

# Effects of managerial communication as moderated by LMX and trait NA

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**Original citation & hyperlink:**

Sniderman, P, Fenton-O'Creevy, M & Searle, R 2016, 'Effects of managerial communication as moderated by LMX and trait NA' *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, vol 31, no. 6, pp. 1074-1090

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JMP-04-2015-0120>

DOI 10.1108/JMP-04-2015-0120

ISSN 0268-3946

Publisher: Emerald

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**TITLE: Effects of managerial communication as moderated by LMX and trait NA**

Sniderman, P.R., O’Creevy, M.P., & Searle, R., *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 31,

Iss 6 pp. 1074-1090

**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose-** Using the concept of disconfirming communication to define interpersonal mistreatment, this study explores the impact of specific negative managerial communication behaviors on employee emotions, while taking into account both leader-member exchange (LMX) and employee trait negative affect (trait NA).

**Design/methodology/approach-** 275 working adults completed surveys about their managers’ confirming and disconfirming communication and their own emotional responses to these communications.

**Findings-** The positive relationship between disconfirming managerial communication and employee negative felt emotion was reduced when LMX was high and was increased for employees with high trait NA personalities.

**Research limitations/implications-** While the cross-sectional design exposes the study to potential common method bias, a priori and post hoc procedures minimized this risk, confirming it has a negligible impact on the results.

**Practical implications** –Study insights and the new instrument, the confirming/disconfirming managerial communication indicator, (C/DMCI) can be used to train managers to be better communicators, thereby improving organizational effectiveness.

**Social Implications** – Drawing attention to the nature and emotional impact of disconfirming managerial communication may reduce its incidences, and lead to improved employee mental health with resultant positive effects for society.

**Originality/value** – Unlike previous studies of interpersonal mistreatment and managerial communication, we focus explicitly on the effect on employee emotion and explore confirming and disconfirming communication, and the moderating roles of LMX and trait NA.

**Keywords**- Managerial communication; relationship quality (LMX); emotions; disconfirmation; interpersonal mistreatment; interpersonal communication; face-to-face communication, trait negative affect (NA)

## **Paper type**

Research paper

## **Introduction**

At times managers communicate with their employees in ways that belittle them, ignore them, or invalidate their feelings. Whether intentional or not this form of interpersonal mistreatment has negative consequences for employee emotions, on organizational effectiveness and on society as a whole. This study introduces the model of disconfirming and confirming managerial communication (Sieburg, 1969; Ellis, 2002) and explores its complex relationship with employee emotions in the context of LMX, and the employee's trait NA personality.

Important definitional elements in this model help to differentiate it from other interpersonal mistreatment constructs. First, it has an exclusive focus on verbal and non-verbal

interpersonal communication rather than exploring more broadly, the negative aspects of the employee-supervisor relationship such as in abusive supervision (Tepper, 2007) or social undermining (Duffy, Ganster & Pagon, 2002). Second, the expanded focus on interpersonal communication highlights three types of negative managerial communication, called indifferent, impervious and disqualifying, which provides a more behavior-specific approach to understanding interpersonal mistreatment, as recommended by Tepper and Henle (2011). Third, the model includes both high and low intensity behaviors ranging from “interrupted me during conversations” to “belittled me” in contrast to incivility which, by definition, include constructs that are low intensity (Schilpzand, De Pater & Erez, 2016). Finally, a unique contribution of the model is its inclusion of positive behaviors i.e. confirming managerial communication. This inclusion not only acknowledges that a manager’s failure to use confirming communication (i.e. not asking for an opinion or soliciting another’s viewpoint) can also be experienced as negative, but also offers a model of both positive and negative managerial communication that strengthens the practical application and research possibilities in this field. Importantly, in Sieburg’s (1973) theoretical paradigm, confirming and disconfirming communication behaviors are not simply two ends of a bipolar dimension but are instead two qualitatively different phenomena. Confirming communication concerns that which builds on another person’s ideas, or clearly recognizes the other person’s value. Behaviors include giving undivided attention when engaged in private conversation and maintaining meaningful eye contact. In contrast, disconfirming communication is defined as behavior that communicates that the other person is inferior or not worthy of respect and includes behaviors such as interrupting, criticizing someone’s feelings when he or she expressed them, and giving ambiguous responses.

