Indian participants from various industries, confirming their hypotheses in the U.S. sample that negative emotions positively affected work-family interference while negatively affecting work-family enrichment.

3.2 Positive Effects of Workplace Leader Anger on Leadership Effectiveness

As research continues to expand, increasing scholars have begun examining the positive effects of workplace leader anger (Eberly & Fong, 2013; Wang et al., 2018), primarily manifested in three aspects: individual effects, interpersonal relationships, and performance.

Regarding individual effects, leader anger provides potential internal signals to

subordinates, 暗示 ing goal obstruction and mobilizing protective physiological changes and behaviors to address potential threats (Frijda, 1986). Leader anger makes subordinates feel apprehensive, thereby generating compliance (Adler, Rosen, & Silverstein, 1998), and can also make subordinates perceive leaders as effective because anger is typically associated with dominance, strength, intelligence, and power status (Bucy & Newhagen, 1999). When leaders express anger using low-intensity verbal language (rather than physical expression), more positive effects may emerge (Gibson et al., 2009). Recent research indicates that anger is an important management strategy for leaders (Sweeney, 2013), and leader anger helps identify and solve problems promptly (Stickney & Geddes, 2014), primarily by enhancing leaders' influence (Van Kleef, Homan, & Cheshin, 2012), changing status quo, improving work relationships, increasing team performance, and promoting organizational goal achievement (Lindebaum & Geddes, 2016; Stephens & Carmeli, 2016).

In interpersonal relationships, leader anger helps clarify needs and adaptive behaviors for both interaction parties. Anger expression not only signals boundaries that clarify mutual needs and appropriate behaviors but also prompts subordinates to perceive positive effects on superior-subordinate relationships (Tafate, Kassinove, & Dundin, 2002). Moreover, from a social functional perspective, leader anger is an adaptive emotion that motivates behavior (Callister, Geddes, & Gibson, 2017), beneficial for enhancing organizational effectiveness. For instance, Lindebaum and Fielden (2011) found that leader anger positively influenced subordinates' perceptions of leadership effectiveness in a construction industry sample, a finding also supported by Van Kleef et al. (2009) and Wang et al. (2018).

Regarding performance, previous research has primarily focused on leader anger in performance contexts, examining whether leader anger improves subordinate performance (Stickney & Geddes, 2014; Van Knippenberg & Van Kleef, 2016). For example, Lindebaum et al. (2016) used qualitative methods to investigate both negative and positive effects of leader anger among military leaders and soldiers, finding that while leader anger caused negative emotions and low perceptions of leadership effectiveness among soldiers, those in intense training states responded proactively to leader anger by strictly following orders and improving their behavior and performance.

Analysis of these two opposing effect categories reveals that workplace leader anger is a "double-edged sword" (Van Knippenberg & Van Kleef, 2016) with both depleting and facilitating effects that exist in contradictory relationships. Whether leader anger proves effective likely depends on its mediating mechanisms and boundary conditions.

4 Dual-Path Transmission Mechanism of Workplace Leader Anger Effectiveness

Previous research has predominantly focused on the specific mechanisms underlying the negative effects of workplace leader anger, with only a few studies exploring the theoretical logic and mechanisms of its positive effects. We argue that Emotion as Social Information Theory (EASI) (Van Kleef, 2009) provides a new perspective for explaining workplace leader anger effectiveness. EASI emphasizes that anger not only serves social functions of emotion but also has interpersonal effects that transmit information for oneself or others, manifested in two aspects: affective reactions at the emotional level and inferential processes at the cognitive level. These two interpersonal effects coexist and interact (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2010). According to EASI, leader anger can influence leadership effectiveness through both affective reactions and inferential processing paths. Therefore, this paper explains the mechanisms of workplace leader anger effectiveness from this dual-path perspective.

