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Shen, Winny; Hentschel, Tanja; Hideg, Ivona

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ARTICLE

Leading through the uncertainty of COVID-19: The joint influence of leader emotions and gender on abusive and family-supportive supervisory behaviours

Winy Shen¹  | Tanja Hentschel²  | Ivona Hideg¹ 

¹Schulich School of Business, York University, 111 Ian Macdonald Boulevard, Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3, Canada

²Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Amsterdam, Postbus 15953, Amsterdam 1001 NL, The Netherlands

Correspondence

Winy Shen, Schulich School of Business, York University, 111 Ian Macdonald Boulevard, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3, Canada.

Email: wshen88@schulich.yorku.ca

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Abstract

As COVID-19 was a highly novel virus in 2019, it brought risks that are difficult to quantify and rampant uncertainty to the fore. We focus on how leaders navigate such an uncertain context. Drawing upon appraisal theories of emotions, we first argue that under the context of high uncertainty, leaders experience emotions relating to their perceptions of (un)controllability: anxiety and hope. We predict that these have differential behavioural consequences; leaders' anxiety about the pandemic relates to abusive supervision, whereas leaders' hope relates to family-supportive supervision. Integrating research on gender roles, we theorize that counter to common stereotypes, men's leadership would be more affected by their emotions. At the same time, women would provide leadership behaviours needed by their followers irrespective of their emotions; namely, refraining from abusive and providing family-supportive supervision. Our hypotheses were supported using a sample of 137 leader-follower dyads in the early phases of the pandemic. Our research has significant implications for appraisal theories of emotions by demonstrating that the behaviours of women, compared to men, may be less affected by their emotions. These findings present a significant departure from previous literature by revealing an important boundary condition of appraisal theories of emotions.

KEYWORDS

appraisal theories of emotions, COVID-19, gender, leadership, uncertainty

[corrections added on 24 May 2023 after the first online publication; funding statement was added to the acknowledgements section]

Winy Shen and Tanja Hentschel contributed equally to this manuscript and share lead authorship.

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Practitioner points

- We investigate how leaders' uncertainty- and controllability-linked emotions (i.e., anxiety, hope) related to the COVID-19 pandemic affect their leadership behaviours.
- Results indicate that men leaders' supervisory actions were related to their emotions. However, women leaders generally refrained from abusive supervision and provided family-supportive supervision regardless of their emotions.
- Organizations should be aware that leaders diverge in how they navigate the uncertainty of the pandemic by using different cues to guide their actions.

BACKGROUND

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) injected novel risks and additional uncertainty into our environment. The pandemic affected every significant facet of our lives and required us to adjust to new circumstances and cope with new challenges, including how we navigate our workplaces. Thankfully, emerging research suggests that employees are not alone in charting these unknown waters; leaders appear to play a vital role in shaping how subordinates experience and react to pandemic-related changes (Hu et al., 2020; Slaughter et al., 2021; Yuan et al., 2021).

Although effective leadership is needed to help individuals, groups, organizations and nations negotiate the uncertain path forward during the pandemic, leaders themselves are also affected by the uncertainty brought on by this crisis, which is the focus of the current study. Drawing upon appraisal theories of emotions (Lazarus, 1991; Moors, 2014), we argue that based on leaders' appraisals or interpretations of the uncertain pandemic situation, leaders experience different emotions, which in turn affect how they lead. Specifically, anxiety and hope are the two main emotions induced by uncertainty and are often viewed as opposing responses to uncertain environments (Roseman, 2013; Roseman et al., 1996). Crucially, anxiety and hope relate to people's perceptions of controllability in an uncertain environment. Specifically, anxiety is a negative emotion characterized by the fear of uncertain, yet existential, threats, and it arises as a function of appraising the uncertain environment as uncontrollable. In contrast, hope is a positive emotion, still characterized by fear, but also by the belief that a desired outcome is possible. Although hope can arise both in situations appraised as more as well as less controllable (Roseman, 2001), generally, hopeful people tend to perceive situations as more controllable than less hopeful people (Chang & DeSimone, 2001).

We argue that because of the close link between controllability and the emotions of anxiety and hope, experiencing anxiety versus hope in reaction to an uncertain environment, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, leads to different leadership actions. Current developments in appraisal theories (Jin, 2010; Lazarus, 2006; Yih et al., 2019) focus on how people cope with emotions. Specifically, people often aim to mitigate anxiety by adapting their behaviour. As anxiety is associated with a lack of perceived control, it is likely that anxious leaders seek to increase their sense of controllability. Namely, we argue that leaders try to compensate for a lack of control by asserting dominance in a domain they have control over—their leadership or behaviours toward subordinates. One possible way for them to reclaim some control is by engaging in more abusive supervision, domineering and hostile—albeit non-physical—supervisor behaviours (Tepper, 2000; Xi et al., 2022).

By contrast, feeling hope is related to appraisals of control and often involves a perceived opportunity to improve the situation, and a greater skill and motivation for solving social problems (Chang, 1998; Chang & DeSimone, 2001; Smith et al., 2014; Snyder, 2002). Hence, hope will lead to different behaviours than behaviours emerging from anxiety. In contrast to anxious leaders, hopeful leaders may not need to restore their sense of control and have more resources to focus on bringing stability and controllability

to their subordinates. As such, hopeful leaders may be more perceptive and attuned to the struggles that their employees are experiencing and more motivated to engage in goal-directed actions to address them (Snyder, 2002). Challenges employees face in effectively managing their work and home responsibilities during the pandemic have constantly been in the news—most notably, struggles around childcare given multiple school and daycare closures (Perelman, 2020; Pinsker, 2021). As such, these challenges are likely salient to leaders. Especially in the early phases of the pandemic, there was an unprecedented worldwide need for family-supportive supervision, and supervisors experiencing hope would have been more likely to provide such support.

Bringing together research on gender roles (Wood & Eagly, 2009) with appraisal theories of emotion (Lazarus, 1991, Moors, 2014), we argue that the proposed effect of anxiety and hope on abusive and family-supportive supervisory behaviours, respectively, holds more strongly for men than for women leaders. Counter to lay theories suggesting that women are more likely to be overwhelmed by their emotions (Brescoll, 2016; Shields, 2002), we suggest that women are less affected by their emotions. Instead, we expect women to engage in more supportive and effective leadership behaviours regardless of what emotions they experience. This assumption is grounded in a long line of research indicating that women are socialized to be communal and care for others (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Hentschel et al., 2019). Women's focus on others' well-being should be particularly pronounced during highly uncertain and turbulent times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, their leadership behaviours should be less affected by their emotions resulting from uncertainty, but instead primarily reflect a focus on their followers' needs and concerns (Vial & Cowgill, 2022). We test our predictions using a sample of leader-follower dyads during the early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 1 for our conceptual model).

