Daily uncertainty may overshadow the role of perceived manager effectiveness on daily performance via experienced daily positive affect: a multilevel study

Abstract

Objectives: In this study, we expand on the existing work on daily performance by focusing on (1) within-person fluctuation in perceived manager effectiveness in relation to daily positive affective experiences and daily performance and (2) between-person fluctuations in uncertainty as a relevant boundary condition of these relationships.

Methods: Multilevel data from 101 managers (1,010 measurement occasions) were used to test the hypotheses.

Results: The results showed that fluctuations in the perception of the manager's effectiveness related positively to daily positive affective experiences, and this relationship was moderated by the team member's uncertainty levels, in such a way that perceived uncertainty buffered the positive effect of leadership effectiveness on positive affective experiences. Further, the findings evidenced a positive association between daily positive affective experiences and daily performance. Finally, results showed a significant indirect effect from perceived manager's effectiveness to daily fluctuations in performance via daily fluctuations in positive affective experiences.

Conclusions: perceived manager's effectiveness made employees feel more positive affective experiences, which contributed to their daily performance. However, uncertainty overshadows the influence of the manager's effectiveness on their worker's positive affective experiences. We discuss implications for theory and practice.

Keywords: perceived manager's effectiveness; positive affective experiences; performance; uncertainty.

Introduction

The concerns of researchers about the role of managers have been massively studied (e.g., Cícero et al., 2010) in part because managers have a significant influence on diverse personal (work-related affective experiences) and organizational outcomes (e.g., performance). Many scholars have been focused on perceived manager's effectiveness – the ability to mobilize and manage workers (Chemers, 2001) – arguing that beyond exploring management styles (e.g., charismatic), was understanding how these perceived their manager's effectiveness (Michel et al., 2020; Sy & van Knippenberg, 2021).

Indeed, the impact that managers have on organizational outcomes, such as attaining goals (e.g., Yukl, 2012), productivity (e.g., Leroy et al., 2018), and performance (e.g., Kaiser et al., 2008) are well known (van Knippenberg, 2020). In particular, there is consistent and massive research demonstrating the beneficial effects of a manager's effectiveness (e.g., Michel et al., 2020) for performance – the set of workers' behaviors that are relevant to their task-related goals (Koopmans et al., 2011). In addition, there are also studies focused on how this relationship occurs. Relying on the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2001), we argue that having a manager who is perceived as effective will be a valuable resource that will contribute to their workers' positive affective experiences, and this, in turn, will improve their performance. Valuable resources, such as effective managers, can create conditions for resource acquisition and development, such as work-related positive affective experiences, that is, the set of positive emotions experienced at work; Diener et al., 2020). These positive affective experiences will thereby contribute to performance by enhancing workers' energy, motivation, and task concentration (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Hence, positive affective experiences will mediate how perceived managerial effectiveness influences performance.

Despite the considerable research on the relationship between the perceived manager's effectiveness and performance (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013) there are fewer studies exploring the boundary conditions of this relationship (Hales, 2019). Accordingly, there have been calls for more research on how contextual and situational factors (e.g., Carroll & Gillen, 2019) influence the relationship between perceived managers' effectiveness and performance. While recently more research has shown moderators, few studies look at contextual dynamic factors, for instance in terms of work-related uncertain conditions – the perceived uncertainty and volatility that is inherent to the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) world in which present organizational and working settings are embedded in (e.g., Taskan et al., 2022).

In the present study, we extend previous research on the impact of the managers' perceived effectiveness, exploring perceived uncertainty as a boundary condition of the relationship between perceived managers' effectiveness and performance via positive affective experiences, at the within-person level. Specifically, we argue that when individuals perceive their context as uncertain, the indirect effect of perceived managers' effectiveness on performance via positive affective experiences will be buffered.

In what follows, we first present the construct of perceived managers' effectiveness. Second, we detail the roles of work-positive affective experiences at the within-person level and uncertainty at the between-person level as antecedents of job performance. Third, we elaborate on the relationship between perceived managers' effectiveness and daily performance. Finally, we present the overall research model by including the indirect relationship between daily perceived managers' effectiveness to daily performance via daily positive affective experiences and the cross-level moderator of uncertainty.

Literature review and hypothesis development

Perceived manager's effectiveness

Effective managers are crucial for rapidly changing and complex work environments characterized by high uncertainty and volatility (Weinberger, 2009). Indeed, nowadays, organizations must rapidly change and adapt to assure their competitive advantage and profitability. For that, they need effective managers who not only work effectively but also are able to influence their workers toward needed changes. The continuous environment of turmoil and change was coined the "permanent white waters" of modern life (Vaill, 1996). Effective managers are a key element in driving and managing these white waters (Weinberger, 2009).

Having effective managers is thereby critical for both workers and organizations. For organizations, because effective managers can boost efficient outcomes and objective results (Goleman, 2000), and for employees, because they cannot only influence and persuade them to move and perform better as well as they can make them feel better at work, by influencing their well-being and affect (Siddiqui et al., 2021).