In addition to using the confirming-disconfirming model to understand employee mistreatment from a communications perspective, we are interested in how a manager's communication behavior relates to employee emotion. A few studies have revealed that ineffective or inappropriate communication is a significant predictor of employees' negative emotions (Basch & Fisher, 2000; Dasborough, 2006; Fiebig & Kramer, 1998). The main interest in these studies, however, was on emotions therefore managerial communication was studied in a very general way. Consequently, the findings offered limited insights into the nature of these negative triggers, nor were they detailed enough to help managers improve their interpersonal communication behavior-something that we were hoping our study would accomplish. Additionally, these studies did not take into account the employees' personalities. This is a gap because substantial evidence exists to indicate that individuals with high trait NA personalities tend to experience more negative emotion in response to negative work events than those with low levels of this trait (Gable, Reis & Elliot, 2000). We therefore included trait NA as a possible moderator in our model.

Finally, our research into the extensive interpersonal communications literature revealed the critical role that the relationship between communicators plays when trying to understand the impact of negative communication (Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989). Indeed the general omission of relationship context from interpersonal mistreatment research has recently been noted (Hershcovis & Reich, 2013) so we drew from the leadership literature and included the leader-member exchange (LMX) construct (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) to explore the possible role of relationship quality as a moderator of the relationship between disconfirming managerial communication and employee emotion.

In summary, this research extends the field in four distinct ways: First, our use of the confirming and disconfirming managerial communication model provides a more behavior-specific focus on verbal and nonverbal communication than other interpersonal mistreatment constructs. Second, we examine and empirically confirm the importance of understanding the relational context when exploring the impact of disconfirming managerial communication on employee emotions. Third, we provide support to Affective Events Theory by demonstrating the moderating role of the employee's trait NA personality, and finally, we introduce the Confirming/Disconfirming Managerial Communication Indicator (C/DMCI), a potential new tool for research and management training. Our research model is shown in Figure 1.

<INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE>

## **Theory and Hypotheses**

### *Disconfirming Managerial Communication as a Trigger of Employees' Negative Felt Emotions*

Extant studies reveal that leaders' direct interactions with employees are common triggers of employees' negative felt emotions but attention has focused more on the emotional response, rather than on the managerial communication behaviors. The latter have simply been described as insults, protests, justifications, and venting (Waldron & Krone, 1991), being challenged or questioned (Fiebig & Kramer, 1998), and being "spoken to in a rude manner" (Dasborough, 2006:171-172). Greater precision is therefore required to enhance understanding of what negative managerial communication is, to enable more nuanced insights into the impact of such knowledge, and for practical application in management training.

A number of constructs have explored negative communication. These include verbal aggressiveness (Infante & Wigley, 1986), position-centered communication (Fix & Sias, 2006), defensive communication (Stamp, Vangelisti & Daly, 1992) and disconfirming and confirming communication (Cissna & Sieburg, 1981; Ellis, 2002; Dailey, 2006; Gottman & Notarius, 2002; Sieburg, 1969). We use the latter constructs in our study. Disconfirming and confirming communication differ from models such as abusive supervision (Tepper, 2007) and social undermining (Duffy et al., 2002) because they focus exclusively on verbal and non-verbal communication. Second, they differ from incivility (Schilpzand et. el, 2016; Cortina, Magley, Williams & Langhout, 2001) by including both high and low intensity behaviors, and by articulating a more comprehensive list of both confirming and disconfirming communication behaviors. However, the model is similar to both abusive supervision and incivility in that it makes no assumption regarding the actor's intention to cause harm.