The current study makes several contributions. We contribute to appraisal theories of emotions (Lazarus, 1991; Moors, 2014) by spotlighting leaders' own appraisals and emotions, which complements past work focusing on how leaders influence followers' emotions (Kaplan et al., 2014; Thiel et al., 2012). Critically, our work introduces an important boundary condition of appraisal theories of emotions, that is, the gender of the appraiser. We suggest that appraisal theories of emotions and the behavioural effects they propose hold for men leaders, but are less likely to hold for women leaders. Instead, women's gender role, which involves a primary focus on others rather than the self (Vial & Cowgill, 2022), seems to outweigh the behavioural drive resulting from their emotions—at least in uncertain times. Said otherwise, women are more likely to focus on helping others regardless of how they feel. This proposal is a significant departure from previous work; broadly speaking, our work contributes to a larger movement in the natural and social sciences to examine and consider how women's experiences differ from men's experiences (Crasnow, 2020).

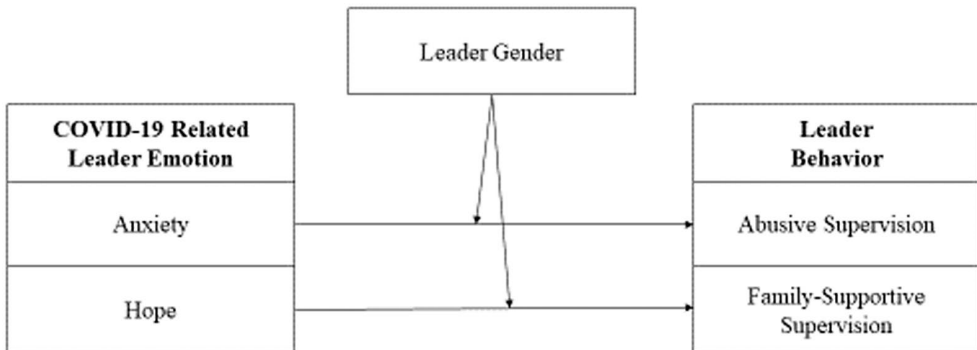


FIGURE 1 Conceptual model.

Uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic and appraisal theories of emotions

The pioneer of appraisal theories, Richard Lazarus (1991), argued that emotions result from specific patterns of appraisals people make about situations. An appraisal is a cognitive process comparing the environmental constraints and resources with the person's goals and beliefs (Lazarus, 1993). The appraised goal attainment options then generate emotions and complex states that guide people to adequately respond to the situation (Lazarus, 1991; Moors, 2014; Moors et al., 2013; Yih et al., 2020). Although a diverse field of research (Lazarus, 1991; Moors, 2014; Moors et al., 2013), appraisal theories coalesce around the idea that the situation's (un)certainty is a significant predictor of emotions (in addition to other factors such as the situation's goal relevance, pleasantness, agency and coping potential; Moors et al., 2013).

Uncertainty is experienced when an outcome is unknown, and the objective probabilities associated with the outcome are also unknown (Knight, 1921). Uncertainty is common in everyday life (De Groot & Thurik, 2018) and has tremendously increased during the COVID-19 pandemic (Stewart, 2021). For example, if you attend a large work gathering, you know there is a chance of contracting or not contracting COVID-19. Yet, the exact probability is difficult to estimate given that it depends upon several factors, including the behaviours and choices of others that you are likely not privy to and that are, thus, out of your control. Furthermore, beyond concerns and decisions regarding the virus itself, virus mitigation measures have had cascading impacts on several other domains. Therefore, individuals likely manage additional social and economic uncertainty during the pandemic.

Individuals must still move forward and make decisions in this uncertain context. In particular, appraisal theories suggest that the pandemic's threat and uncertainty give rise to distinct emotional responses (Roseman et al., 1996; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985); the greater the uncertainty, the stronger the emotional reactions (Mellers et al., 1999). Appraisal theories suggest that two emotions are particularly likely to be experienced under conditions of uncertainty: anxiety and hope (Huang et al., 2019; Loewenstein et al., 2001; Roseman, 2013). Said otherwise, they reflect the two primary affective responses to uncertainty and the prospect of unknown future outcomes (Baumgartner et al., 2008; Harvey & Victoravich, 2009; Ortony et al., 1988). Moreover, appraisal theories suggest that both anxiety and hope are related to perceptions of controllability, but in different ways. Whereas anxious people feel an existential threat and lack of control over the (pandemic) situation (Jin, 2010; Lazarus, 1991), hopeful people still feel (at least limited) control (Chang & DeSimone, 2001; Snyder, 2002).

Anxiety during the pandemic results, for example, from heightened mortality salience as the result of COVID-19 deaths (Hu et al., 2020), how the pandemic is covered by the news media (Andel et al., 2021), perceived threats to firm business (Wang et al., 2023), and economic stress from virus mitigation measures (Sinclair et al., 2020). Indeed, anxiety is the single most experienced emotion during the pandemic (Kleinberg et al., 2020; Medford et al., 2020). In addition, people feel hopeful even in extremely difficult and dire circumstances (Marciano et al., 2022; Sawyer & Clair, 2022), and people do experience hope during the pandemic (Dubey, 2020; Slaughter et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023), even when their organizations underwent painful transitions (e.g., furloughs, pay cuts; Slaughter et al., 2021). Therefore, in the midst of the pandemic, anxiety and hope encompass the most relevant pessimistic and optimistic emotions, respectively, among people, including leaders.

Emotions not only result from appraisals but also shape appraisals that influence people's perceptions and actions (Frijda & Zeelenberg, 2001; Lerner et al., 2003). Indeed, the evolutionary or functional value of discrete emotions is that they drive reactions and behaviours (Frijda & Mesquita, 1994; Roseman, 2013; Roseman et al., 1994; Smith & Kirby, 2011), and acting based upon emotions helps people to navigate and cope with uncertainty and threats (Lazarus, 1993; Li et al., 2014; Loewenstein et al., 2001; Yih et al., 2020; Zinn, 2008). Additionally, appraisal theories argue that people examine their emotions in a continuous cycle and are motivated to deal with distinct emotions via distinct coping processes (Yih et al., 2019). Thus, we expect leaders feeling anxiety or hope toward the pandemic to address the associated controllability issues in distinct ways.

COVID-19-related anxiety and abusive supervision

Due to the uncertainty of the pandemic, anxiety serves as an 'alarm', letting an individual know that they need to be prepared for anything (Grupe & Nitschke, 2013). One of the tricky aspects of anxiety is that because threats can be abstract or symbolic, the specific actions one should take to deal with them are often unclear (Lazarus, 1991; Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2005). In fact, anxiety resulting from crisis situations is associated not only with appraisals of low crisis predictability, but also with appraisal of low controllability (Jin, 2010). In other words, leaders feeling high levels of anxiety appraise that they have little control over the situation. They perceive that they are unable to attain desired goals (Lerner & Keltner, 2000) and feel powerless (Schmidt et al., 2010). Such a perceived lack of control—and the perception of leader goals being blocked by the pandemic situation—results in compensation of control in other aspects of life (Landau et al., 2015) and can drive destructive behaviours (Fox et al., 2001; Krasikova et al., 2013).