Effective managers have "the ability to influence, motivate, and direct others to achieve expected goals" (Noureddine, 2015, p. 65). Similarly, Yukl (2012) emphasized that "the essence of managers in organizations is influencing and facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 66). Effective managers lead their teams effectively, satisfy the needs of their subordinates, actively contribute to the organization's goal and represent their teams in the organization (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Hence, effective managers are those that are able to influence followers to achieve a common goal for the benefit of the organization (Yukl, 2013).

Indeed, a manager's effectiveness is a driver for several outcomes including team effectiveness, individual performance, and organizational productivity (Judge et al., 2009; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005).

Perceived manager's effectiveness, positive affective experiences and performance

One theoretical framework that may contribute to explaining the influence of managers on their workers is the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964); there may be an influence from the effective manager on his/her workers if a social exchange occurs. That is when there is a reciprocity of behaviors exchange (e.g., Baran et al., 2012) – as highlighted by the reciprocity norm (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Hence, the more perceived quality in social exchanges between a manager and his/her workers, the higher the perceived manager's effectiveness, and hence the greater influence of the manager over the workers, both affectively and behaviorally.

When managers are perceived as more effective, it is likely that workers feel better while working, and hence higher performances (individual, team, and organizational) are achieved (Weinberger, 2009). In other words, effective managers tend to positively influence their workers' affective states which, in turn, influence them to engage in positive work behaviors that are relevant for higher performance rates (Puccio et al., 2020). Moreover, as described by Avolio and Bass (1995), when managers engage in behaviors oriented toward satisfying their followers' needs (e.g., helping them to achieve a goal) or act in a way that best represents their worker's interests (e.g., providing conditions to teleworking), they make them feel more positive emotions and likely influence them to pursue organizational goals (as proposed by the mechanisms inherent to the reciprocity norm of social exchanges) and thus contribute to their individual performances and their team as a whole (Leroy et al., 2018; Yukl, 2012).

In addition, Bass (1985) highlighted that managerial processes fluctuate, that is, the same manager might engage in different behaviors at different times in different situations. Indeed, behaviors tend to fluctuate over time; that is, behaviors present fluctuations both within and between-person; hence it is likely that the perceived manager's effectiveness also presents within-person fluctuations. As such, we defined the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. Within-person fluctuations in perceived manager's effectiveness are positively related to within-person fluctuations in positive affective experiences.

Cross-level interaction of perceived uncertainty

The way through which the manager's behaviors trigger positive affect is not always equal. That is, there are within-person fluctuations both in the manager's behaviors and in the worker's perceptions of their manager's effectiveness. These fluctuations mean that the workers' affective response is not always the same, even when the manager's behaviors are similar over time. For instance, Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) argue that the same behavior does not lead to the same affective reaction because this depends on the context and the situation in which the behavior occurs. Additionally, Lazarus (1999) highlighted that an affective response to some behavior also depends on the way through which an individual cognitively appraises that behavior and this appraisal is conditional to several factors, including the context (for instance, being in a positive context or on an uncertain one). As such, the perception of a manager's effectiveness and the affective reactions aroused are conditional on contextual factors, such as the perceived uncertainty dynamics of turbulent and ambiguous times (Altig et al., 2020; Blustein et al., 2020).

Vecchio (2002) highlighted the importance of examining the manager's effectiveness and his/her perceived organizational context as a potential moderator of the relationship between his/her effectiveness and several outcomes, including workers' reactions. Examining the effects of perceived contextual moderators in the relationship between perceived manager's effectiveness and positive affective experiences may clarify how these affective reactions may vary depending on perceived aspects of the context as well as perceived manager's effectiveness. Indeed, there may be some aspects of the context that buffer (e.g., perceived uncertainty) or intensify (e.g., context stability) the worker's affective reactions to the perceived manager's actions (effectiveness) (Karreinen et al., 2023).

We argue that perceived uncertainty of the working context will buffer the positive influence of managers' effectiveness on their workers' affective reactions for two reasons. First, we must consider the period lived nowadays that has been characterized by higher uncertainty and volatility (Bluestein et al., 2020; Taskan et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic crisis was a trigger of this perceived uncertainty that is being lived so far (Junça-Silva & Silva, 2022). Together with the VUCA world (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous; Taskan et al., 2022), COVID-19 and its social, economic, and organizational consequences enhanced the instability and uncertainty brought by these times. Uncertainty can be conceived either objectively - the actual state of knowledge about the accuracy of predictions of what will happen that is usually expressed in probabilistic terms - and subjectively, that is, as the set of cognitive perceptions of the unknown (Freeston et al., 2020). Perceived uncertainty occurs when the context or the events experienced are not stable enough to create patterns. Following this line of reasoning, uncertainty may be a cognitive evaluation. As Kuang (2017) noted: uncertainty is a “psychological state of “not knowing” (p. 199)”. Moreover, as emphasized by Freeston et al. (2020), perceived uncertainty tends to intensify the reactions to objects or situations that occur in the uncertain context (e.g., manager’s behaviors); in other words, uncertainty generally leads to negative emotions, and this effect is heightened in those who hold negative beliefs about uncertainty (Morriss et al., 2022). This means that individuals tend to experience fewer positive emotions and more negative ones when inserted in work contexts that are unknown and hence uncertain, even when good things happen to them (Junça-Silva & Silva, 2022). Indeed, when individuals perceive uncertainty, they tend to feel more anxious or have other negative affective states such as frustration, anger, and rage (Carleton, 2016). These tend to occur because of the perceived uncertain situation and the desire for more stability or certainty (Carleton et al., 2007; Freeston et al., 2020; Morriss et al., 2023). Hence, perceived uncertainty is the subjective and cognitive perception of what is unknown in each situation (Kuang, 2017; Kuang & Wilson, 2017).