4.1 Affective Reactions Path

The affective reactions path emphasizes that leader anger generates emotional-level interpersonal effects by directly triggering negative emotions in subordinates (Van Kleef et al., 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2010). Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) also provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding emotions and their affective and behavioral consequences (Raja et al., 2011). This theory posits that negative emotions experienced by employees in the workplace affect their work attitudes and behaviors (Dasborough, Ashkanasy, Tee & Herman, 2009), with affective reactions mediating the relationship between emotional events and attitudes/behaviors. Additionally, Emotional Contagion Theory (Hatfield & Cacioppo, 1994) suggests that during emotional transmission processes, subordinates are prone to experiencing more negative affective reactions to leader anger, such as increased leader aversion (Van Kleef et al., 2009).

Empirically, the affective reactions path has received strong support in leadership literature (Eberly & Fong, 2013), demonstrating that leader anger reduces leadership effectiveness by influencing subordinates' negative affect (Van Kleef et al., 2009). Dasborough et al. (2009) proposed an integrated model of how negative emotions at individual, team, and organizational levels influence organizational attitudes toward leaders based on emotional contagion theory, suggesting that leader negative emotions affect organizational recognition or cynicism toward leaders through leader-member exchange, team-member exchange, affective climate, and trust climate. However, this remains a conceptual model awaiting empirical testing. Madera and Smith (2009) examined leader anger effectiveness in product failure scenarios using 322 employees from accounting, legal, teaching, nursing, and other industries, finding that leader anger influenced perceptions of leadership effectiveness through subordinates' nega-

tive emotions. Schwarzmüller, Brosi and Welpé (2017) investigated the effects of leader anger on supervisor-directed deviance and subordinate work effort using 165 participants from a large German business network, finding that leader anger influenced supervisor-directed deviance through subordinates' anger levels. Wang et al. (2018) also found that leader anger triggered by subordinate competence violations led to negative affective reactions in subordinates.

4.2 Inferential Processing Path

The inferential processing path introduces information processing concepts, emphasizing that individuals generate cognitive-level interpersonal effects by analyzing and judging others' emotional expression information (Van Kleef et al., 2010). According to Social Information Processing Theory, individuals process social information to understand their work environment, which in turn affects work attitudes and behaviors (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Because leaders hold higher status and have direct interaction opportunities with employees, they represent important sources of social information (Yaffe & Kark, 2011). Subordinates make judgments and inferences from leader anger, interpreting it as failure to meet performance standards, such as reasoning, "The leader is dissatisfied with my performance; I need to exert more effort" (Eberly & Fong, 2013).

Previous research has confirmed that leader anger can reduce leadership effectiveness through the affective reactions path in the EASI model (Madera & Smith, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2018). However, findings on how leader anger influences leadership effectiveness through the inferential processing path remain inconsistent (Van Knippenberg & Van Kleef, 2016). On one hand, subordinates infer low levels of leader charisma from leader anger, thereby reducing perceptions of leadership effectiveness (Damen et al., 2008). On the other hand, subordinates infer low task performance levels from leader anger, which 反而 enhances perceptions of leadership effectiveness (Van Kleef et al., 2009). These inconsistent findings may stem from the broad conceptualization of inferential processing in the EASI model, leading scholars to operationalize inference types differently (Shao, Wang, & Tse, 2018). Inference type reflects whether individuals tend toward motivation-focused inference (centered on goals and intentions) or trait-focused inference (centered on personality) when processing and interpreting social events. Motivation-focused inference describes reasoning about others' underlying motives and intentions behind their behaviors, being more concrete and context-dependent. Trait-focused inference describes stable, underlying trait dispositions, discarding context-relevant information value. Although conceptually distinct, these two inference types are interrelated. Unfortunately, research examining how subordinates' inference types regarding leader anger affect leadership effectiveness remains rare. Recently, Shao et al. (2018) drew on social inference theory and used experimental methods to examine the mediating role of inference type in the relationship between leader anger and leadership effectiveness, supporting a negative relationship be-

tween trait-focused inference and leadership effectiveness but not supporting a positive relationship between motivation-focused inference and leadership effectiveness.