As leaders cannot assert control over the pandemic situation itself, one significant aspect of their lives in which they can assert personal control is leadership. In other words, leaders have control over their treatment and management of subordinates, and through their leadership behaviours, they can decide the extent to which they claim authority and dominance over their subordinates. As such, one way for leaders experiencing pandemic-related anxiety to try to restore a sense of personal control is to engage in abusive supervision—defined as hostile, non-physical leader behaviours (Tepper, 2000). For example, abusive supervisors tend to be rude, yell at, lie to, or ridicule employees. They are also likely to remind employees of past failures, tell them they are incompetent, or not allow them to interact with co-workers (Tepper, 2000). Indeed, recent research indicates that engaging in abusive supervision can make leaders feel powerful (Ju et al., 2019).

A meta-analysis on antecedents of abusive supervision found that leaders' stress, negative experiences and general negative affect increased abusive supervision (Zhang & Bednall, 2016; although only limited studies were available for these variables). Explicitly focusing on work-related anxiety (e.g., leaders being nervous about performance targets), Xi et al. (2022) recently found a positive relationship between anxiety and abusive supervision (see also Li et al., 2016; Mawritz et al., 2014). Therefore, we put forth the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. Leader anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic is positively associated with abusive supervision.

COVID-related hope and family-supportive supervision

Appraisal theories offer that different emotions lead to different coping processes, choices and behaviours (Lerner & Keltner, 2000). Thus, pandemic-related hope is likely to prompt different leadership behaviours than anxiety. Hope is a pleasant emotion associated with a sense that an uncertain situation will turn out well (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Evidence indicates that hopeful people are better at handling stress and stressful life events (Chang, 1998; Valle et al., 2006). One important reason, we argue, is that hopeful people appraise stressful situations as more controllable than less hopeful people (Chang & DeSimone, 2001). Thus, it is plausible that hopeful leaders view the pandemic as more controllable than their less hopeful counterparts, and do not perceive it as blocking their goals. Instead, hope has been described as an 'opportunity-based emotion' (Smith et al., 2014, p. 21); hopeful leaders likely appraise the pandemic as having challenges to be tackled. Higher perceived control has behavioural consequences. It elicits engaged behaviour, such as working toward solving problems in the situation, rather than disengaged behaviour, such as avoiding thinking about or dealing with the situation (Chang & DeSimone, 2001). In other words, hope increases conscious effort to pursue goals confidently and involves the conviction that the future can be changed (Ludema et al., 1997; Snyder, 2002).

We argue that hopeful leaders believe in having at least some control in dealing with the pandemic situation, and thus, have less need to restore control for themselves. Instead, they may pursue goals

addressing relevant and tangible challenges in the pandemic. Appraisal researchers argue that hope can increase commitment to solving *social* challenges (Smith et al., 2014) and enhance relationship skills (Umphey & Sherblom, 2014). There are even some hints that hope may increase people's focus on others and relationships (Merolla et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2014). Therefore, hopeful leaders may set their energy toward helping and accommodating others' needs—for example, by providing others with a similar sense of control in dealing with the pandemic—particularly others whom they already have responsibility for, that is, their subordinates. How can they do so?

We expect hope to nudge leaders to provide extra support where subordinates are most taxed, namely, their personal and family issues. During the pandemic, employees' challenges in effectively simultaneously managing their work and home responsibilities have constantly been in the news (Perelman, 2020; Pinsker, 2021). Thus, the need for addressing these non-work challenges may be especially salient in leaders' minds—particularly during the pandemic's early phases when work–family challenges were at an all-time high due to closed schools and daycare centres.

To address these important challenges, we expect hopeful leaders to show family-supportive supervision, which involves recognizing the importance of employees' non-work lives and seeking to help them balance work and non-work demands¹ (Hammer et al., 2009). Hopeful leaders are likely aware that during the uncertain times of the COVID-19 pandemic, they can only rebuild subordinates' perceived control if they support them not only in their work, but also in their many non-work challenges. In other words, we believe that leaders are aware that they can only make long-lasting contributions when they engage in leadership behaviours that reflect that they care about their subordinates as *people* rather than only as workers. In line with this reasoning, research shows that family-supportive supervision is consequential. Workers whose leaders were lower on family-supportive supervision tended to struggle more with managing the work–family interface during the pandemic (Vaziri et al., 2020) and exhibited worse well-being outcomes (Evanoff et al., 2020).

In summary, we offer the following hypothesis²:

Hypothesis 2. Leader hope related to the COVID-19 pandemic is positively associated with family-supportive supervision.

The moderating role of leader gender

Although we anticipate that anxiety related to the pandemic will generally be associated with abusive supervision and hope related to the pandemic will generally be associated with family-supportive supervision, we also predict that these emotion–supervisory behaviour relationships will differ for men and women. Whereas lay theories suggest that women are more likely than men to act based on their emotions

¹Similar to anxiety and hope, abusive and family-supportive supervision appear to be oppositional: Whereas abusive supervision results from leaders' self-focus, is characterized by hostility toward employees, and is only concerned with work issues, family-supportive supervision results from leaders' focus on the situation, is characterized by kindness and sympathy toward employees, and is concerned with both work and non-work issues.

²We note that we do not make predictions regarding the associations between leader anxiety and family-supportive supervision as well as leader hope and abusive supervision since they are less clear-cut. For the former relationship, contrasting predictions can be made. On one hand, some research suggests that anxiety, including during the pandemic, is likely to heighten self-interest (Hillebrandt & Barclay, 2022; Kouchaki & Desai, 2015). Thus, leaders who experience anxiety due to COVID-19 may be less likely to engage in family-supportive supervision if it is conceptualized as an altruistic and other-oriented action. On the other hand, research has demonstrated that anxiety can also have a 'bright side' by leading individuals to take productive actions to avoid harm (Barclay & Kiefer, 2019). This opens the possibility that leaders who are experiencing anxiety due to the pandemic may engage in more family-supportive supervision to the extent that they anticipate that such actions will mitigate future problems (e.g., family-supportive supervision leads to less employee turnover, facilitating the survival of their organization). Similarly, hope is theorized to promote an agentic approach to achieving goals, including considerations of different pathways to success (Snyder et al., 1996). Although dominance strategies that engender compliance, which could encompass abusive supervision (Yeung & Shen, 2019), is known to be a viable avenue to influence and success in groups, it is by no means the only avenue (i.e., prestige-oriented strategies, such as sharing knowledge and expertise, are an alternative; Cheng et al., 2013). Thus, it is ambiguous as to whether hope would be related (either positively or negatively) to abusive supervision. More generally, prior research has shown that use of effective leadership behaviours does not necessarily preclude use of ineffective leadership behaviours and vice versa (e.g., Duffy et al., 2002; Lian et al., 2012), such that these should be considered relatively independent actions (vs. ends of a single continuum).