Second, these unknown aspects of each situation may be accompanied by situations or behaviors of threat (objectively, perceived, or overestimated) (Carleton, 2016; Freeston et al., 2020). That is, some managers’ behaviors in an uncertain context may thereby be understood as threats, either objectively or perceived which can be a source of uncertainty (Zampetakis, 2023). Independently of its nature, it is likely that the interplay between the manager’s behaviors and an uncertain context may mitigate the workers’ positive affective reactions (Morriss et al., 2023). For instance, helping behavior from the manager, in an uncertain context, might be understood as a reprimand or an incompetent call, which will mitigate the workers’ positive affective reactions. On the opposite, the same behavior from the manager, in a stable context, may be appraised as civility behavior which will intensify the worker's positive affective reactions (e.g., satisfaction).

Empirically there are diverse studies that have demonstrated the moderating role of perceived uncertainty in the relationship between work conditions or events and affective reactions (e.g., Liao et al., 2016; Temouri et al., 2022). For instance, Behar et al. (2009) evidenced that individuals after experiencing positive events, when they are in uncertain conditions tend to engage in maladaptive behaviors and cognitive strategies (e.g., worry) which only serve to maintain and exacerbate negative affective reactions. Indeed, this is in line with the affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) which describes that the relationship between daily events and affective reactions is moderated by individual differences, such as uncertainty. Indeed, perceived uncertainty will negatively bias information by inflating the perceived threat of an ambiguous, complex, or volatile situation (Junça-Silva & Caetano, 2023a; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Accordingly, the uncertainty components of a manager's behaviors and his/her perceived effectiveness may appear more threatening to those who perceive their environment as more uncertain, contributing to higher levels of negative affective reactions and fewer positive ones. On the opposite, those who perceive their environment as less uncertain may be less threatened by the manager's behaviors, and therefore be able to find solutions to reduce the uncertainties associated with that, leading them to experience more positive affect.

Hypothesis 2. Perceived uncertainty moderates the within-person relationship between daily fluctuations in perceived manager's effectiveness and daily fluctuations in positive affective experiences such that for those who score low on perceived uncertainty, perceived manager's effectiveness will be strongly positively related to positive affective experiences.

Indirect relationship from perceived manager's effectiveness to performance via positive affective experiences

As described before, the perception of a manager's effectiveness may fluctuate over time, as it depends on the worker's perceptions of the manager's traits and behaviors (Junça-Silva & Caetano, 2023b). Indeed, an effective manager exists when workers perceive him/her as effective. Empirical studies have demonstrated that a manager's effectiveness operates on an individual level and exists in the eye of the beholder (e.g., Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1994). Hence, the perceived manager's effectiveness in the eye of the worker helps to further understand the dynamics regarding how s/he comprehensively influences his/her workers.

The more effective a manager is perceived, the higher the performance their workers achieve (Weinberger, 2009). Our study evaluated the construct of positive affective experiences as the basis for those performances. We considered adaptive performance due to the critical period in which data was collected – the pandemic crisis of COVID-19. Hence, adaptive behaviors at work – that is adaptive performance – are key for individuals to deal with uncertain work contexts (Pulakos et al., 2020). As described by Griffin et al. (2007), to be effective in these contexts, individuals need to adapt to or cope with changes to their work roles and their environment. Task adaptivity refers to adaptive performance and "reflects the degree to which individuals cope with, respond to, and/or support changes that affect their roles as individuals" (Griffin et al., 2007, p. 331). For instance, a manager who adapts well to a new process of work demonstrates individual task adaptivity. Adaptive performance is relevant when there is a new technology, a new process of doing tasks, or when something at work changes (e.g., work redesign) because this means that workers have to adapt their behaviors to such changes (Griffin et al., 2007).

The manager may facilitate workers' adaptability. Indeed, effective managers move and significantly influence their workers, in part because they emotionally contaminate and inspire them through positive affect (Goleman et al., 2002; Junça-Silva & Caetano, 2023b). Positive affect is the set of daily experienced emotions (e.g., enthusiasm or contentment) and is regarded as a valuable resource in the work context that is able to drive motivation and develop resources (e.g., energy) needed to achieve higher performance (Diener et al., 2020). Positive affective experiences are thereby valuable resources that broaden and build the worker’s cognitive and behavioral repertoire (Fredrickson, 2001). That is, when workers experience positive affect it develops other resources, such as energy, regulatory resources, or concentration, which broaden their thoughts and behaviors at higher standards (Fredrickson, 2013). For instance, if one is having a good day because the leader behaved in a fair and supportive manner, making him/her experience positive affect (Norman et al., 2010), s/he is likely able to drive his/her behavior toward the task at hand leading to improved performance. Hence, positive affect positively influences performance and may indeed be a mechanism through which perceived managers’ effectiveness influences performance.