Emerging research has begun examining leader anger effectiveness in moral contexts. Because leader anger effectiveness and its mechanisms are more complex in moral contexts, Shao (2018) examined the relationship between leader anger and subordinate trust in leaders within moral contexts, referring to leader anger in such contexts as “moral anger”—an emotional state evoked by initial appraisals of moral violations (Lindebaum & Geddes, 2016). Based on EASI theory, Shao proposed two different inference types: leader integrity and leader benevolence, suggesting that subordinates infer whether leaders are 正直 or 仁慈 from anger expression signals, thereby affecting trust in leaders. Results indicated that leader anger reduced subordinates’ perceptions of leader benevolence, consequently reducing affective trust in leaders, while the indirect effect of leader anger on trust through subordinates’ perceptions of leader integrity was not significant.

5 Boundary Conditions of Workplace Leader Anger Effectiveness

What boundary conditions moderate the process through which workplace leader anger influences leadership effectiveness via dual-path mediating mechanisms? Reviewing existing literature reveals that workplace leader anger does not produce identical effects for everyone but rather demonstrates situational and individual differences. This paper proposes moderating variables at the individual, team, and organizational levels.

5.1 Individual Level

Gender has consistently been considered an important factor in evaluating and explaining leader anger effectiveness. Previous research has primarily examined whether gender differences exist in leader anger, normative standards for anger elicitation, and anger consequences. Current evidence does not indicate that men are more prone to anger than women, or vice versa, or that no differences exist (Simon & Nath, 2004). Despite limited empirical evidence for gender differences, stereotypes suggest that men can express anger more frequently than women and that the workplace is more appropriate for male anger expression (Hess, Adams, & Kleck, 2007). Traditionally, women are expected to play cooperative, inclusive, and mediating roles and should not express anger, as female anger is evaluated as having low interpersonal quality (Gianakos, 2002), being ineffective, low-status, low-competence, and low-paying (Cabral, Tavares, & de Almeida, 2016), and thus should be suppressed. Conversely, men are expected to play confident, powerful, dominant, and competitive roles and can express more anger with less interpersonal impact (Hershcovis et al., 2007), being viewed as symbols of “masculinity” and “status” (Cabral, Tavares, & de Almeida, 2016). These gender stereotypes likely constitute key factors in explaining leader anger

effectiveness from a gender perspective.

Information processing and perceived appropriateness. According to EASI, anger influences leadership effectiveness through affective reactions and inferential processing paths, with the choice between paths depending on two factors: information processing depth and appropriateness judgments. Information processing, influenced by individual characteristics, represents the depth and comprehensiveness with which individuals process emotional information. Perceived appropriateness, influenced by social factors, involves judging whether anger expression is reasonable (Van Kleef, 2014). These two moderators jointly determine subsequent path selection. EASI theory emphasizes that the relative strength of these paths also depends on the appropriateness of emotional expression (Van Kleef, 2016). Inappropriate emotional expressions likely trigger negative affective reactions (relative to inferential processes) in workplace settings because they provide less useful contextual information, and subordinates are unwilling to invest in deeper, more comprehensive information processing (Chi & Ho, 2014). Therefore, perceptions of fair and appropriate leader anger are more likely to trigger subordinates' inferential processing, whereas perceptions of unfair and inappropriate leader anger may lead to negative affective reactions (Van Kleef et al., 2012).