(Brescoll, 2016; Shields, 2002), Vial and Cowgill (2022) recently made a strong case that women leaders engage in more emotional labour than men leaders and use their power more prosocially. Specifically, women self-regulate their own emotions to focus on the needs of their employees to reach organizational goals. The authors argue that women do so for three reasons: (1) they have higher emotional labour skills (likely due to socialization processes, Brody & Hall, 2009), (2) they construe power more interdependently in connection to others (rather than independently; Gabriel & Gardner, 1999) and relatedly, have a higher internal motivation to care for others (Hentschel et al., 2019), and (3) gender norms and prescriptions that require women to be caring to avoid social backlash increase women's external motivation to care (Heilman & Chen, 2005; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004).

In line with these propositions, influential social role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2012) also argues that traditional gender roles dictate that women should be communal (e.g., warm, helpful) or oriented to the needs of others. In contrast, men have significantly fewer prescriptions to be communal and are typically expected to act with agency (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Additionally, prior research indicates that both genders tend to internalize these gender-based expectations (Wood & Eagly, 2009). Indeed, women view themselves as more concerned about others than men (Hentschel et al., 2019). Thus, women's leadership behaviours should be more other-focused or driven by what others, such as their subordinates, need — and, thus, less dependent on their emotions regarding the pandemic. In line with these theoretical arguments, research has found that women, compared to men, leaders expressed higher levels of empathy during the early stages of the pandemic (Sergent & Stajkovic, 2020).

Asked about what employees particularly value during the pandemic, employees state that they prefer communal rather than agentic actions from their leaders, with the three most essential behaviours desired being honesty, understanding, and care (Eichenauer et al., 2022). Thus, women leaders should generally avoid abusive supervision (as it reflects a lack of care) and engage in family-supportive supervision (as it demonstrates understanding and concern, particularly of the person *as a whole*), regardless of their own emotions. Conversely, since men are socialized to be agentic and independent, they likely focus more on personal (rather than others') concerns (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Gabriel & Gardner, 1999). As a result, men's leadership behaviours during the pandemic may be more strongly shaped by their emotions—both in positive ways when they experience hope and in negative ways when they experience anxiety. Overall, we predict the following:

Hypothesis 3. The relationship between leader anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic and abusive supervision is moderated by leader gender, such that this relationship is weaker for women than men.

Hypothesis 4. The relationship between leader hope related to the COVID-19 pandemic and family-supportive supervision is moderated by leader gender, such that this relationship is weaker for women than men.

METHOD

Participants and procedures

Participants were recruited using snowball sampling with the assistance of four undergraduate students as part of their bachelor thesis projects in the Netherlands. These students were trained on research ethics and the importance of the proper distribution of survey links to maintain the integrity of the scientific process and were encouraged to recruit broadly. Similar procedures have been successfully used in prior research (e.g., Meier & Spector, 2013; Priesemuth et al., 2014). Specifically, students contacted workers in their networks and asked them to participate in an online study about work dynamics.

Both workers with and without supervisory responsibilities were contacted. They were then asked to participate with either their leader or follower, based on whether they held a leadership role. Namely, individuals who indicated they had supervisory responsibilities were assigned to complete the leader survey and then asked to invite a subordinate of theirs to participate in the study. In contrast, individuals who indicated they did not have supervisory responsibilities were assigned to complete the follower survey and then asked to invite their supervisor to participate in the study.³ We did not specify criteria by which leaders should select which follower to invite. Leader-follower dyads were unique; each leader only participated with one follower (not more) and vice versa (i.e., participants were instructed to participate in the study only once, and the student researchers verified that this was the case using participants' contact information). Leaders reported their emotions toward the pandemic, and followers rated their leaders' behaviours. Participants did not receive compensation for their participation.

Our data collection occurred between mid-May and early June 2020. This timeframe corresponds to the period in Europe when many European countries lifted at least some (but by no means all) social distancing restrictions, as there was evidence that the infection rates had somewhat lowered for the first wave of the pandemic. After matching leader-follower surveys using unique codes, the final sample consisted of 137 dyads (187 dyads were contacted by the student researchers, response rate = 73.5%). The majority of leaders were men (56.2%), Dutch (59.1%) and White (92%). On average, leaders were 44 years old ($SD = 12.52$), had been at their organization for 11 years ($SD = 9.28$) and were contracted to work 37 hours/week ($SD = 9.82$). The majority of followers were women (56.2%), Dutch (59.9%) and White (89.1%). On average, followers were 34 years old ($SD = 12.98$), had been at their organization for seven years ($SD = 7.85$) and were contracted to work 31 hours/week ($SD = 13.43$). Most commonly, participants worked in the service (38.2%), public (27.9%), or information and technology (22.8%) sectors.

We note that although many studies that focus on work–family constructs only recruit participants who meet the researcher's definition of having a 'family' (e.g., employees with a spouse or cohabitating partner, employees with children), we did not constrain participation in this study by these types of criteria. This is because research increasingly suggests that such definitions may not necessarily match participants' perspectives of who constitutes their family and problematically erases the family or non-work responsibilities of specific populations, such as single adults without children (Casper et al., 2016). Among leaders in our sample, 80.3% were in a relationship, and 56.9% lived with children. Among followers in our sample, 61.4% were in a relationship, and 24.1% lived with children.

Measures

Leader emotions

To assess leader emotions related to the pandemic, we asked leaders, 'to what extent do you feel the following when thinking about the COVID-19 pandemic?' Specifically, in line with prior emotions research (Fredrickson, 2013), we used emotion adjectives to assess anxiety (i.e., anxious, afraid, scared; $\alpha = .89$) and hope (i.e., hopeful, optimistic, heartened; $\alpha = .85$). Participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

³We inferred which member of the dyad was contacted first by the student researchers based on time stamps for who completed the study first. It appears that the sample was evenly split between leaders who completed the study first, who then invited their follower to participate (49.6%, $n = 68$), and followers who completed the study first, who then invited their leader to participate (50.4%, $n = 69$). In the case of the former, there may be some concern of bias, as leaders may potentially tend to invite followers with whom they have a closer or more positive relationship if they have multiple followers. To explore whether this was likely to be a threat in the current data, we examine whether followers recruited by their leaders rated their leaders more positively than followers directly recruited by the research team did. Independent samples t -tests indicate that the two groups did not significantly differ in their ratings of abusive supervision, $t(135) = 1.51, p = .13$, or family-supportive supervision, $t(135) = -.70, p = .49$.

