How Do Leaders' Interpersonal Emotion Management Strategies Break the Self-Perpetuating Effect of Employees' Venting Toward Leaders? A Venter-Receiver Interaction Perspective

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Abstract

Workplace venting by employees to leaders is extremely common and has become a daily management challenge that leaders must confront. Previous venting literature has primarily adopted a single perspective of either the venter or the recipient, examining the effects of employee venting to leaders on both leaders and employees themselves. Based on cognitive neoassociation theory and interpersonal emotion management literature, this paper explains why venting to leaders exhibits a self-perpetuating effect: that is, employees' venting to leaders on a given day triggers their anger on that day, which in turn leads them to continue venting to leaders the following day. Simultaneously, adopting a venter-recipient interaction perspective, this paper explores what interpersonal emotion management strategies leaders can employ after receiving employee venting to effectively break this self-perpetuating effect. This study focuses on the daily dyadic interaction process between subordinates (venters) and leaders (recipients), employing a time-based experience sampling methodology over a period of 10 working days to collect data. Data results from 1,032 matched sample points from 60 leaders and their 119 subordinates show that: at the within-person level, employees' venting to leaders on a given day enhances their anger on that day, which subsequently prompts them to continue venting to leaders the next day, producing a self-perpetuating effect. When leaders adopt situation-improvement interpersonal emotion management strategies after employee venting, the self-perpetuating effect is broken, whereas leaders' adoption of attentional diversion and emotion suppression interpersonal emotion management strategies proves ineffective.

Full Text

How Leaders' Interpersonal Emotion Management Strategies Can Break the Self-Perpetuating Effect of Employee Venting? A Venter–Recipient Interaction Perspective

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Abstract

Venting—defined as expressing negative emotions or feelings about someone or something to others in the workplace—is highly prevalent in modern Chinese organizations. Traditional venting theory posits a "catharsis myth," suggesting that venting helps individuals release dissatisfaction and alleviate negative emotions, ultimately leading to self-dissipation. However, this perspective has not been systematically examined in the context of employees venting to leaders, despite leaders being powerful organizational figures whose responses could significantly impact venting outcomes. Drawing on cognitive neoassociation theory and interpersonal emotion management literature, this study explains why venting to leaders may produce a self-perpetuating effect: employees' venting on a given day intensifies their anger, which in turn prompts further venting to leaders the following day. Adopting a venter–recipient interaction perspective, we investigate which interpersonal emotion management strategies leaders can employ to effectively break this self-perpetuating cycle.

Focusing on daily dyadic interactions between subordinates (venters) and leaders (recipients), we collected data using a time-interval-based experience sampling method over ten workdays. Matched data from 1032 observations of 119 employees and their 60 leaders revealed that, at the within-person level, employees' daily venting to leaders enhanced their same-day anger, which subsequently increased next-day venting—demonstrating a self-perpetuating effect. Importantly, when leaders employed situation modification strategies after receiving employee venting, this self-perpetuating effect was attenuated. In contrast, leaders' use of attentional deployment and response modulation strategies proved ineffective.

Keywords: venting, anger, interpersonal emotion management strategies, self-perpetuating effect

Classification Codes: B849, C93

Introduction

Venting—expressing negative emotions or feelings about work-related issues to others—is ubiquitous in contemporary Chinese workplaces. Traditional venting theory promotes the "catharsis myth," suggesting that venting helps people release frustrations and relieve negative emotions, ultimately leading to self-dissipation. This belief has profoundly influenced both practice and academia. Organizations invest substantial resources encouraging employee venting (including to leaders) as a stress management tool. While venting recipients can be colleagues or leaders, recent research has shifted focus toward venting to leaders. Unlike venting to peers, employees venting to leaders typically expect substantive problem resolution, given leaders' authority and problem-solving capabilities. Most existing research has examined effects on the recipient (the leader), finding that employee venting generates various negative outcomes for leaders, including general and specific negative emotions, ego depletion, and ultimately destructive leadership behaviors.