Type of violations. When leaders' goals and expectations are violated—for instance, when employees fail to solve problems correctly or engage in deception—a series of behaviors violating leader expectations may trigger leader anger (Averill, 1982). Considering that categorizing violations of leader expectations (competence-based vs. integrity-based violations) aligns with leader expectation research, Wang et al. (2018) classified negative behaviors violating leader expectations into two types: (1) competence-based violations, where leader anger is triggered by employees lacking expected knowledge, skills, or abilities required for work; and (2) integrity-based violations, where leader anger arises from employees violating workplace moral standards. Either type of violation can trigger leader anger. Their research found that leader anger triggered by integrity violations stimulated subordinates' inferential processing, thereby enhancing perceptions of leadership effectiveness, whereas anger triggered by competence violations induced more negative affective reactions, weakening subordinates' perceptions of leadership effectiveness. Generally, when subordinates violate competence expectations, they are more likely to experience negative emotions. Conversely, when subordinates violate moral expectations, leader anger may evoke less negative affect and stronger inferential processing, leading subordinates to infer that unethical behavior is unacceptable in their organization and that they expect leaders to respond angrily to moral violations (Van Kleef, Wanders, Stamkou, & Homan, 2015). In other words, they believe leader anger is a more appropriate and just emotion for maintaining organizational discipline, and that moral violations deserve punishment (Van Kleef et al., 2015). Leader anger helps reduce unethical behavior and enhances perceptions of leadership effectiveness (Wang et al., 2018).

Personality. Using multi-source, multi-phase data from 40 companies across different industries, Chi and Ho (2014) collected 191 leader-subordinate dyads and found that subordinate personality (conscientiousness and agreeableness) positively moderated the relationship between leader negative emotions (anger, annoyance, fury, rage) and subordinate performance. Additionally, implicit theories of personality focus on fundamental assumptions about human nature, constructing frameworks for making sense of and drawing inferences about the surrounding world (Hong et al., 2001). Currently, two types of implicit personality theories are supported: incremental theory and entity theory (Dweck et al., 1995). Incremental theory emphasizes that personality is dynamic and malleable, whereas entity theory emphasizes that personality is static and stable. Individuals with different implicit personality theories exhibit different types of logical reasoning, which can alter subordinates' inference types regarding leader anger and enhance or diminish leadership effectiveness. Shao et al. (2018) treated the two types of implicit personality theories (incremental and entity) as moderators of the relationship between leader anger and subordinate inference types, empirically testing how implicit personality theories moderate this relationship and consequently change leadership effectiveness.

5.2 Team Level

Currently, research on team-level contextual factors moderating leader anger effectiveness is extremely scarce. Surface acting, as a form of emotional labor, involves modifying emotions to conform to work role expectations (Damen et al., 2008). Related research indicates that leaders do use emotional labor when interacting with subordinates, often employing surface acting techniques to express emotions and improve subordinate performance. Subordinates infer underlying meanings behind leaders' emotional expressions from their surface acting (Fisk & Friesen, 2012). For example, Wang and Seibert (2015) studied leaders and subordinates from three U.S. companies, hypothesizing that team-level leader surface acting would moderate the individual-level relationship between leader negative emotions (frustration, disappointment, anger, anxiety, annoyance) and subordinate performance. Specifically, they predicted that when leaders infrequently used surface acting, leader negative emotions would positively influence subordinate performance, but when leaders used surface acting more frequently, the relationship between leader negative emotions and subordinate performance would become non-significant. However, this hypothesis was not supported by the data.

5.3 Organizational Level

Power distance, as an important cultural value, influences individuals' sensitivity to leader anger. In fact, employees with different power distance orientations typically differ in their cognitive acceptance of leader anger, such that even when leaders display identical emotions, different effects may emerge for subordinates with varying power distance levels during social interactions (Tsui,

Zhang, Wang, Xin, & Wu, 2006). At the organizational level, high power distance directly affects organizational members' acceptance of authority and influences their reactions to leader anger (Robert, Probst, Martocchio, Drasgow, & Lawler, 2000). According to emotional contagion theory, leader anger can influence subordinates' emotional reactions through contagion. Emotional contagion effects are more likely when the expresser holds an important or central position in a group, particularly in high power distance cultures where leaders have higher authority and control more resources. Leader anger thus influences organizational members more substantially, making them more likely to recognize leader authority, more susceptible to contagion and negative affect, and more inclined to work hard in response to leader anger. Consequently, power distance can enhance leader anger effectiveness. In low power distance cultures, however, leader anger negatively affects subordinate performance (Chi & Ho, 2014).