Leadership behaviours

We asked followers to report on their leaders' abusive supervision and family-supportive supervision. Specifically, we asked them how frequently these behaviours occurred 'over the past few weeks during the COVID-19 pandemic'. Abusive supervision was assessed using the 4-item measure by Johnson et al. (2012), adapted from Neuman and Baron's (1998) scale. Sample item: 'My supervisor was rude to subordinates'. Participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*all the time*). We removed one item (i.e., 'My supervisor started arguments with subordinates') as reliability improved markedly when this item was excluded ($\alpha = .64$ to $.77$). However, we note that the pattern of results remains unchanged when the full 4-item measure was used instead.

Family-supportive supervision was assessed using 7 items focused on emotional and instrumental support for employees' family lives from Hammer et al.'s (2009) measure ($\alpha = .91$). Sample item: 'I can rely on my supervisor to make sure my work responsibilities are handled when I have unanticipated nonwork demands'. Participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

In our arguments above, we posit that hope should uniquely predict family-supportive supervision to address specific challenges that have arisen that employees face because of the uncertainty associated with the pandemic. In other words, we do not necessarily expect hope to motivate all types of positive or effective leadership behaviours. To explore whether these assumptions are correct, we sought to examine whether hope would also be related to task-oriented (i.e., initiating structure) and relationship-oriented (i.e., consideration) leadership behaviours. To do so, we asked followers to report on their leaders' initiating structure ($\alpha = .80$; sample item: 'My supervisor made his/her expectations for performance clear to workgroup members') and consideration ($\alpha = .86$; sample item: 'My supervisor was friendly and approachable to subordinates') with the 4-item scales used by Lanaj et al. (2016). These measures used the same instructions and response scale reported above for abusive supervision.

Data analysis

To address our hypotheses, we conducted multiple regression analyses. Given our interest in moderation effects, we centred all continuous variables before analyses, in line with prior recommendations (Cohen et al., 2003).⁴ Additionally, given that our theorizing draws upon traditional gender roles, we chose to control for follower gender in all our analyses. This is because prior research indicates that leadership behaviours may be affected by demographic (dis)similarity effects (Shen & Joseph, 2021). Therefore, it may be essential to capture the gender composition of the leader-follower dyad. We note that leader and follower gender were not significantly correlated in this study ($r = .10$, $p = .26$), such that there were 40 men leader-women subordinate dyads, 37 men leader-men subordinates dyads, 37 women leader-women subordinates dyads and 23 women leader-men subordinates dyads. Patterns of results and conclusions did not change when follower gender was excluded as a control from the analyses.

Based on the potentially disruptive effect of the pandemic, we asked participants, 'did your working relationship with your employee/supervisor change because of the COVID-19 crisis?' For leaders, 27% said yes, and 14.6% said yes for followers. The positive correlation between the two parties ($r = .31$, $p < .001$) indicates that there was convergence within dyads regarding the impact of the pandemic on their working relationship. We explored controlling for both leader and follower reports of this variable in our

⁴Different authors have made varying recommendations in the literature regarding centering, with some authors in favour of centering and others advocating for raw values (Dawson, 2014). Hayes (2005) argues that centering is often unnecessary (in that it does not reduce non-essential multicollinearity as some author scholars have suggested) – though we note that this does not imply that doing so is incorrect. Furthermore, he acknowledges that centering before creating the interaction term does not affect the regression weight, t -statistic, and p -value (i.e., statistical significance) regarding the interaction term. Thus, ultimately, the same conclusion would be drawn regardless of whether the raw values or the centered variables were employed, and we see this choice as primarily a matter of researcher preference given varying practices in the literature and because it does not affect substantive interpretations.

analyses, but the pattern of results did not change. Similarly, given that leader anxiety and hope toward the COVID-19 pandemic were significantly correlated ($r = -.18, p = .04$), we also explored controlling for the other emotion in our analyses (i.e., hope in the anxiety analyses and anxiety in the hope analyses), but the pattern of results remained the same. As a result, we chose to leave these variables out as controls based on best practices in the literature (Becker et al., 2016).

RESULTS

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics, correlations and reliabilities. Although not the focus of our investigation, we note that there were mean differences by leader gender for anxiety surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic ($r = .23, p = .01$), such that women leaders expressed significantly higher levels of anxiety than men leaders. By contrast, there were no significant mean differences by leader gender for feelings of hope toward the pandemic ($r = .03, p = .72$).

Tables 2 and 3 reports the results of our multiple regression analyses. As shown in the first step of Table 2, leader anxiety regarding COVID-19 was positively related to follower-rated abusive supervision ($b = .09, SE = .03, t = 2.89, 95\% CI = [.03, .16], p = .004$), supporting *Hypothesis 1*. A separate multiple regression was conducted to examine relations between leader hope, leader gender and family-supportive supervision. As shown in the first step of Table 3, leader hope regarding COVID-19 was positively related to follower-rated family-supportive supervision ($b = .16, SE = .06, t = 2.53, 95\% CI = [.04, .29], p = .01$), supporting *Hypothesis 2*. However, as shown in the second step of both regressions, these relationships varied based upon the leader's gender.

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics, correlations and reliabilities

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Leader gender	–	–	–							
2. Follower gender	–	–	.10	–						
3. Leader anxiety	3.06	1.54	.23**	.20*	(.89)					
4. Leader hope	4.29	1.30	.03	–.09	–.18*	(.85)				
5. Abusive supervision	1.29	.57	–.10	–.03	.21*	–.10	(.77)			
6. Family-supportive Supervision	5.63	.99	.07	.08	–.15	.21*	–.36**	(.91)		
7. Initiating Structure	4.73	1.23	.02	–.03	.01	.02	–.02	.16	(.80)	
8. Consideration	4.78	1.27	.09	.02	–.01	.06	–.24**	.53**	.35**	(.86)

Note. $N = 137$; Gender is coded: 0 = men and 1 = women. Coefficient alphas are in parentheses along the diagonal. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 2 Multiple regression analyses examining relations between leader anxiety, abusive supervision and leader gender.