As behaviors, positive affective experiences also present within-person fluctuations that are influenced by situational factors, such as daily micro-events (Junça-Silva et al., 2022). Building on the empirical and theoretical evidence described, we expect that within-person fluctuations in positive affective experiences not only lead to higher levels of performance but also mediate the relationship between perceived managers' effectiveness and performance.

Hypothesis 3. Within-person fluctuations in positive affective experiences are positively related to within-person fluctuations in performance.

Hypothesis 4. Within-person fluctuations in perceived managers' effectiveness are positively related to daily fluctuations in performance through within-person fluctuations in positive affective experiences.

Method

Participants and procedure

This study resorted to multilevel research that included one general and diary survey answered for 10 workdays (from Monday to Friday for two weeks). Following the best procedures, all the scales were presented in Portuguese after a process of translation and back-translation. All the surveys (general and daily) were answered online as a way to check the date and time on which respondents answered them.

We emailed 200 Portuguese working adults from the researchers' professional networks to take part in this study. After this request, 155 completed the general survey (response rate: 77.5%), 131 completed at least one diary survey (response rate: 65.5%), and 101 completed all 10 daily online surveys (response rate: 50.5%, measurement occasions=1010). This sample size was considered adequate because as suggested by Maas and Hox (2005) when there is the aim to perform cross-level interactions (i.e., between-person moderators on a within-person relationship), level 2 variables (perceived uncertainty at the between-person level) must exceed 30 respondents in a multilevel framework (diary nested in persons) resulted in an accurate estimation of standard errors. Thus, the final sample of 101 Portuguese participants had satisfactory power and accuracy, as it far exceeds the minimum sample requirements (Maas & Hox, 2005).

Overall, 62.5% were female, 38.1% held a high school degree and 28.8% held a university degree. Participants were on average 31.50 years old (*SD*=12.11), and their mean organizational tenure was 11.90 years (*SD*=11.68). They reported working on average 35.10 hours per week (*SD*=13.93), and they worked in diverse occupational sectors, including management (42%), services (31%), and health (27%). Participants had on average 1.28 child (*SD* = 2.29).

Measures

General survey. A general survey was used to collect sociodemographic data (i.e., sex, age, tenure, and educational level) and the between-person variable – perceived uncertainty. Perceived uncertainty was measured using four items from the Organizational Change Scale of Rafferty and Griffin (2006). Participants were asked to rate the items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Example items are as follows: “My work environment is changing in an unpredictable manner” and “I am often unsure about the effect on change on my work unit” ($\alpha = 0.74$, $\omega = 0.76$).

Daily survey. We followed the recommendations procedure for daily diary methods (e.g., Ohly et al., 2010). As such, to reinforce the daily nature of the survey, all items were worded such that they included “today,” and used the past tense in each item. Moreover, to improve reliability and lessen participants’ mortality, we used short scales. Finally, we also tested the level-specific composite reliability (i.e., within-person ω) as suggested by Geldhof and colleagues (2014).

Perceived managers' effectiveness. Participants rated the managers' effectiveness using four items developed by Giessner and van Knippenberg (2008). An example item was "Today, my manager led the team in a way that motivated the team members." Individuals responded to these items using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). The within-person omega reliability coefficient was good (ω= 0.78).

Positive affect. We used eight items from the Multi-Affect Indicator (Warr et al., 2014), to assess the experienced daily positive affect (e.g., "enthusiasm"). Participants answered on a 5-point scale (1–*never*; 5–*always*) (ω= 0.73).

Performance. We measured performance through the 3-item of the Individual Task Adaptivity Scale of Griffin et al. (2007). Respondents rated the items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very little*) to 5 (*a great deal*). An example item is: "Today, I adapted well to changes in core tasks" (ω= 0.76).

Control variables. We only used the time of data collection (from Monday to Friday – a within-person variable) because due to the daily diary nature of the data, it could influence the criterion variables (e.g., Hox & Boeije, 2005).

Data analysis

We used JASP to perform confirmatory factor analyses and SPSS with the macro-Multivel mediation (MlMed) to assess the hypothesized moderated mediation model (Rockwood, 2020). We used this macro because (1) other studies reported reliable findings through the use of it (e.g., Rockwood, 2020), (2) it appears to deliver similar results to other statistical software (e.g., Mplus), and (3) because it is particularly relevant when testing a cross-level interaction (Rockwood, 2020).