Although many believe venting releases pressure and reduces emotional distress, academic research has not systematically investigated the impact of venting to leaders on employees themselves—particularly noteworthy given leaders' organizational power and resources. Moreover, emerging social phenomena contradicting the "catharsis myth" prompt reconsideration of venting's presumed benefits. Research on repetitive negative thinking indicates that repeatedly focusing on distress symptoms produces destructive consequences and emotional disturbance, suggesting venting may create negative cycles. Real-world cases further illustrate this concern; for instance, one Beijing company employee who vented to their leader experienced not emotional relief but intensified anger and escalated behavior. Such cases, while anecdotal, suggest that venting to leaders may not self-dissipate as the catharsis myth predicts, but instead may exhibit self-perpetuating effects. Examining this phenomenon would reveal the "other side" of venting's impact on venters and deepen understanding of its potential negative consequences, while also helping organizations reassess the wisdom of promoting venting as a management tool.

Unfortunately, existing literature has not adequately addressed this self-perpetuating phenomenon. Therefore, our first core research question is: Does and why does employee venting to leaders produce a self-perpetuating effect? Furthermore, given leaders' special organizational role and responsibility to assist employees, our second question asks: What measures can leaders take to break this self-perpetuating cycle when faced with employee venting? Previous research has treated leaders as passive recipients, neglecting their potential to actively exert interpersonal influence during interactions. Consequently, existing literature cannot answer this question.

Addressing these gaps, we adopt a venter (employee)–recipient (leader) interaction perspective, integrating cognitive neoassociation theory and interpersonal emotion management literature. First, we reveal the psychological mechanism

underlying the self-perpetuating effect: employees' venting to leaders on a given workday enhances their anger, which prompts continued venting the next day. Second, we propose that leaders can break this cycle through appropriate interpersonal emotion management strategies. Specifically, situation modification strategies effectively attenuate the self-perpetuating effect, whereas attentional deployment and response modulation strategies prove ineffective. Our research model is depicted in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

[Figure 1: see original paper]

1.1 Employee Venting to Leaders and Same-Day Anger

In organizational contexts, venting to leaders is often perceived as intense, reckless, and low in constructiveness due to inherent power differentials and concerns about maintaining leader authority. However, venting to leaders serves a unique function: it alerts resource-holding, help-responsible leaders to employees' difficulties. To clarify the construct, we distinguish venting from related concepts. First, although sometimes viewed as "emotional voice," venting differs fundamentally from voice behavior, which is constructive in content and less intense in form. Second, while venting and "tucao" (complaining with humorous undertones) both involve expressing dissatisfaction, tucao includes teasing and jesting elements, whereas venting represents pure negative emotional expression.

Anger, a specific negative emotion, typically arises from displeasure with situations, events, or others' actions. Traditional views attribute anger primarily to external triggers—particularly intentional events blocking goal attainment. Cognitive neoassociation theory offers a different explanation, proposing that anger results not only from external events but also from activation of aggression-related cognitive networks. According to this theory, aggression-related thoughts, emotions, cognitions, and behaviors form an interconnected network in memory. When individuals exhibit hostile behavior, this network activates, linking aggressive ideas, emotions, impulses, and behaviors. This theory supplements traditional anger research and provides our theoretical foundation for explaining why venting to leaders intensifies rather than reduces employees' anger.

Both venting to leaders and anger exhibit substantial within-person variance across days. We therefore examine why daily venting increases same-day anger at the within-person level. On days when employees vent more intensely to leaders, they likely engage in greater rumination and cognitive processing of negative events. According to cognitive neoassociation theory, this cognitive processing makes adverse experiences more salient, further activating aggressive emotions—anger. Thus, higher levels of venting may produce stronger same-day anger. Empirical research provides indirect support: Baer et al. (2018) found that discussing injustice triggers higher anger levels, while Martin and Dahlen (2005) and Bushman (2002) demonstrated that rumination and recounting adverse experiences increase anger.

Hypothesis 1: At the within-person level, employees' daily venting to leaders is positively related to their same-day anger.

1.2 Same-Day Anger and Next-Day Venting to Leaders

Specific emotions accompany dominant behavioral tendencies that drive particular actions. Anger motivates individuals to remove or resolve harmful situations rather than avoid them. In organizations, direct leaders possess both resources and legitimate authority to help employees resolve adverse situations, and problem-solving constitutes a core leadership responsibility. Therefore, when employees experience high anger on a given workday, they are more likely to continue venting to leaders the next day, hoping to gain attention and assistance. Conversely, on days with lower anger, next-day venting is less probable.

Hypothesis 2: At the within-person level, employees' same-day anger is positively related to their next-day venting to leaders.