Emotional norm content and strength constitute important moderators of leader anger effects. The more leader anger aligns with organizational norms, the more positive the outcomes (Callister et al., 2007). Socialized organizational members may need to understand these specific emotional norms (Sutton, 1991). Leader anger norm content includes when, where, why, and toward whom anger expression is appropriate or inappropriate—for example, expressing anger in front of clients is inappropriate. Leader anger norm strength refers to the degree of consensus among participants regarding norm violations and potential sanctions (Gibson et al., 2009). Strong anger norms make participants more likely to detect norm violations and inappropriate anger expressions. Although evidence regarding differences in leader anger norms across organizational cultures remains insufficient, existing research suggests that organizations may develop unique norms for controlling leader anger. For example, Sutton (1991) examined norms for frequently generating or expressing specific emotions in organizations, where members could be trained to control their own anger or observe others' anger. Aquino, Douglas, and Martinko (2004) also found that employees who perceived organizational norms as encouraging competition were more likely to express anger in response to provocation, possibly viewing anger expression as useful. Van Kleef and Cote (2007) argued that expressing anger is appropriate in different negotiation contexts, and suitable anger norms affect high-power negotiators' cognition and behavior. Gibson et al. (2009) inferred that status likely interacts with organizational emotional norms: when individuals have lower status, anger expressions consistent with emotional norms produce more positive outcomes, but when individuals have higher status, they are more likely to violate organizational emotional norms, weakening the relationship between norm compliance and positive outcomes. Therefore, future research should pay more attention to interactions among status, organizational emotional norms, and leadership effectiveness.

Effectiveness, Mediators, and Moderators of Workplace Leader Anger (Selected Research Perspectives)

Study	Sample Context	Effectiveness of Leader Anger (+/-)	Mediating/Moderating Variables	Outcomes
Madera and Smith (2009)	322 employees from accounting, legal, teaching, nursing, and other industries	Performance leadership effectiveness (+/-)	Subordinate negative emotions	Subordinate performance (+/-)
Chi and Ho (2014)	191 dyads from 40 Taiwanese companies (86 leaders, 191 subordinates)	Subordinate performance (+)	Personality (conscientiousness and agreeableness), power distance orientation	

Study	Sample Context	Effectiveness of Leader Anger (+/-)	Mediating/Moderating Variables	Outcomes
Mawrit215 et al. (2014)	leader- subordinate dyads from fi- nance, in- sur- ance, bank- ing, food ser- vice, re- tail, edu- ca- tion, and health in- dus- tries in north- east- ern and mid- west- ern U.S.	Abusive supervision (+)		

Study	Sample Context	Effectiveness of Leader Anger (+/-)	Mediating/Moderating Variables	Outcomes
Wang and Seibert (2015)	66 lead-ers and 247 sub-ordi-nates from three com-pa-nies in bank-ing, elec-tri-cal engi-neer-ing, and hos-pital-ity in-dus-tries in mid-west-ern U.S.	Subordinate performance (+)	Team surface acting, team negative emotion level	

Study	Sample Context	Effectiveness of Leader Anger (+/-)	Mediating/Moderating Variables	Outcomes
Schwarzer et al. (2017)	165 participants from a large German business network	Supervisor-directed deviance (+), subordinate effort (-)	Subordinate anger level	
Wang et al. (2018)	Study 1: 125 college students; Study 2: 165 employees recruited from MTurk; Study 3: 222 leaders	Leadership effectiveness (+/-)	Subordinate inference type (motivation-focused vs. trait-focused)	