	Abusive supervision							
	Step 1				Step 2			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI
Constant	1.41**	.08	17.02	[1.25, 1.57]	1.42**	.08	17.52	[1.26, 1.58]
Leader gender	–.17	.10	–1.71	[–.36, .03]	–.16	.10	–1.70	[–.35, .03]
Follower gender	–.07	.10	–.73	[–.27, .12]	–.05	.10	–.47	[–.24, .15]
Leader anxiety	.09**	.03	2.89	[.03, .16]	.18**	.04	3.96	[.09, .26]
Leader anxiety × leader gender					–.17**	.06	–2.64	[–.29, –.04]
ΔR^2						.05**		
Total R^2		.07				.12		

Note. $N = 137$; Gender is coded: 0 = men and 1 = women. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 3 Multiple regression analyses examining relations between leader hope, family-supportive supervision and leader gender

	Family-supportive supervision							
	Step 1				Step 2			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	95% CI
Constant	5.48**	.14	38.91	[5.20, 5.76]	5.50**	.14	39.83	[5.23, 5.77]
Leader gender	.11	.17	.65	[-.22, .44]	.11	.16	.69	[-.21, .44]
Follower gender	.19	.17	1.11	[-.15, .52]	.16	.17	.97	[-.17, .49]
Leader hope	.16*	.06	2.53	[.04, .29]	.32**	.09	3.66	[.15, .49]
Leader hope × leader gender					-.33*	.13	-2.60	[-.58, -.08]
ΔR^2								.05*
Total R^2		.06				.10		

Note: $N = 137$; Gender is coded: 0 = men and 1 = women. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

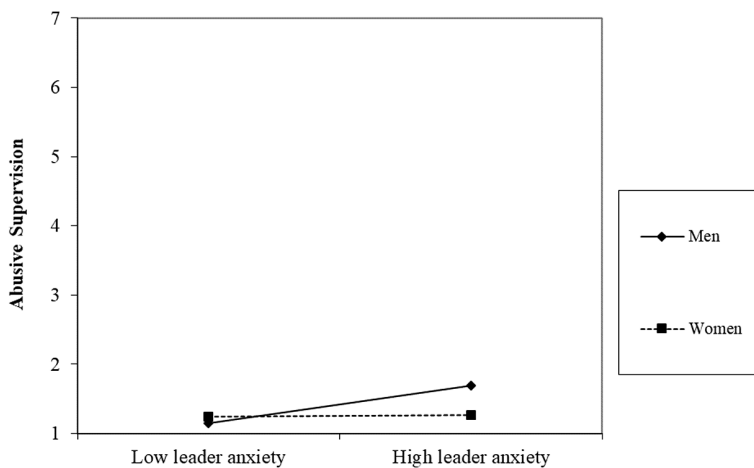


FIGURE 2 Moderating effect of leader gender on the relationship between leader anxiety and abusive supervision.

First, the relationship between leader anxiety and abusive supervision was moderated by leader gender ($b = -.17$, $SE = .06$, $t = -2.64$, 95% CI = $[-.29, -.04]$, $p = .009$; see Table 2). This interaction is depicted in Figure 2. Simple slope analyses (Dawson, 2014) reveal that the relationship between leader anxiety and abusive supervision was significant for men leaders ($b = .18$, $t = 3.91$, $p < .001$), but was non-significant for women leaders ($b = .01$, $t = .22$, $p = .82$). These results support *Hypothesis 3*; women leaders engaged in low levels of abusive supervision, regardless of how anxious they were feeling about the COVID-19 pandemic, but men leaders engaged in more abusive supervision when their anxiety was higher.

Second, the relationship between leader hope and family-supportive supervision was also moderated by leader gender ($b = -.33$, $SE = .13$, $t = -2.60$, 95% CI = $[-.58, -.08]$, $p = .01$; see Table 3). This interaction is depicted in Figure 3. Specifically, simple slope analyses (Dawson, 2014) demonstrate that the relationship between leader hope and family-supportive supervision was significant for men leaders ($b = .32$, $t = 3.58$, $p < .001$), but was non-significant for women leaders ($b = -.01$, $t = -.11$, $p = .91$). These results support *Hypothesis 4*; women leaders provided relatively high levels of family-supportive supervision to their subordinates, irrespective of their level of hope, whereas higher levels of hope were associated with greater family-supportive supervision among men leaders.

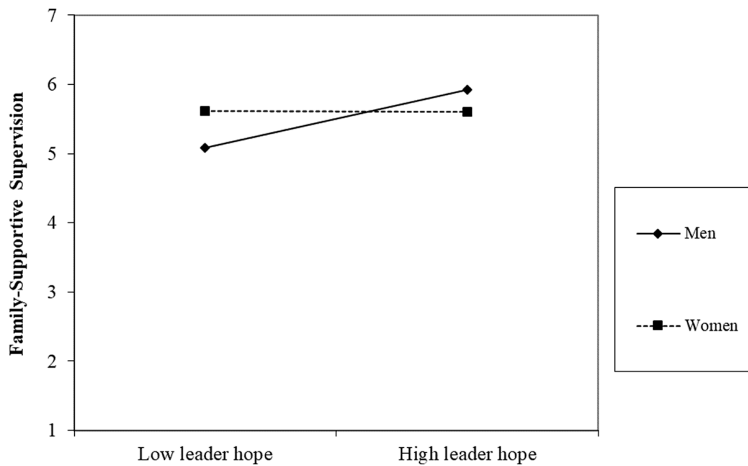


FIGURE 3 Moderating effect of leader gender on the relationship between leader hope and family-supportive supervision.

Supplemental analyses

As mentioned prior, for exploratory purposes, we investigated whether hope motivates not only family-supportive supervision, but different types of effective leadership behaviours indiscriminately. Thus, we conducted supplemental analyses testing whether hope relates to task-oriented (i.e., initiating structure) and relationship-oriented (i.e., consideration) leadership behaviours. Multiple regression analysis revealed that leader hope toward the pandemic did not predict follower-rated initiating structure ($b = .02$, $SE = .08$, $t = .21$, 95% CI = $[-.15, .18]$, $p = .84$) or consideration ($b = .06$, $SE = .09$, $t = .71$, 95% CI = $[-.11, .23]$, $p = .48$). Additionally, we did not find that these relationships were further moderated by leader gender (initiating structure: $b = -.19$, $SE = .16$, $t = -1.14$, 95% CI = $[-.51, .14]$, $p = .26$; consideration: $b = .02$, $SE = .17$, $t = .12$, 95% CI = $[-.32, .36]$, $p = .90$). Thus, although family-supportive supervision and consideration were moderately and positively correlated ($r = .53$, $p < .001$), which likely belies their shared relational focus and nature, in the current study hope was only uniquely predictive of family-supportive supervision.

DISCUSSION

Even though the pandemic has introduced new risks and uncertainty into our lives, appraisal theories of emotions (Lazarus, 1991) suggest that individuals do not necessarily interpret and cope with them uniformly. Namely, in the face of such uncertainty, leaders varied in the extent to which they felt anxious or hopeful about the outcomes of the pandemic. In this study, leaders' emotions toward the pandemic, which reflect their prospection regarding an uncertain future and their perceptions of controllability, were related to how they led. Anxiety was associated with higher levels of abusive supervision. In contrast, hope was associated with higher levels of family-supportive supervision. Given prior evidence that these leadership behaviours can meaningfully affect followers and organizational processes (e.g., Crain & Stevens, 2018; Mackey et al., 2017), these leadership actions may further enhance or reduce the risks and uncertainty these actors face during the pandemic.