By definition, disconfirming communication fails to endorse, recognize or acknowledge another person as valuable and significant (Cissna & Sieburg, 1981). It comprises three clusters labeled: indifferent, impervious, and disqualifying. *Indifferent* communication manifests when someone engages in a monologue, remains silent or avoids eye contact. *Impervious* communication discredits the other person's expression of feelings with statements like "You shouldn't feel that way", and *disqualifying* communication is ambiguous, or contradictory. In contrast, confirming communication is the degree to which a message communicates that another individual is unique, valuable and worthy of respect, for example by asking a person for his or her opinion. In any one interaction, a communicator can exhibit both confirming behavior, for example, by maintaining eye contact, as well as disconfirming behavior, for example by being ambiguous or contradictory. We expand on research evidence that negative

managerial communication is a significant trigger of employee emotions, by using the concepts of “disconfirming” to define the nature of the negative communication behavior more clearly.

We therefore propose the first part of hypothesis 1 as follows:

**Hypothesis 1a:** Disconfirming managerial communication is positively related to employee negative felt emotion.

### *The Importance of Relationship Context in Interpersonal Communication*

Context can be an important, but often overlooked factor in organizational research (Griffin, 2007). A number of different communicative contexts influence communication outcomes. For example, the national cultures of the communicators have a very significant impact, especially in differences between individuals’ use of space, the symbolism of their attire, and their use of vocalic and kinesic cues, such as eye contact (Burgoon & Hoobler, 2002). In addition, the time and place of the exchange, the goals and topics of the conversation, and the quality of the relationship between the communicators are important (Knapp & Daly, 2002). Results from relational communication research reveal that messages transmit critical information about how a communicator perceives his or her relationship with the other person (Cissna & Sieburg, 1981; Watzlawick, Bevelas & Jackson, 1967). Indeed, this aspect of the message (called metacommunication) often tends to override the intended content of the message itself. Organizational researchers study manager-employee relationships under the umbrella of leader-member exchange or LMX (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This research initially focused on differences between managers’ in-groups (characterized by trust, respect and liking) and out-groups (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Contemporary LMX conceptions however, have emphasized the importance of building high quality



relationships and unique “strategic alliances” with *all* employees (Graen & Schiemann, 2013). Indeed, in conversations with high LMX employees, managers make fewer attempts at topic control and exhibit less performance monitoring (Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989). In addition, employees are less likely to engage in counterproductive behaviors (Feys, Anseel & Willis 2013), personal aggression or deception, (Horan, Chory, Carton, Miller & Raposo, 2013). Thus, we propose the second part of hypothesis 1:

**Hypothesis 1b:** The positive relationship between disconfirming managerial communication and employee negative felt emotion is weaker when perceived LMX with the manager is high and stronger when perceived LMX is low.

#### *The Role of The Employee’s Trait Negative Affect (NA) Personality*

We also contend that the employee’s trait NA personality will moderate the relationship between disconfirming managerial communication and employee felt emotion as suggested by Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). It is important to distinguish clearly between the two affective constructs of negative felt emotion and trait NA. Negative felt emotions tend to be elicited by a specific target (in our case, the manager), are directed at someone or something (Barsade & Gibson, 2007), and result in visible “adaptive behaviors” (Frijda, 1986). By contrast, trait NA is a personality construct and is part of the ‘mood’ category. Moods imply generally negative or positive feelings and that no specific target exists (Barsade & Gibson, 2007). Individuals with low trait NA personalities tend to experience fewer negative emotions at work and are less reactive (Grandey, Tam & Brauburger, 2002) while high trait NA individuals are more vigilant in scanning for environmental threats and tend to

accentuate negative aspects of a situation (Gable, Reis & Elliot, 2000; Watson, Wiese, Vaidya & Tellegan, 1999). Therefore, we propose our second hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2:** The positive relationship between disconfirming managerial communication and employee negative felt emotion is stronger for employees with high trait NA and weaker for those with low trait NA personalities

## **Methodology**

### *Sample*

We collected data from working adults who were also taking courses at a Canadian university. Two samples were collected comprising 142 and 150 individuals, with eight surveys in sample 1 and nine surveys in sample 2 rejected due to incomplete information. Response rates were 94.4% and 94%, respectively. Our final sample comprised 275 respondents of whom 44% were male, 77% worked at non-supervisory levels, 49% worked 35 hours or less per week, and 44% had worked with their current manager for a year or less. We checked these continuous variables to confirm that there were no significant differences between the two samples.