Study	Sample Context	Effectiveness of Leader Anger (+/-)	Mediating/Moderating Variables	Outcomes
Ahmed145 et al. (2018)	145 participants from various U.S. industries; 176 participants from various Indian industries	Work-family interference (+), work-family enrichment (-)	Negative emotions (including anger)	

Study	Sample Context	Effectiveness of Leader Anger (+/-)	Mediating/Moderating Variables	Outcomes
Shao et al. (2018)	Study 1: 64 employees from MTurk; Study 2: 125 Australian college students (experimental); Study 3: 89 college students (experimental)	Leadership effectiveness (+/-)	Subordinate implicit personality theories	

Study	Sample Context	Effectiveness of Leader Anger (+/-)	Mediating/Moderating Variables	Outcomes
Shao (2018)	Study 1: 138 Australian college students (online survey), 117 college students (lab study); Study 2: 217 employees (experimental)	Moral context Trust in leader (-)	Leader integrity, leader benevolence	

Source: Compiled by the authors

6 Future Research Directions

This paper has reviewed the origins and characteristics of workplace leader anger, explained its negative and positive effects from a dual-edged perspective, clarified the internal logic of these dual effects using the two mechanisms of the EASI model, and analyzed boundary conditions of workplace leader anger effectiveness, providing directions for future research. The above discussion demonstrates that workplace leader anger represents an important and emerging research area in both theoretical analysis and empirical studies. Future research can further enrich and expand this field in the following areas.

First, conceptualization and measurement of workplace leader anger. While Gibson and Callister's (2010) definition of workplace leader anger has gained relatively high acceptance in the West, it has not yet been operationalized or measured. As a unique research domain, Chinese scholars have only just begun exploring the connotation of leader anger. Future research could propose new concepts of workplace leader anger based on Chinese organizational contexts—for example, defining leader anger as a negative emotion triggered by workplace events, possessing dual social and interpersonal functions, containing strong cognitive/motivational/behavioral intention components, and capable of promoting or hindering organizational goal achievement. Moreover, emotional expression exhibits cultural differences: collectivist cultures tend toward “concealing emotions,” emphasizing harmony and restraint, whereas individualist cultures focus on personal ability and achievement, advocating openness and expressiveness (Batja, 2001). Due to cultural heterogeneity between East and West and the context-dependence of leader anger, simply transplanting anger connotations from Western cultural backgrounds to Chinese organizational practice is inappropriate, and anger structures derived from Western college student samples may not apply to Chinese organizational contexts. Future research should propose more rigorous leader anger concepts and explore their structural measurement in conjunction with indigenous workplace contexts.

Second, event antecedents and consequences of workplace leader anger. Previous literature has relatively separated antecedents and consequences, without considering the possibility that leaders' anger expressions toward different events may lead to different consequences (Wang et al., 2018), resulting in inconsistent findings regarding leader anger's effects (Van Knippenberg & Van Kleef, 2016). Future research could integrate previously fragmented antecedent and consequence studies and incorporate different anger-triggering events into leader anger effectiveness research. Additionally, previous research has primarily focused on the social-structural functions of leader anger effectiveness—that is, how leaders define and modify anger content according to cultural rules (Gibson et al., 2009)—but has not paid sufficient attention to its interpersonal effects. Recent research has begun exploring leader anger's interpersonal effects, primarily manifested in its impact on performance (Van Knippenberg & Van Kleef, 2016) and subordinate ethical behavior (Wang et al., 2018). Future research could organically connect workplace leader anger's event antecedents with its dual social-interpersonal effects to more deeply reveal the inconsistent effects of leader anger effectiveness.