As we had a multilevel data structure, that is days nested in individuals, we estimated the intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) for perceived manager's effectiveness, positive affective experiences, and performance (Hox, 2010). We did not estimate an ICC of perceived uncertainty because this variable was only measured at a between-person level. The results indicated that a significant proportion of the variance (ICC values were 0.46, 0.41, and 0.39, respectively) is attributable to within-person fluctuations. Moreover, because all the ICCs were higher than 0.05, we can assume that the data had indeed a multilevel structure (days nested in individuals). As such, following a multilevel modeling approach appears to be a valid strategy (Marcoulides & Schumacker, 2009).

Results

Descriptive results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and zero-order and person-centered correlations of the variables to be tested.

--TABLE 1—

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

We conducted CFAs in JASP in which we accounted for the nested structure of our data (i.e., days nested within individuals). Table 2 presents the fit statistics. The first measurement model (M1) is the hypothesized model, including the following four latent factors: perceived manager's effectiveness, positive affective experiences, performance, and uncertainty. Four alternative CFA models have been tested: (1) one alternative model comprised the same four latent factors and a common method factor (M1*); another alternative model comprised the two latent factors in which perceived manager's effectiveness and positive affective experiences were loaded onto one factor (M2), and (2) the other one in which perceived manager's effectiveness, positive affective experiences, and performance were loaded on one factor (M3). At last, we tested a CFA with only one latent variable (M4) – that is, all the variables were loaded onto one factor. Therefore, we evaluated the model fit for each of these CFAs. We evaluated it based on the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). As Schreiber et al. (2006) described, a model presents a good fit when the values of both CFI and TLI are higher than 0.90's; when the values of both RMSEA and SRMR are below 0.08. Following these criteria, the hypothesized measurement model (M1) had an acceptable fit with the data. In addition, we compared all the models to our proposed one (M1) through a χ^2-difference test. The χ^2-difference test indicated that the hypothesized model presented the best fit to the data. Hence, the hypothesized model was the one with the best fit for the data.

Hypotheses testing

As suggested by Griep et al. (2022) we analyzed which model best fit the data. As such, we analyzed the Bayesian information criterion (BIC) – that is the balance between the number of parameters (i.e., model complexity) and the fit of the model to the data. We compared the BIC and the sample size–adjusted BIC values between the multilevel 1-1-1 mediating model with the multilevel moderated mediation model. The findings showed that the multilevel moderated mediation model was the one with the lowest BIC value, hence it was the one that presented the best fit to the data (BIC = 2862,73; sample size–adjusted BIC = 2866,73) when compared to the multilevel mediating model (BIC = 2864,32; sample size–adjusted BIC = 2868,32). Figure 2 presents the estimated paths of the model.

--FIGURE 2--

As hypothesized, daily fluctuations in perceived manager's effectiveness (Estimate=0.56, 95% CI = [0.33, 0.80]) related positively to daily fluctuations in positive affective experiences at the within-person level, supporting Hypothesis 1.

Next, we tested the second hypothesis 2. The results showed a positive cross-level relationship between perceived uncertainty and daily fluctuations in perceived manager's effectiveness in relation to daily fluctuations in positive affective experiences (Estimate = -0.15, 95% CI = [-0.22, -0.06]).

Moreover, the results showed that perceived uncertainty buffered the positive relationship between perceived manager's effectiveness and daily positive affective experiences. As Figure 3 shows, the strength of the relationship between daily fluctuations in perceived manager's effectiveness and daily fluctuations in positive affective experiences was smaller for employees scoring high on perceived uncertainty in comparison to employees scoring low on perceived uncertainty. Put differently, daily positive affective experiences were less dependent on daily fluctuations in perceived manager's effectiveness when employees had high perceived uncertainty. Hypothesis 2 was thus supported.

--FIGURE 3--

With respect to the within-person relationships between daily fluctuations in positive affective experiences and daily fluctuations in performance, our results showed that daily fluctuations in positive affective experiences related positively to daily fluctuations in performance (Estimate = 0.20, 95% CI = [0.13, 0.26]), thereby providing support for Hypothesis 3.

Finally, we found a significant indirect effect from daily fluctuations in perceived manager's effectiveness to daily fluctuations in performance (Estimate = 0.11, 95% CI = [0.06, 0.18]) via daily fluctuations in positive affective experiences, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 4.

Discussion

This study aims to contribute to expanding the literature on perceived managers' effectiveness. Specifically, it intended to develop knowledge of the mechanisms and the conditions through which the manager's effectiveness influences their workers' positive affective experiences and ultimately performance, at the within-person level. Further, it intends to understand whether the context' perceived uncertainty is a boundary condition that may attenuate the beneficial effect of the perceived manager's effectiveness on performance via influences on positive affective experiences. As such, this study develops knowledge on how and why the perceived manager's effectiveness influences their worker's performance by considering positive affective experiences as a process through which this influence occurs, and perceived uncertainty as a relevant boundary condition that harms this effect.

Overall, the findings show that within-person fluctuations in the perceived manager's effectiveness positively influence within-person fluctuations on the workers' positive affective experiences, and perceived uncertainty attenuates the strength of this relationship. Moreover, the findings also evidence that within-person fluctuations in daily positive affective experiences are positively associated with within-person fluctuations in daily performance. At last, the results show an indirect effect from the perceived manager's effectiveness to daily fluctuations in daily performance via daily fluctuations in daily positive affective experiences.