## **Measures**

The data collection focused on disagreement discussions between employees and their managers to avoid trivial or unimportant (with low goal relevance) conversation topics (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2002).

### *Disconfirming and Confirming Managerial Communication*

Managerial communication was assessed using a modified version of Ellis' (2002) 28-item Parent Confirmation Behavior Indicator (PCBI). The scale's content and convergent

validity were confirmed using Sieburg's Perceived Confirmation Scale (1973). In undertaking our modifications, three items could not be adapted and so were discarded resulting in a final 25-item scale. Participants were first cued into the context by instructions to: "*Think about the times you have had disagreements with your manager. What were the disagreements about? Please list all the topics.*" After thinking about these disagreements, they were asked to indicate the frequency with which their manager engaged in behaviors listed using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "Never", and 7 "Always."

*Scale development:* Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used to test and confirm the presence of the bi-polar dimension structure Ellis (2002) had proposed. Our results indicated a poor fit with this single factor model ( $\chi^2 = 3.47$ ;  $df = 275$ , CFI=.70, TLI=.68, RMSEA=.14). We then excluded 6 items due to their high cross-loadings, and instead used exploratory factor analysis to test for Sieburg's (1973) two factors (disconfirming and confirming communication) with three disconfirming sub-factors, (indifference, imperviousness and disqualifying). Finally, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis using the second response cohort. Our analysis showed this model had acceptable fit ( $\chi^2 = 2.04$ ,  $df = 148$ , CFI=.91, TLI=.90), except for the RMSEA which was .09. As RMSEA is best suited to larger samples for CFA (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010, p. 649), we also tested the fit on the full sample of 275 and found the fit improved and adequate ( $\chi^2 = 2.62$ ,  $df = 148$ , CFI=.93, TLI=.91, RMSEA=.08).

The final Confirming/Disconfirming Managerial Communication Indicator (C/DMCI) contained 19 items. The confirming factor (Cronbach alpha 0.91) contained 8 items, example "*gave me undivided attention when engaged in private conversation.*" The disconfirming factor (Cronbach alpha 0.92) contained 11 items split into 3 sub-factors as follows: The "indifferent" sub-factor contained 4 items, example "*interrupted me during conversations.*" The

“impervious” sub-factor contained 4 items, example “*discounted or explained away my feelings.*” The “disqualifying” sub-factor contained 3 items, example “*sent double messages (verbal and non-verbal messages that differed.)*” Cronbach alphas for the three sub-factors were 0.81, 0.87 and 0.81 respectively.

#### *Employee Negative Felt Emotions*

Eight items from the Job Emotions Scale (Fisher, 2000) were used to measure employees’ negative felt emotions (disgusted, worried, angry, frustrated, depressed, disappointed, unhappy and embarrassed). This scale was developed specifically to measure emotions in the workplace (as distinct from affect) by only including terms that implied a specific target. Participants were asked to indicate the emotions they experienced during, or after, their disagreement with their manager using the response format ranging from 1 = not at all to 5 = a great deal. The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was 0.87.

#### *Manager-Employee Relationship Quality (LMX)*

Leader-member exchange quality was measured using LMX-7 (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) replacing the word “leader” with “manager”. Sample items included “*Do you know where you stand with your manager...do you usually know how satisfied your manager is with what you do?*” Employees indicated their agreement levels using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = either “Rarely” or “Strongly Disagree” to 5 = “Very Often” or “Strongly Agree”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.89.

#### *Trait Negative Affect (trait NA)*

Ten items from the PANAS (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988) were included to measure employees’ trait NA. The items were irritable, upset, nervous, frustrated, distressed,

guilty, scared, hostile, ashamed and jittery. Respondents indicated the extent to which they generally feel this way at work using a 5-point Likert scale with 1= very slightly to 5= extremely. Cronbach's alpha was 0.84.