Cognitive neoassociation theory posits that aggressive behavior activates aggressive thoughts, emotions, and behavioral tendencies, which not only intensify anger but also increase the likelihood of further aggressive responses. Based on this, we predict that when employees vent to leaders on a given day, they experience anger that same day, which then drives continued venting the next day, manifesting a self-perpetuating effect.

Hypothesis 3: At the within-person level, employees' same-day anger mediates the relationship between same-day venting and next-day venting to leaders.

1.3 The Moderating Role of Leaders' Interpersonal Emotion Management Strategies

Cognitive neoassociation theory indicates that emotion management—defined as "the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions"—can inhibit, enhance, or modify anger generation. Recent research has expanded from self-focused to interpersonal emotion management. Little et al. (2012) categorized interpersonal emotion management strategies into four types: (1) situation modification, which involves removing negative emotion-eliciting factors to improve the target's circumstances; (2) cognitive change, which guides targets to reinterpret situations positively; (3) attentional deployment, which helps targets shift focus away from adverse experiences; and (4) response modulation, which directly suppresses negative emotions. Situation modification is the most direct problem-solving strategy because it eliminates the source of negative emotions.

Interpersonal emotion management strategies also exhibit substantial within-person variance. During interactions, recipients shape how individuals evaluate stressful events, ultimately affecting emotional intensity. Since venting involves employees expressing negative emotions about adverse work experiences to leaders, we focus on leaders' strategies after receiving subordinate venting.

Integrating cognitive neoassociation theory and interpersonal emotion management literature, we adopt a venter–recipient interaction perspective to examine how leaders' strategies influence the self-perpetuating effect of venting. We propose that different strategies will differentially affect anger intensity following venting.

Venting to leaders, while seemingly extreme and reckless, reflects two critical issues: employees encounter problems hindering goal achievement that they cannot resolve independently, and they hope venting will inform leaders and elicit assistance. When leaders employ situation modification after receiving venting, they directly and thoroughly resolve the work factors causing anger, aligning employee expectations with leader responses. This alignment makes employees feel respected and valued while reducing anticipated future interference from problematic situations, enhancing perceived controllability and reducing rumination—thereby lowering post-venting anger intensity.

In contrast, when leaders use cognitive change, attentional deployment, or response modulation, employees may perceive leaders as evading core issues, creating misalignment between expectations and responses. This misalignment can make employees feel undervalued and increase distrust, leading them to anticipate persistent future problems and continued rumination. Consequently, these strategies prove less effective at reducing post-venting anger. Supporting this, Scontrino (1972) found that violating group members' leadership expectations produces negative attitudes, while van den Akker et al. (2009) demonstrated that inconsistent leader behavior reduces employee trust.

Hypothesis 4: At the within-person level, leaders' same-day use of situation modification strategies negatively moderates the relationship between employees' same-day venting and same-day anger, such that the positive relationship weakens as leaders' use of situation modification increases.

Hypothesis 5: At the within-person level, leaders' same-day use of situation modification strategies negatively moderates the indirect effect of employees' same-day venting on next-day venting through same-day anger, such that the positive indirect relationship weakens as leaders' use of situation modification increases.

2.1 Sample and Procedure

We employed a time-interval-based experience sampling method. Participants were recruited from 60 gas stations of a petroleum company in western China. After obtaining corporate approval, we first recruited middle- and lower-level leaders who met two criteria: (1) having at least two subordinates, and (2) regularly interacting with subordinates to ensure venting opportunities and emotion management possibilities. All 60 station leaders agreed to participate.

Adopting a venter–recipient interaction perspective, we followed established procedures for similar research. Each leader randomly selected two employees,

resulting in 60 leaders and 120 employees. Researchers explained the study's purpose and procedures, assured confidentiality, and established WeChat groups for questionnaire distribution via Wenjuanxing platform.

During the first week, leaders and employees completed baseline surveys measuring between-person variables (demographics, trait empathy, leader-member exchange, emotional intelligence). All 120 employees and 60 leaders completed baseline surveys. Subsequently, participants completed daily surveys for two weeks (10 consecutive workdays). To reduce common method bias, daily questionnaires were distributed at four time points: (1) morning employee anger (9:00–11:00), (2) employee venting to leader (13:00–15:00), (3) leader interpersonal emotion management (17:00–19:00), and (4) evening employee anger and emotional relief (21:00–24:00). Average completion times were 9:42, 13:57, 17:35, and 21:56, respectively.