Theoretical implications

First, the results demonstrate that the perceived manager's effectiveness fluctuates on a daily basis, that is, workers do not always perceive the manager in the same rigid way. This is in line with what Weinberger (2009) described. Accordingly, the leader does not behave in the same way, as it depends on several factors (e.g., mood, personality, affective states, dispositions, situations, and problems), the same occurs to workers; that is, they do not react to the manager's behaviors in the same way as they may appraise it in different ways due to their inner states (e.g., mood), and contextual influences (e.g., perceived uncertainty) (Alimo-Metcalfe et al., 2008).

Further, the within-person fluctuations in the perceived manager's effectiveness are positively associated with their workers' fluctuations in positive affective experiences. In other words, the manager's behaviors – those that give rise to the workers' perceptions about their managers' effectiveness – contribute to stimulating more frequent positive affective experiences in their workers. This may be understood through the lens of the affective events theory. Accordingly, some behaviors are considered affective events (e.g., a leader helping a follower or giving some advice) that not only fluctuate over time (Ohly & Schmitt, 2015) but also trigger positive affect (Sy & van Knippenberg, 2021). This has been consistently found (e.g., van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). For instance, Yukl (2012) demonstrated that managers' behavior influenced his/her followers' emotional states.

What this study adds in terms of innovation is the analysis of a specific contextual factor (uncertainty) to understand whether this relationship is conditional to it. The results highlight that the way through which the workers appraise the contextual uncertain conditions influence the relationship between the perceived manager's effectiveness and the felt positive affective experiences. Hence, we may conclude that the perceived uncertainty of the context is a relevant boundary condition that minimizes the beneficial effect of the perceived manager's effectiveness on their workers' positive affect. Under uncertain contextual conditions, workers appear to be less reliable to their manager's positive behaviors, as uncertainty seems to overshadow the perceived managers' effectiveness. Hence, this is less relevant when uncertainty is higher, as this dampens the beneficial effects of having an effective manager regarding workers' positive affect. This may be explained because we measured the perceived manager's effectiveness, and not the perceived leader's effectiveness. Maybe, the role of the leader could be different under uncertain working conditions, as leaders appear to be more supportive and influencers of their team members (Alimo-Metcalfe et al., 2008) whereas managers appear to be more oriented to plan and organize work under stable working conditions (Carroll & Gillen, 2019; Hales, 2019). For instance, Charoensukmongkol and Phungsoonthorn (2021) demonstrated that the perceived leader's effectiveness, measured by behaviors of support to their workers, contributed to lessening perceived uncertainties; these perceived uncertainties acted as a buffer on the relationship between the perceived leader's effectiveness over their workers' emotional exhaustion. Thus, we may say that uncertainty overshadows the influence of the perceived manager's effectiveness on their workers' positive affective experiences.

Additionally, the results demonstrate the effect of the within-person fluctuations in daily positive affective experiences on within-person fluctuations in daily performance. This is highly acknowledged both theoretically and empirically (e.g., Fredrickson, 2001). Indeed, positive affect is a valuable resource at work as it serves to build even more resources (e.g., energy) needed for employees' performance (Diener et al., 2020; Hobfoll et al., 2018). By feeling good at work, individuals can create strategies to self-regulate behavior and thus engage in positive behaviors that feed the performance requirements (Junça-Silva et al., 2022) and thus contribute to higher performance standards (Griffin et al., 2007; Koopmans et al., 2011).

At last, the results show an affective mechanism through which the perceived manager's effectiveness influences the follower's performance. That is, the results evidence an indirect effect from the perceived manager's effectiveness to daily fluctuations in daily performance via daily fluctuations in daily positive affective experiences. In other words, the perceived manager's effectiveness makes employees feel more frequently positive affective experiences which serve to energize them to engage in daily performance. Yukl (2012) stated that managers influence their followers' emotions (positive affect) and behaviors (adaptive performance). What was not demonstrated so far was the indirect link. Hence, this study advances the knowledge of the affective mechanism that explains how a manager may influence employees' performance, by creating conditions for them to feel better (a higher frequency of positive affective experiences). Sy and van Knippenberg (2021) showed that the emotional manager not only created outstanding work environments but also contributed to their employees' feeling more positive emotions and behaviors.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the relationship between the perceived manager's effectiveness influences the followers' positive affective experiences, and these positively affect performance. Further, the relationship between the perceived manager's effectiveness and their workers' positive affective experiences is dampened by the perceived uncertainty of the context.

Limitations and Future directions

Despite the positive features of the study, there are also limitations to consider when interpreting the data. First, we used self-reported measures which might account for the common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). However, we took some measures that minimize this risk, such as having performed several CFA, and testing for two reliability indices (ω and α). Hence, this seems not to be a severe issue in this study.