Third, mediating mechanisms of workplace leader anger effectiveness. Although the affective reactions and inferential processing paths each have explanatory power and interact (Van Kleef et al., 2010), previous research typically analyzed each path in isolation, neglecting their interactive effects. For example, existing research on the “affective reactions path” almost exclusively follows the “leader anger → negative emotions → negative outcomes” logic, with scarce research on “leader anger → positive emotions → positive outcomes.” We argue that leader anger, as an important emotional event experienced by subordinates in

the workplace, can generate positive affective reactions. Attribution research on leadership processes indicates (Martinko, Harvey, & Douglas, 2007) that subordinates often make attributions about the underlying intentions behind leader anger, and this intention attribution process cannot be ignored because it determines subordinates' affective reactions (Dasborough et al., 2009). Future research could organically integrate the affective reactions and inferential processing paths to explore their interactions, such as "leader anger → inferential processing → affective reactions → positive/negative outcomes," to systematically explain why leader anger produces positive or negative effects. Additionally, current literature primarily uses EASI theory as the explanatory framework for leader anger effectiveness. We believe that Attribution Theory clarifies how observers make causal explanations for others' emotions (Weiner, 2010), distinguishing between intrapersonal and interpersonal attributions (Weiner, 2000). For example, subordinates may attribute leader anger to their own poor performance or tense interpersonal relationships with leaders, thereby affecting leadership effectiveness. Future research could attempt to use Attribution Theory to explain workplace leader anger effectiveness and its mechanisms.

Fourth, contextual factors of workplace leader anger effectiveness. Although emotions play important roles in changing organizational behavior, most emotion research has focused on emotion characteristics while neglecting emotional expression contexts (Wang et al., 2018). Current research has primarily examined leader anger effectiveness in performance contexts (Gooty, Connelly, Griffith, & Gupta, 2010; Rajah, Song, & Arvey, 2011), providing new understanding of the positive relationship between leader anger and performance. Future research could expand leader anger effectiveness studies to other workplace contexts such as moral and change situations (Van Knippenberg & Van Kleef, 2016; Shao, 2018). Second, existing research has mainly focused on individual characteristics such as gender and personality (Van Knippenberg, 2011). Leader anger effectiveness may also vary with anger intensity and content. For example, Geddes and Callister (2007) proposed a dual threshold model of anger, where anger levels maintained between upper and lower thresholds are more likely to produce positive outcomes, and anger intensity may have a curvilinear effect on leader anger effectiveness (Adam & Brett, 2018; Hunsaker, 2018). Therefore, future research could examine anger intensity and verbal message content as moderators of leader anger effectiveness (Shao, 2018). Furthermore, leader behaviors also influence the boundaries and applicability of leader anger effectiveness, such as abusive supervision (Wang et al., 2018). Future research could test the effectiveness of anger expression by leaders with different leadership styles (charismatic, ethical, humble leadership, etc.).

Fifth, research methods and levels of analysis for workplace leader anger effectiveness. Most previous empirical models have been relatively static, unable to describe the dynamic process of leader anger effectiveness in specific workplace situations or deeply reveal causal relationships between variables. Future research should adopt new assessment and data collection methods, such as Experience Sampling Methodology (ESM) and multi-time-point designs, to im-

prove causal explanations of workplace leader anger effectiveness. Additionally, most existing literature has only explored leader anger effectiveness at the individual level, with scarce research at the team or organizational level. Since leader anger effectiveness and its mechanisms are highly complex across different levels, its effectiveness requires further in-depth investigation. Future research should enrich and expand leader anger effectiveness across different levels to reveal its multi-level mechanisms.

Research on workplace leader anger effectiveness and its mechanisms remains in an exploratory stage. Although this paper provides in-depth explanation and analysis of workplace leader anger' s connotation, effectiveness, dual-path mediating mechanisms, and boundary conditions, several issues require further exploration, such as: What are the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western conceptual structures of workplace leader anger? What theories can explain why leader anger produces inconsistent effectiveness? How can workplace leader anger effectiveness research become more rigorous and contextualized? Future research could conduct deeper theoretical and empirical investigations based on the foundation provided by this paper.

References

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

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