We matched employees' day t+1 venting data; day t data were excluded if day t+1 data were missing. Following best practices, we retained participants with complete data for at least three days, yielding 1032 observations from 119 employees and 60 leaders (average 8.67 observations per employee).

The final sample comprised: employees—18.49% under 30, 39.50% aged 30–39, 37.82% aged 40–49, and 4.20% 50 or older; 24.37% male; average tenure 3.03 years (SD = 1.51). Leaders—11.67% under 30, 46.67% aged 30–39, 36.67% aged 40–49, and 5.00% 50 or older; 43.33% male; average tenure 4.68 years (SD = 1.11).

2.2 Measures

All original English scales were translated into Chinese following Brislin's (1986) back-translation procedure and adapted for within-person research. All scales used 7-point Likert formats.

Venting to leader. We used Rosen et al.'s (2021) 3-item scale (e.g., "Today, I expressed anger to my leader about a work-related problem"). Within-person $\alpha = 0.88$, Omega = 0.88. Next-day venting: $\alpha = 0.88$, Omega = 0.89.

Employee anger (evening). We used Tangney et al.'s (1996) 3-item scale (e.g., "Today, I felt angry"). Within-person $\alpha = 0.94$, Omega = 0.94.

Leader interpersonal emotion management. We used Little's (2012) 20-item scale comprising four dimensions (five items each). Leaders rated strategies used after receiving venting from each participating subordinate: (1) Situation modification (e.g., "Today, I tried to change the situation that negatively affected this subordinate"), $\alpha = 0.89$, Omega = 0.89; (2) Attentional deployment (e.g., "Today, when this subordinate was troubled, I shifted their attention elsewhere"), $\alpha = 0.86$, Omega = 0.86; (3) Cognitive change (e.g., "Today, I changed how this subordinate viewed their situation"), $\alpha = 0.86$, Omega = 0.86; (4) Response modulation (e.g., "Today, when this subordinate experienced negative emotions, I told them not to show it"), $\alpha = 0.81$, Omega = 0.81.

Control variables. We controlled for morning anger (within-person $\alpha = 0.93$, Omega = 0.93) to capture post-interaction changes. Following ESM best practices, we also controlled for within-week trends: day of week, sine = $\sin(2\pi t/7)$, and cosine = $\cos(2\pi t/7)$, where t represents the day. To rule out the catharsis alternative explanation, we controlled for emotional relief (Mitchell et al., 2015; e.g., "Today, I felt calm"), within-person $\alpha = 0.90$, Omega = 0.90.

At the between-person level, we controlled for subordinate trait empathy (Davis et al., 1980; $\alpha = 0.82$), leader emotional intelligence (Law et al., 2004; $\alpha = 0.91$), and leader-member exchange (Bauer et al., 1996; $\alpha = 0.93$).

2.3 Analytical Strategy

Given our nested data structure (within-person observations nested within individuals), we conducted multilevel confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Mplus 8.3 to assess construct validity. Table 1 shows the eight-factor model fit best: $^2 = 1626.35$, df = 800, $^2/\text{df} = 2.03$ (< 5), RMSEA = 0.03 (< 0.08), CFI = 0.96 (> 0.9), TLI = 0.95 (> 0.9), within-person SRMR = 0.03 (< 0.08), between-person SRMR = 0.03 (< 0.08).

We used multilevel path analysis (Preacher et al., 2010) to test hypotheses. Table 2 presents within-person variance, between-person variance, variance proportions, and ICC(1) values. All variables showed significant within-person variance, justifying multilevel analysis.

2.4 Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations appear in Table 3 . At the within-person level, venting correlated significantly with evening anger ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.001$), and evening anger correlated significantly with next-day venting ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$).

Multilevel path analysis results appear in Table 4 . Model 2 shows venting significantly predicted evening anger ($B = 0.12$, $SE = 0.02$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Model 15 shows evening anger significantly predicted next-day venting ($B = 0.27$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < 0.001$), with significant mediation ($B = 0.03$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < 0.001$). Monte Carlo estimation (20,000 draws) yielded a 95% CI of [0.02, 0.05], supporting Hypotheses 2 and 3.

We examined moderation using piecewise and simultaneous regression. Piecewise results (Models 3 and 5) showed significant negative moderation for situation modification ($B = –0.13$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < 0.01$) and cognitive change ($B = –0.15$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < 0.05$). However, simultaneous regression (Model 7) revealed only situation modification significantly moderated the venting–anger relationship ($B = –0.11$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < 0.05$), indicating its superior effectiveness in complex management contexts.

Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper] illustrates the interaction: when lead-

ers used high situation modification, the venting–anger relationship was non-significant (slope = –0.01, SE = 0.06, p = 0.86); when leaders used low situation modification, the relationship was significantly positive (slope = 0.24, SE = 0.06, p < 0.001). The difference was significant (d = –0.25, SE = 0.11, p < 0.05), supporting Hypothesis 4.

Moderated mediation analysis shows: when leaders used low situation modification, the indirect effect of venting on next-day venting via anger was significant (B = 0.06, SE = 0.02, p < 0.001; 95% CI [0.03, 0.10]); when leaders used high situation modification, the indirect effect was non-significant (B = –0.00, SE = 0.02, p = 0.86; 95% CI [–0.04, 0.03]). The difference was significant (B = –0.07, SE = 0.03, p < 0.05; 95% CI [–0.13, –0.006]), supporting Hypothesis 5.

Venting did not significantly predict emotional relief (B = –0.01, SE = 0.02, p = 0.54), and emotional relief did not predict next-day venting (B = –0.01, SE = 0.04, p = 0.78). Situation modification did not moderate the venting–relief relationship (piecewise: B = –0.02, SE = 0.04, p = 0.58; simultaneous: B = 0.02, SE = 0.05, p = 0.62).

2.5 Supplementary Experiment and Analysis

To further validate the causal relationship between venting and anger, we conducted a supplementary experiment using scenario simulation to examine venting's effect on anger while controlling for baseline anger levels triggered by events.

2.5.1 Sample and Procedure

Assuming a medium effect size (Cohen's d = 0.5), power analysis indicated a need for 128 participants. We recruited 134 working adults (68 experimental, 66 control; 39.55% male; 94.03% with bachelor's degrees or higher; mean age = 34.46, SD = 6.13). The study received ethics approval from Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (Approval No.: 2014000268-202501).

Participants read scenario materials about BM Company, imagining themselves as project management engineers facing coordination challenges between R&D and production departments that resulted in project delays. After reading, participants reported baseline anger. They were then randomly assigned to experimental (venting) or control conditions.

Experimental condition: Participants imagined expressing emotions to their leader, writing at least three specific points venting their feelings about the project delay and departmental performance.

Control condition: Participants wrote at least three objective work descriptions about their project tasks.

Participants spent at least two minutes on the task before reporting anger again.

2.5.2 Measures

Manipulation check. Three trained undergraduates coded participants' written content using Rosen et al.'s (2021) venting scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.98$–1.00). Inter-rater agreement was high (median rwg = 1.00, mean rwg = 0.76, ICC[1] = 0.87, $F(133, 268) = 20.94$, $p < 0.001$). Experimental group venting ($M = 6.29$, $SD = 1.37$) significantly exceeded control group venting ($M = 1.05$, $SD = 0.25$, $F(1, 131) = 3070.39$, $p < 0.001$), confirming successful manipulation.

Anger. Measured using the same scale as the main study (Time 1 $\alpha = 0.81$; Time 2 $\alpha = 0.91$).

2.5.3 Hypothesis Testing

ANCOVA controlling for baseline anger showed a significant overall effect of venting manipulation on anger ($F(1, 131) = 6.15$, $p < 0.05$). Adjusted mean comparisons revealed that experimental group anger ($EM = 5.95$, $SE = 0.12$) significantly exceeded control group anger ($EM = 5.52$, $SE = 0.12$), $t(131) = 2.53$, $p = 0.02$, supporting Hypothesis 1.

3.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes three important contributions to venting literature. First, we identify a self-perpetuating effect of venting to leaders, complementing existing literature that primarily focuses on venting's self-dissipating effects. While previous research has documented negative impacts on leaders (e.g., threat appraisal, negative emotions, ego depletion, destructive leadership), our findings reveal that venting may also harm employees themselves, expanding the scope of potential negative effects.

Second, we extend research on leaders' proactive role as recipients. While early research treated leaders as passive recipients, recent work has begun recognizing their agency in managing their own responses. We further extend this by showing how leaders' interpersonal emotion management can influence venters' subsequent emotions and behaviors, moving from self-management to other-management.

Third, we adopt a venter–recipient interaction perspective, examining how the interplay between employee venting and leader emotion management shapes anger and subsequent venting. This perspective emphasizes how leaders can break the self-perpetuating cycle through situation modification, opening new avenues for venting research.