### *Control Measures*

Since the length of time that an employee has reported to his or her manager relates to his or her perceptions of leader-member exchange quality (Wayne, Liden, Kraimer & Graf, 1999), and affects cumulative frequency of communication episodes, we also measured contact time and direct interaction frequency: *Contact Time* was calculated as (reporting time x hours worked/week)/10. Coding for length of reporting time ranged from 1 = < 6 months to 4 = 5-10 years. Coding for hours worked per week ranged from 1 = 1-10 hours/week to 5 = >40 hours per week. *Direct interaction frequency* was measured based on response to the question "In the past 4 weeks, approximately how many times did you communicate with your manager, either face-to-face or by phone?" Coding ranged from 1= more than twice a day to 7= not once. Additional control variables were *employee gender* and *manager gender* (males = 0)

-INSERT TABLE 1 HERE-

### **Construct Validity**

Discriminant validity was confirmed by checking that each construct's variance shared with other constructs was lower than its average (Sharma, Yetton & Crawford, 2009). We also used the Harman one-factor test for common method bias and loaded the full set of items into a principal component factor analysis. Our analysis revealed a solution that accounted for 56.17% of the total variance, while the single factor solution accounted for only 21%-24% of the variance. Further, our test for the common latent factor revealed that only 3.28% of the

variance in survey items was explained by common method. (.181<sup>2</sup>). Thus, common method bias appears not to be of particular concern in this study.

## **Results**

Table 1 summarizes the means, standard deviations, correlations and scale reliabilities. Regression analysis, as shown in Step 1, Table 2 revealed that, after controlling for contact time, disconfirming managerial communication was positively related to employee negative felt emotion (.29,  $p < .001$ ), and confirming managerial communication was negatively (-.22,  $p < .001$ ) related to employee negative felt emotion, supporting hypothesis 1a. We found main effects for trait NA and LMX with disconfirming managerial communication accounting for 4.67% (.216<sup>2</sup>) of unique variance in employee negative felt emotion, and confirming managerial communication accounting for 1.67% (-.129<sup>2</sup>) of unique variance in the employee negative felt emotion. This lends support to Sieburg's (1973) contention that even though a significant portion of the variance is shared high disconfirming managerial communication is not equivalent to low confirming managerial communication, and low disconfirming managerial communication is not equivalent to high confirming managerial communication.

*-INSERT TABLE 2 HERE-*

We used hierarchical moderated regression to test the influence of LMX (H1b) and trait NA (H2) on the relationship between disconfirming managerial communication and employee negative felt emotion (see Step 2, Table 2). In this analysis, all of the predictor variables were mean-centered (Aguinis & Gottfredson, 2010) and we tested the interactions between communications and LMX and between communications and trait NA. Entering the interaction

terms for LMX and trait NA accounted for an additional 3% of variance. Both communication interactions (disconfirming and confirming) with LMX were significant ( $-.13, p < .05$  and  $.12, p < .05$ ), supporting H1b. In addition, the interaction between disconfirming managerial communication and trait NA was significant ( $-.14, p < .01$ ), while the interaction of confirming managerial communication x trait NA was not significant ( $-.04, p > .05$ ).

*-INSERT FIGURE 2 AND FIGURE 3 HERE-*

We examined the interaction effects in more detail by calculating regression slopes with the “Low” and “High” values of disconfirming and confirming managerial communication set to one standard deviation above, and below the mean (See Figures 2, 3 and 4). The subsequent slope plots for LMX (Figures 2 and 3) revealed that high LMX reduced the negative impact of disconfirming managerial communication, and also accentuated the positive impact of confirming managerial communication on employee negative felt emotion.