Interestingly, men and women reacted differently based on their emotions. Specifically, during this uncertain and tumultuous crisis, women leaders' hope and anxiety did not affect their leadership behaviours. Instead, women leaders appeared to adhere to gender norms regarding communality (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2012) by being oriented toward meeting the needs of their subordinates (Vial & Cowgill, 2022)

during this challenging time. Specifically, women leaders steered clear of abusive supervision and delivered family-supportive supervision, regardless of their feelings about the pandemic. In contrast, men leaders' actions appeared to be more sensitive or reactive to their emotions toward the pandemic. Thus, although many individuals continue to believe that women are 'too emotional' to be effective leaders (Brescoll, 2016; Shields, 2002), our study indicates that this prevalent stereotype and associated inference that, relative to men, women cannot control the impact of their emotions, is erroneous.

Theoretical contributions

Individuals can better manage and optimize their decision-making when risks can be quantified. However, in many situations, including the current pandemic, individuals are faced with uncertainty as these probabilities are essentially unknowable (Stewart, 2021). Yet, individuals still need to choose and determine the best path forward. Drawing upon appraisal theories of emotions (Lazarus, 1991; Moors, 2014; Moors et al., 2013), we spotlight the critical role played by discrete emotions evoked by uncertainty—*anxiety and hope*. Although there has been a growing interest in understanding relationships between emotions and leadership behaviours (Gooty et al., 2010; Joseph et al., 2015), this work has generally failed to make finer conceptual distinctions between different types of discrete emotions (Fisher, 2019). Thus, our work highlights how uncertainty and perceptions of control are intimately tied to the appraisal and experience of specific emotions, particularly *anxiety and hope*, and prompt leadership behaviour in different ways. Moreover, for a long time, investigations that draw upon appraisal theories have primarily focused on emotions as outcomes of appraisals. We contribute to developments in appraisal theories and their call for a deeper understanding of how emotions influence coping and behaviours (Jin, 2010; Lazarus, 2006; Yih et al., 2019). In particular, by applying appraisal theories of emotions (Lazarus, 1991; Moors, 2014; Moors et al., 2013) to the organizational context, we show how different appraisals of the same uncertain situation, the COVID-19 pandemic, can result in diverging leadership behaviours.

By theorizing how appraisals associated with anxiety decrease leaders' perceptions of control, such that they need to reassert their control through dominant and hostile actions, and by demonstrating how anxiety drives abusive supervision, we contribute not only to the literature on emotion in the workplace, but also to the growing literature on antecedents of abusive supervision (Zhang & Bednall, 2016)—which is of high relevance for understanding how such a negative leadership style can be discouraged so that organizations can effectively function even during societal crises. Importantly, abusive supervision is likely only one way leaders experiencing anxiety may try to restore a personal sense of control. Thus, our research poses the question of how anxiety may influence other counterproductive leader behaviours.

Relatedly, our theorizing regarding the link between appraisals associated with hope and family-supportive supervision is novel. Existing research on the benefits of hope in organizational contexts has generally focused on trait or individual differences in hope rather than feelings of hope involving an event; consequently, studies on the behaviours of hopeful leaders have also been called for (Helland & Winston, 2005). Rather than arguing that hope is broadly associated with good outcomes, we make nuanced arguments regarding how leaders may act on their feelings of hope amid uncertainty to help subordinates deal with salient pandemic struggles and regain control not only of their work, but of their lives overall. As what motivates family-supportive supervision is currently not well understood (Crain & Stevens, 2018), our study gives back to the work–family literature by showing how leader emotions (i.e., hope) can help foster family-supportive supervision during a time when workers sorely need such aid. Moreover, our findings and theorizing further suggest that appraisal theories of emotions and the controllability of an environment (Lazarus, 1991; Moors, 2014; Moors et al., 2013) may be an important avenue to understanding these behaviours. Specifically, seeking to support their subordinates as people and feeling hopeful regarding the pandemic was positively associated with family-supportive supervision, but not necessarily other effective leadership behaviours that are more work role-focused (i.e., initiating structure, consideration). Therefore, these findings help both appraisal and hope researchers better understand the potential boundary conditions surrounding the advantages of hope.

Our largest theoretical contribution with significant implications for appraisal theories of emotions (Lazarus, 1991; Moors, 2014) is demonstrating that the behaviours of women leaders, compared to men leaders, are less affected by their emotions. Appraisal researchers often assume that emotions, once experienced, similarly guide all individuals to engage in corresponding behaviours, failing to consider that other motivations may serve as constraints in this process. Indeed, many appraisal researchers assume that action tendencies resulting from emotions take control precedence, that is, they are often prioritized over action tendencies resulting from non-emotional needs and motivations (Frijda & Zeelenberg, 2001; Moors, 2013). Our research suggests that, at least in some situations, this proposition might not hold true. For example, women leaders felt greater anxiety regarding the pandemic, indicating they may perceive greater uncertainty and less control regarding potential undesirable outcomes than their men counterparts. However, they were also less likely to act upon this anxiety in potentially problematic ways. Our findings on gender differences in emotion–supervisory behaviour relationships present a significant departure from previous research by showing an important boundary condition of appraisal theories of emotions. More broadly, we provide insights on women's unique experiences and specification of theories where men are often treated as the default (Cheryan & Markus, 2020; Crasnow, 2020).

Our study highlights that women leaders' experiences are not the same as men leaders', and not all our theories may apply to women in the same manner as they apply to men. Specifically, our study sheds light on gender as an essential factor in predicting the relationship between emotions and supervisory behaviour by showing that the relationship between COVID-related anxiety and abusive supervision and COVID-related hope and family-supportive supervision, respectively, are weakened for women (vs. men) leaders. Rather than relying upon their emotions as appraisal theories suggest, women leaders tend to adhere to gender roles requiring them to be communal and choose their actions based on the presumed needs of others (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2012; Vial & Cowgill, 2022). In contrast, men, who are generally stereotyped as agentic and independent (Gabriel & Gardner, 1999; Hentschel et al., 2019), appear more internally oriented, as their behaviours are more dependent upon their personal feelings and emotions toward uncertainty. Generally, this suggests the need for more nuanced theorizing in appraisal theories regarding the impact of gender.

Practical implications

Given the many stressors faced by employees during the pandemic, promoting effective leadership is particularly critical. Using insights from appraisal theories (Lazarus, 1991; Moors, 2014; Moors et al., 2013) to understand how emotions can facilitate different types of leadership is critical for organizations and leaders. In the form of abusive supervision, leadership can negatively influence employee attitudes, performance, and well-being (e.g., Mackey et al., 2017). In the form of family-supportive supervision, leadership can positively influence these outcomes (e.g., Crain & Stevens, 2018).