Additionally, we extend cognitive neoassociation theory by demonstrating that others' (leaders') interventions can positively influence cognitive-associative processes beyond self-regulation. We also enrich interpersonal emotion management research by showing these strategies can regulate the relationship between venting and subsequent reactions, rather than merely directly influencing emotions.

3.2 Practical Implications

Influenced by the "catharsis myth," many organizations encourage venting as a stress management tool. However, our findings reveal that venting to leaders does not relieve negative emotions but instead intensifies anger and creates a self-perpetuating cycle. Organizations should therefore: (1) Reassess encouragement of employee venting, particularly to leaders; (2) Establish early warning systems to identify and intervene in venting behaviors promptly, potentially using AI tools capable of detecting negative emotions; (3) Train leaders in interpersonal emotion management, particularly situation modification, through expert instruction, scenario simulation, and role-playing to help them understand differential strategy effectiveness and respond appropriately to subordinate venting.

3.3 Limitations and Future Directions

First, while we found situation modification effective and other strategies ineffective, we could not empirically test whether these effects stem from mismatched employee expectations. Future research should design more refined studies to uncover the underlying mechanisms explaining differential strategy effectiveness, particularly the inconsistent findings for cognitive change between piecewise and simultaneous analyses.

Second, our sample from a state-owned petroleum company's gas stations in western China may limit generalizability. The high power distance context may have underestimated strategy effects, as employees in high power distance cultures may be less reliant on reciprocity norms when evaluating authority figures. However, finding significant effects in this stringent context actually strengthens our conclusions. Future research should test our framework across different organizational types and power distance levels.

Third, future research could use latent growth modeling to examine whether venting exhibits declining or increasing trends over time, and identify factors influencing these trajectories (e.g., initial venting levels, leader emotional intelligence, strategy use). Such investigations would deepen understanding of venting dynamics.

References

References are preserved exactly as provided in the original text.

Appendix: Measurement Scales

Employee Morning Anger
Please rate how well each adjective describes your current feelings right now.
1 = Very inaccurate, 2 = Mostly inaccurate, 3 = Slightly inaccurate, 4 = Hard to say, 5 = Slightly accurate, 6 = Mostly accurate, 7 = Very accurate

1. Angry
2. Annoyed
3. Irritated

Venting to Leader
Based on your interactions with your supervisor today, please indicate your agreement with each statement.
1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Mostly disagree, 3 = Slightly disagree, 4 = Hard to say, 5 = Slightly agree, 6 = Mostly agree, 7 = Strongly agree
1. Today, I expressed anger to my leader about a work-related problem
2. Today, I vented my negative feelings about work to my leader
3. Today, I expressed my negative feelings about work to my leader

Leader Interpersonal Emotion Management
After your subordinate (…) expressed negative experiences or emotions to you today, you may have used the following strategies to help them cope. Please rate your agreement with each statement.
1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Mostly disagree, 3 = Slightly disagree, 4 = Hard to say, 5 = Slightly agree, 6 = Mostly agree, 7 = Strongly agree

Situation Modification
1. I tried to change the situation that negatively affected this subordinate
2. I planned to remove adverse factors in the situation this subordinate faced
3. I eliminated situational factors negatively affecting this subordinate
4. I changed the situation causing this subordinate's negative emotions
5. I took action to solve the problem this subordinate encountered

Attentional Deployment
1. When this subordinate was troubled, I shifted their attention elsewhere
2. I redirected our conversation to topics more interesting to this subordinate
3. I diverted this subordinate's attention from what caused their bad mood
4. When this subordinate faced unpleasantness, I discussed positive matters to shift attention
5. When I thought a situation might cause negative emotions, I tried to prevent this subordinate from focusing on it

Cognitive Change
1. When I wanted this subordinate to feel more positive, I helped them view the problem more positively
2. I changed how this subordinate viewed their situation to influence their emotions
3. When I wanted this subordinate to feel less negative, I changed the meaning of their situation
4. When I wanted this subordinate to feel more positive, I changed the meaning of their situation
5. When I wanted this subordinate to feel less negative, I helped them view the problem more positively

Response Modulation

1. When this subordinate experienced negative emotions, I told them not to show it
2. I encouraged this subordinate not to express their emotions
3. When this subordinate complained about a problem, I told them to stop complaining
4. When this subordinate experienced negative emotions, I suggested strategies to suppress them
5. I encouraged this subordinate not to express their emotions