*-INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE-*

The slope plot for trait NA (Figure 4) reveals that individuals in both the high and low disconfirming managerial communications groups with high trait NA reported higher negative felt emotion but that the difference between these two groups was greatest for the low trait NA group. This result suggests that trait NA has an antagonistic influence on disconfirming managerial communication (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was only partially supported. The interaction pattern produced suggests that employees with high trait NA do tend to experience more negative emotion, whether the manager uses

disconfirming communication or not, while those with low trait NA, had an increase in negative felt emotion in response to disconfirming managerial communication.

## **Discussion**

### *Contributions to Theory*

These results contribute to theory in the areas of interpersonal mistreatment, managerial communication, leader-member exchange and emotions at work. By exploring the impact of confirming and disconfirming communication on employee emotions, our findings extend previous emotions research and studies of interpersonal mistreatment by describing a more comprehensive and nuanced range of negative managerial communication behaviors that do not assume any intention to harm, and that can be used to explore the underlying constructs in more depth. The results of our factor analysis supports Cissna & Sieburg's (1981) original suggestion that high and low disconfirming communication are qualitatively different from low and high confirming communication and suggest that disconfirming communication is a complex phenomenon, comprising the three distinct sub-facets of imperviousness, indifference and disqualification.

Our analysis reveals that a high LMX reduces the deleterious impact of managerial disconfirming communication on employee negative felt emotion, supporting relational communication theory (and contemporary conceptions of LMX as relational leadership (Uhl-Bien, Maslyn, & Ospina, 2012)). Three distinct mechanisms can be considered in relation to these findings, indicating clear directions for future research. First, the social support created by high quality LMX is argued to act as a stress buffer (Cohen & Wills, 1985) protecting people from the potentially adverse effects of stressful events. Second, according to the



“undoing hypothesis”, the experience of positive affect (which might underlie or accompany perceptions of high LMX) can negate the impact of negative emotions (Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade, 2000). Finally, high quality LMX and confirming managerial communication can create a “trust bank” in which earlier, more frequent positive experiences can help off-set a subsequent negative event (Searle & Dietz, 2013). Discovering more about which of these mechanisms is in operation would greatly assist our understanding of how these effects work.

We focused on emotion as an outcome in and of itself due to evidence of its significant influence on organizational outcomes over the past three decades (Lord & Kanfer, 2002) including performance and job satisfaction (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and counterproductive work behavior (Bauer & Spector, 2015). Also, felt emotions are argued to be critical in triggering the process of sense making (Maitlis, Vogus & Lawrence, 2013). Our findings support Affective Events Theory by suggesting that trait NA is a moderator between the emotional job event (disconfirming managerial communication) and the affective reaction (employee negative felt emotion) and also extends the theory by showing the merit of including LMX as a contextual moderator. Regardless of whether employees experienced high and low disconfirming managerial communication, our results show those high in trait NA reported higher negative felt emotion than those low trait NA, consistent with extant research on behavioral inhibition theory. In addition, those low in trait NA also exhibited a greater range in the emotional impact of high and low levels of disconfirming communication (a steeper slope). This interesting finding merits further research: It may be that for those with low levels of trait NA, disconfirming managerial communication stands out as an unexpectedly aversive

situation, whilst individuals high in trait NA may make less distinction between instances of disconfirming communication and the background noise of other aversive events.

### *Implications for Management Practice*

By focusing on the communicational aspects of interpersonal mistreatment, by not assuming hostile intent, and by including both a negative and a positive dimension in our model, the resultant Confirming/Disconfirming Managerial Communication Indicator (C/DMCI) offers a practical and non-threatening tool for management development and performance appraisal training. In addition, empirical support showing that good manager-employee relations is associated with reduced negative employee emotions implies the value of helping managers build good relationships with *all* their direct reports. From an organizational perspective reducing negative employee emotions is related to positive outcomes such as increased affective commitment and helping behaviors, reduced intentions to leave (Elfenbein, 2007; Fisher, 2002), reduced withdrawal behaviors and increased trust during organizational change (Kiefer, 2005)

### *Implications for Society*

High levels of confirming and low levels of disconfirming managerial communication promote a sense of being valued, and can create emotional engagement for employees also called social capital (Uhl-Bien, Graen & Scandura, 2000) or social logic (Kanter, 2011). When the latter coexists with financial logic, organizations build enduring success. In addition, when managers are confirming and not disconfirming, their communication behavior results in perceptions of support by employees. These perceptions promote greater feelings of being

trusted (Salamon & Robinson, 2008), and are associated with a number of positive physical and mental health outcomes that benefit society (Burlison & MacGeorge, 2002; Reuver & Woerkom, 2010).