One practical implication from our research is that it may behoove organizations to seek to reduce anxiety and boost hope during the pandemic or other crisis events, especially among men, to enhance leaders' sense of control and, resultingly, leadership capacity. Organizations should strive to provide their employees with greater personal control to combat potential control compensation via destructive leadership behaviours. One way may be to offer autonomy and job crafting opportunities involving when, where, or with whom to work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Another may be for upper management to provide lower-level leaders with extra transparency and explanations around decision-making so that they feel that their organization has structure and consistency (Lind & Van den Bos, 2002), and thus, provide this sense of predictability.

Our findings also suggest that workers can seek to reappraise events related to the pandemic to engender more adaptive or beneficial emotional and behavioural responses (Folkman, 1984; Pogrebtsova et al., 2022), such as focusing on aspects of the situation that increases their hopes rather than fears. Hope is malleable, and several hope-based interventions exist (e.g., Feldman & Dreher, 2012; Luthans & Jensen, 2002). Organizations can further facilitate this process by offering resources (e.g., flexible and no

questions asked sick day policies), which should then positively influence individuals' appraisals regarding their capacity to cope with the uncertainty of the pandemic or other crises. Organizations could also train co-workers to identify signs of struggle that may occur if someone is struggling with significant anxiety to connect them with the appropriate mental health resources (Dimoff & Kelloway, 2019).

Limitations and future directions

Although our study has many strengths, including using a multi-source design, it is not without limitations. First, it should be acknowledged that our study occurred during a specific time period (i.e., after the first wave of the pandemic). Speculating how the results may differ if we conducted the study now is interesting; given that we have learned more about this virus, anxiety may generally be lower as there may be less uncertainty and greater perceived control associated with the threat of COVID-19. Further, hope may also be higher, given the high vaccination rates in some countries. Nevertheless, although the levels of different emotions may have changed, there is no theoretical reason to expect that the *relationships* we observed would have been altered.

A second limitation is that by recruiting leader-follower dyads, we only obtained leadership behaviour ratings from one follower. We note that we did not restrict participants to report only on behaviours that their leader enacted with them. Thus, followers were free to incorporate their observations of their leaders' behaviours with other subordinates as well in their ratings. However, we recognize that followers are likely not privy to all their leaders' interactions, and leaders can behave differently with different followers (e.g., Ogunfowora et al., 2021). Thus, it may be of interest to future research to conduct multilevel studies whereby we capture the leaders' entire workgroup and their leadership behaviour ratings to minimize potential bias. This type of design would also allow researchers to examine what follower characteristics affect how leaders act upon their positive and negative emotions with different followers.

Another limitation involves the ordering of our study variables. Although conceptually we position leader emotions as motivating different leadership behaviours, leaders did not always complete assessments of their emotions before followers provided ratings of leadership behaviours (i.e., approximately half the time, followers provided their leadership ratings first). However, we note that generally, leaders and followers completed their surveys close in time to each other (i.e., on average, two days apart, and the longest lag was 16 days apart). Additionally, research undertaken during the pandemic suggests that employee emotions were relatively stable from month to month, even when organizations enacted changes in response to the pandemic (Slaughter et al., 2021). Thus, we believe that leaders' emotions surrounding the pandemic were unlikely to have changed meaningfully in the timeframe of our data collection, regardless of which party (leader vs. follower) completed the survey first.

We acknowledge that our design does not allow us to make strong inferences regarding directionality. For example, it is possible that leadership behaviours elicited emotions (e.g., engagement in family-supportive supervision made the leader feel more hopeful about the pandemic) or there are reciprocal relationships between emotions and leadership behaviours. However, we still think our ordering is the most plausible for two reasons. First, we note that a recent paper examining leader emotions in the aftermath of abusive supervision did not find anxiety to be a common reaction. Instead, leaders were most likely to report feeling self-conscious emotions, such as guilt or shame, followed by positive emotions, such as relief or vindication (Shen et al., 2022). Second, to the extent that leadership behaviours generated these emotions, we would expect that the pattern of gender moderation would be different. For example, in a recent investigation, Kim et al. (2022) found that women leaders who engaged in abusive supervision were rated more negatively than their men counterparts. This finding suggests to us that the relationship between abusive supervision and anxiety should be *stronger* for women (vs. men) leaders to the extent that such actions are more damaging for their interpersonal relationships, particularly given arguments in the literature that women are more sensitive to social and environmental threats than men (Wormley et al., 2021).

Our theorizing centres on conformity to traditional gender roles in shaping the leadership behaviours of men versus women in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although prior research has found that there is a tendency for both genders to internalize gender norms and roles (Wood & Eagly, 2009), we recognize that there remains significant variation in the extent to which people identify with and choose to enact their gender role, including in how they lead (Kark et al., 2012), and we did not directly assess gender role identification in our study. In addition, considering the misalignment of lay theories assuming women fall prey to their emotions (Shields, 2002) and our finding that they act less on them poses questions for researchers about how women and men leaders are evaluated when conforming or not conforming to gender-based expectations (cf. Brescoll, 2016; Hentschel et al., 2018). Finally, given that we did not directly assess underlying mechanisms, it is possible that alternative channels could underlie our effects or co-occur with our theorized mechanism. A particularly relevant mechanism we did not directly assess, but which future research could investigate, is whether and how the extent to which men and women engage in emotional labour (Vial & Cowgill, 2022) underlies and influences the relationships we found.

CONCLUSION

The global pandemic that COVID-19 has unleashed has led to significant risk and uncertainty and placed a spotlight on our leaders to guide us through this crisis. Thus, in the current study, we sought to understand how leaders are affected by and navigate this context. Specifically, we find that leaders can experience anxiety and hope in this environment. Further, we demonstrate that these emotions relate to their leadership behaviours during the pandemic. However, not all leaders rely equally on these emotions to guide their actions. Whereas men leaders' use of abusive supervision and family-supportive supervision is linked to their experiences of anxiety and hope, respectively, women leaders appear to lean on gender roles and norms of care and communality to manage uncertainty and control and to steer their interactions with their followers. Overall, our research highlights divergence in leaders' strategies in dealing with the uncertainty related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Winnie Shen: Conceptualization; formal analysis; methodology; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. **Tanja Hentschel:** Conceptualization; data curation; project administration; writing – review and editing. **Ivona Hideg:** Conceptualization; funding acquisition; writing – review and editing.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT


The authors declare they have no known conflicts of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ORCID

Winnie Shen  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6238-0051>

Tanja Hentschel  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3037-1107>

Ivona Hideg  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1900-2631>

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