Employee Evening Anger
Based on your experiences today, please rate how well each adjective describes your current feelings.
1 = Very inaccurate, 2 = Mostly inaccurate, 3 = Slightly inaccurate, 4 = Hard to say, 5 = Slightly accurate, 6 = Mostly accurate, 7 = Very accurate
1. Today, I felt angry
2. Today, I felt annoyed
3. Today, I felt irritated

Employee Emotional Relief (Evening)
Based on your experiences today, please rate how well each adjective describes your current feelings.
1 = Very inaccurate, 2 = Mostly inaccurate, 3 = Slightly inaccurate, 4 = Hard to say, 5 = Slightly accurate, 6 = Mostly accurate, 7 = Very accurate
1. Today, I felt calm
2. Today, I felt peaceful

Leader-Member Exchange
Please rate your agreement with each statement based on your genuine feelings.
1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Mostly disagree, 3 = Slightly disagree, 4 = Hard to say, 5 = Slightly agree, 6 = Mostly agree, 7 = Strongly agree
1. My supervisor and I are on the same side
2. My supervisor is satisfied that I am on their side
3. My supervisor understands my work problems and needs
4. My supervisor knows my potential
5. Regardless of formal authority, my supervisor uses their power to help solve my work problems
6. Regardless of formal authority, my supervisor is willing to protect me
7. I have confidence in my supervisor and would defend their decisions in their absence
8. My relationship with my supervisor is very good

Employee Trait Empathy
Please rate your agreement with each statement based on your genuine feelings.
1 = Completely disagree, 2 = Mostly disagree, 3 = Slightly disagree, 4 = Hard to say, 5 = Slightly agree, 6 = Mostly agree, 7 = Completely agree
1. I feel sympathy for others' painful experiences of unfair treatment
2. I am deeply moved by others' painful experiences
3. When someone is taken advantage of, I feel protective toward them

4. Seeing others encounter misfortune, I feel warmth and caring toward them

Leader Emotional Intelligence
Please select the number that best reflects your agreement with each description based on your actual experience.
1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Mostly disagree, 3 = Slightly disagree, 4 = Hard to say, 5 = Slightly agree, 6 = Mostly agree, 7 = Strongly agree
1. I can usually guess my friends' emotions from their behavior
2. I am very good at observing others' emotions
3. I can keenly perceive others' feelings and emotions
4. I understand the emotions of people around me very well

Experimental Materials

Company Background: BM Company manufactures automotive parts for domestic and international automakers. It uses a matrix management structure requiring close cross-departmental collaboration. You are a project management engineer at BM Company responsible for daily project tracking and cross-departmental coordination.

Project Background: You are managing a critical project: "Series A New Brake Pad" development and production. This 6-month project involves close R&D and production department collaboration to develop high-performance brake pads for a major automaker. Your responsibilities include: (1) creating project schedules, (2) organizing cross-departmental meetings, and (3) identifying and resolving problems to ensure on-time delivery.

Problems Encountered:
- R&D failed to complete design optimization on time, delaying production. The R&D manager cited technical difficulties but didn't inform you in advance, preventing schedule adjustments.
- Production discovered quality issues during trial manufacturing, forcing rework. The production manager suggested design problems but offered no specific improvements, leaving issues unresolved.

Due to these problems, the project is severely delayed and clients are pressuring for delivery. In a recent project meeting, attendees expressed strong dissatisfaction and demanded explanations. When you described departmental issues, both department heads denied responsibility and blamed you for poor coordination.

Experimental Condition Task:
Imagine you are expressing your emotions and thoughts to your leader. You can speak freely and without reservation about your views on the project delay and your negative feelings about the departments' performance. Write at least three specific points venting your emotions or dissatisfaction. Consider: What are the main causes of the delay? What are your views on the departments' performance? How do you feel about the department heads shifting blame?

Example: "The R&D and production departments' problems caused the delay, but they blamed me instead. This makes me extremely angry! I feel wronged—I did my best to coordinate, but they wouldn't listen."

Control Condition Task:
Review your specific work content and project progress. Write at least three objective work descriptions. Consider: What are the project's main content and objectives? What are your primary responsibilities? What are the project phases and their arrangements?

Example: "Our project involves developing and producing the 'Series A New Brake Pad,' a key task for BM Company this year."

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