Second, despite the daily diary study, we only collected data once per day. Hence, we cannot infer causality between the variables. As such, future studies should consider testing the model with a daily diary design but resorting to a data collection made with multiple time points per day. Doing so, will not only expand knowledge of these relationships but also give additional robustness to the findings.

Third, we resorted to the workers' perceived manager's effectiveness. These perceptions are subjective in nature, as they may depend on who perceives them (the worker) and the time of their perceptions, as the perception may change from day to day, and from moment to moment (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). As such, the same manager's behavior may be understood positively on one day, but on the other be appraised as negative. Thus, future studies should rely on multiple data sources, for instance, collecting data from followers and the leader himself/herself.

Future studies should consider testing the model with both positive and negative affect to understand the results, and also measure other relevant criterion variables, such as objective and perceived health.

Practical implications

Given the results of the study, there are some implications that organizations and managers must consider. First, it is relevant to note the importance that managers play in their workers' day to day. This relevance crosses the affective domain to the behavioral one. Indeed, as Yukl (2012) emphasized, managers influence their workers using emotions. As such, it is not surprising that they affect the perceived work climate and may emotionally influence their workers' states. This influence does not end here, instead, it also influences the behavioral domain by affecting the followers' attitudes and behaviors (Weinberger, 2009). From a practical standpoint, managers may consider some strategies to develop the skills and the role of the leader over his/her workers. For instance, organizations should consider training or workshop sessions with leaders with the aim of consolidating their supportive roles, purposes, and daily goals toward work and their followers. Moreover, it should be important to give psychological counseling or coaching to leaders whenever appropriate.

On the other hand, it should also be considered the context in which managers operate. That is, under uncertain working contexts the manager should make additional efforts to behave in a supportive manner (e.g., helping, demonstrating support) toward his/her workers, as it appears to be in these times that individuals need an additional fortification in the relationship between manager-worker. This fortification may serve to reduce the appraisal of the context as an uncertain one, and hence deliver positive results concerning positive affect and performance. By engaging in positive behaviors toward his/her followers, the leader may thereby improve their positive affective experiences and contribute to their performance. As such, organizations may consider training their leaders to know how to act in these uncertain and complex times and at the same time improve their followers' attitudes and behaviors at work.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the relevance of the perceived manager's effectiveness on their employees' positive affective experiences and consequently on their performance. That is, a perceived manager's effectiveness can make their employees' feel positive affective experiences which serve to energize them to engage in daily higher performances. But, this relationship is conditional on the levels of uncertainty, in such a way that under uncertain working conditions, the role of the managers becomes overshadow by the uncertain context. Hence, uncertainty overshadows the influence of the perceived manager's effectiveness on their workers' positive affective experiences.

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Tables

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and zero-order and person-centered correlations.

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5

1. Leader effectiveness	3.47	0.83	-	0.34***	0.49***	-	-0.11**
2. PAE	3.35	0.75	0.23**	-	0.41***	-	-0.05
3. Performance	3.68	0.69	0.41**	0.35**	-	-	-0.25**
4. Uncertainty	2.90	0.85	-0.20**	-0.21**	-0.16**	-	-
5. Time	-	-	-0.07*	0.03	-0.04	-0.01	-

Note. Zero-order correlations are presented below the diagonal (N = 101). Person-centered correlations are presented above the diagonal (N = 1010). Means and standard deviations are presented at the between-person level. We did not estimate person-centered correlations for the between-person variable perceived uncertainty. $p < 0.05$. $^{**}p < 0.01$. $^{***}p < 0.001$. PAE: Positive affective experiences.

Table 2. Fit statistics for the models based on confirmatory factor analyses accounting for a nested data structure ($N_{individuals}$ = 101; $N_{observations}$ = 1010).

Model	*χ2 (df)*	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR	Comparison	Δχ2	Δ*df*	*p*

M1	*4 latent factors*	*1178.86 (113)*	*0.07*	*0.97*	*0.96*	*0.06*				
M1*	4 latent factors with CMF	1224.36 (115)	0.09	0.95	0.94	0.07	M1*-M1	45.5	2	<0.001
M2	3 latent factors	1982.14 (116)	0.12	0.92	0.91	0.08	M2-M1	803.28	3	<0.001
M3	2 latent factors	2789.51 (118)	0.15	0.89	0.87	0.10	M3-M1	1610.65	5	<0.001
M4	1 latent factor	3602.67 (119)	0.16	0.86	0.84	0.11	M4-M1	2423.8	6	<0.001

Note.RMSEA: root mean square error of approximation; CFI: comparative fit index; TLI: Tucker–Lewis's index; SRMR: standardized root mean square residual; CMF: common method factor; PAE: Positive affective experiences. Best-fitting model in italics. M1: leadership effectiveness, PAE, performance, and uncertainty fit load onto four separate latent factors. M1*: leadership effectiveness, PAE, performance, and uncertainty fit load onto four separate latent factors + one higher-order common method factor. M2: PAE and performance were loaded onto one latent factor plus leadership effectiveness and uncertainty were loaded onto two separate latent factors. M3: Leadership effectiveness, PAE, and performance were loaded onto one latent factor, plus uncertainty was loaded onto one latent factor. M4: all the variables (Leadership effectiveness, PAE, performance, and uncertainty) were loaded onto one single factor.

Figures

Figure 1.

The proposed multilevel moderated mediation model.

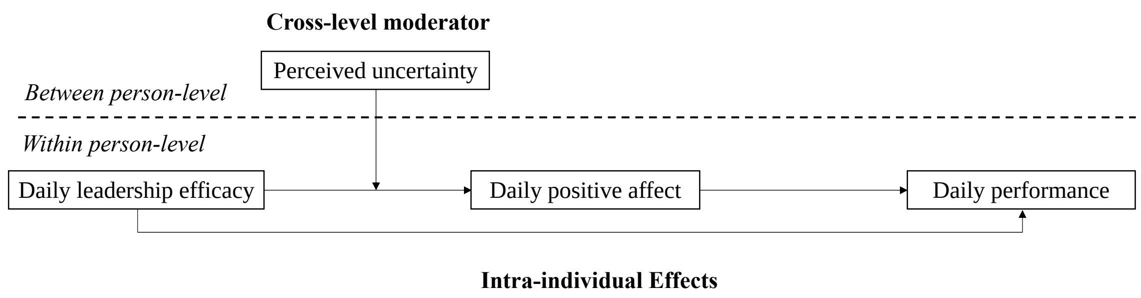
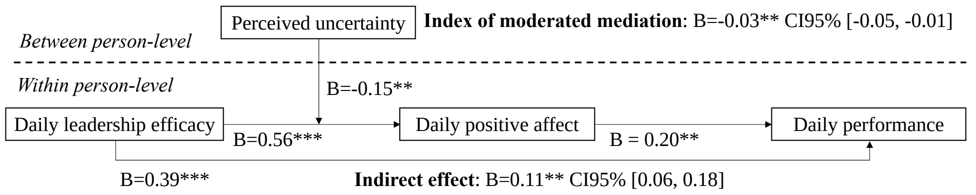


Figure 2.

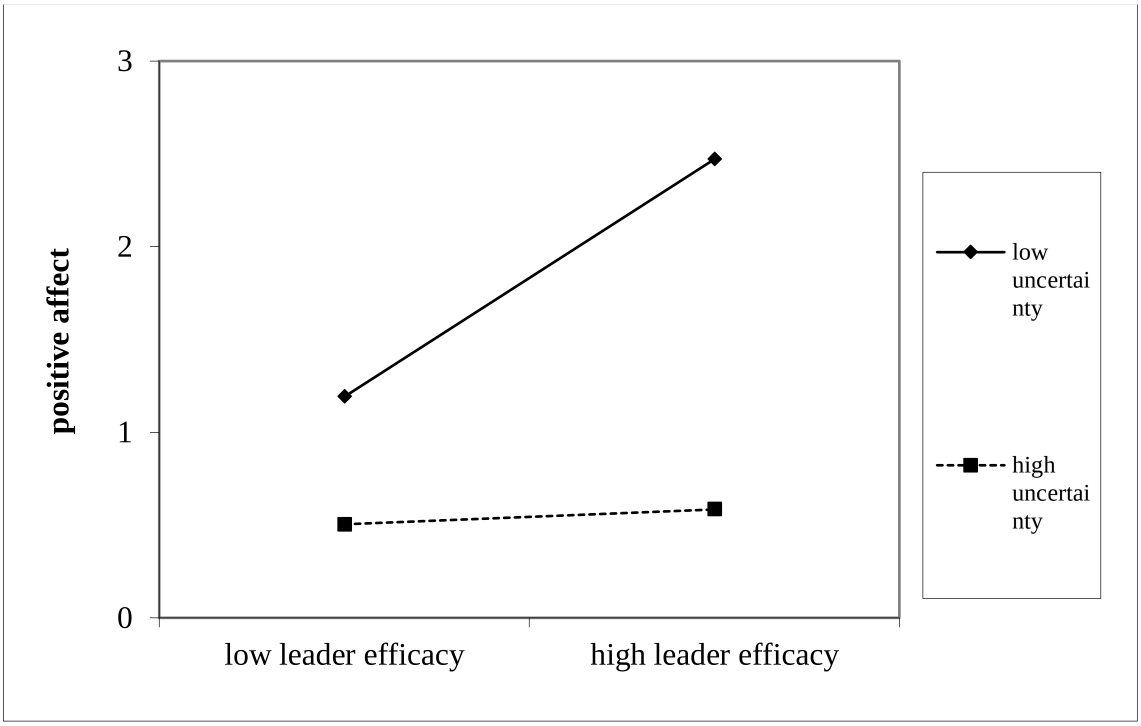
Estimated paths in the full multilevel moderated mediation model.



*$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$. ***$p < 0.001$.

Figure 3.

Cross-level interaction of perceived uncertainty and leadership effectiveness in relation to daily positive affective experiences.


3
2
1
0
positive affect
low leader efficacy
high leader efficacy
low uncertainty
high uncertainty