### *Limitations and Future Research*

There are several limitations to this study. First, all of the measures in our study were self-report, which may increase the possibility of common method variance (CMV). However, as our study focused on real, rather than hypothetical or experimentally constructed relationships, self-report is an appropriate method by which to measure employees' experiences of their managers' communication behaviors. Previous studies have indicated the improved validity of utilizing self-reported over other-reported disconfirming communication (Dailey, 2006), LMX (Sin, Nahrgang & Morgeson, 2009), and felt emotion (Barrett, 2006). However, in order to assess and check the possibility of common method variance, we followed several distinct steps (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Specifically, exogenous and endogenous variables' items were separated over the length of the survey, response formats were varied, and we included several reverse-coded items. In addition, participation was voluntary, with participants guaranteed anonymity, and questionnaires were completed away from their workplaces, making it less likely that responses were influenced by social desirability or evaluation apprehension (Conway & Lance, 2010). Nevertheless, we also conducted further post hoc checks, such as Harman's single factor test, and a confirmatory factor analysis (in AMOS) with common method as a latent variable to reveal that only a small proportion of the variance identified appears to be the result of common method bias.

A second limitation pertains to the validity of our modified measure. While the content validity of the scale on which our tool was modelled (the PCBI) has been established (Ellis, 2002), that measure was a 28-item scale, and our final scale contained only 18 of these items. We recognize that when eliminating items from the original scale we risk compromising the construct it was designed to measure (Aguinis & Vandenberg, 2014). However, face validity remains strong and our confirmatory factor analyses and reliability scores do provide some support for the content validity of this new measure. For practical reasons (likely sample attrition with an overlong survey measure), we did not establish a full nomological net for this measure, and we recommend that future research should continue to build this picture (Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991). In order to test for content validity, this measure could be administered along with Sieburg's Perceived Confirmation Scale (Sieburg, 1973), or Ellis's PCBI (2002). In testing for the discriminant validity, related measures such as the abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), or respectful engagement (Carmeli, Dutton & Hardin, 2015) scales could be used alongside the C/DMCI.

A third limitation is the use of recall. While some argue that retrospective judgment of emotion is likely to tap into *beliefs* about emotions, rather than into the emotions themselves (Robinson & Clore, 2002), recent evidence from organizational justice research reveals that the recall of experiences may be more robust and enduring than previously thought (Lilly, Virick, & Hadani, 2010). In order to examine this and the impact on discrete emotions (Bauer & Spector, 2015) future research could measure managerial communication and emotion contemporaneously (Ruef & Levensen, 2007). A fourth limitation is that the current study is mono-cultural, and that non-verbal behaviors can have different meanings in different cultures.

Future research would benefit from drawing explicitly from various national cultures to incorporate a deeper exploration of non-verbal behaviors such as tone of voice and eye contact.

## **Conclusions**

The objectives of our study were to use the disconfirming/confirming constructs to gain an in depth understanding of the communication behaviors that underlie employee perceptions of interpersonal mistreatment by their managers. We also wanted to place context front and centre and discern whether LMX and the employee's personality were significant moderators of the managerial communication-employee emotions relationship. Our results confirmed that high LMX reduced the effect of high disconfirming and low confirming managerial communication on negative employee felt emotions. Low employee trait NA also had the effect of reducing the effects of disconfirming managerial communication on negative employee felt emotions and interestingly low trait NA employees also exhibited greater variance in relation to high and low levels of managerial disconfirming communication.

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**FIGURES**

**Figure 1: Research Model**

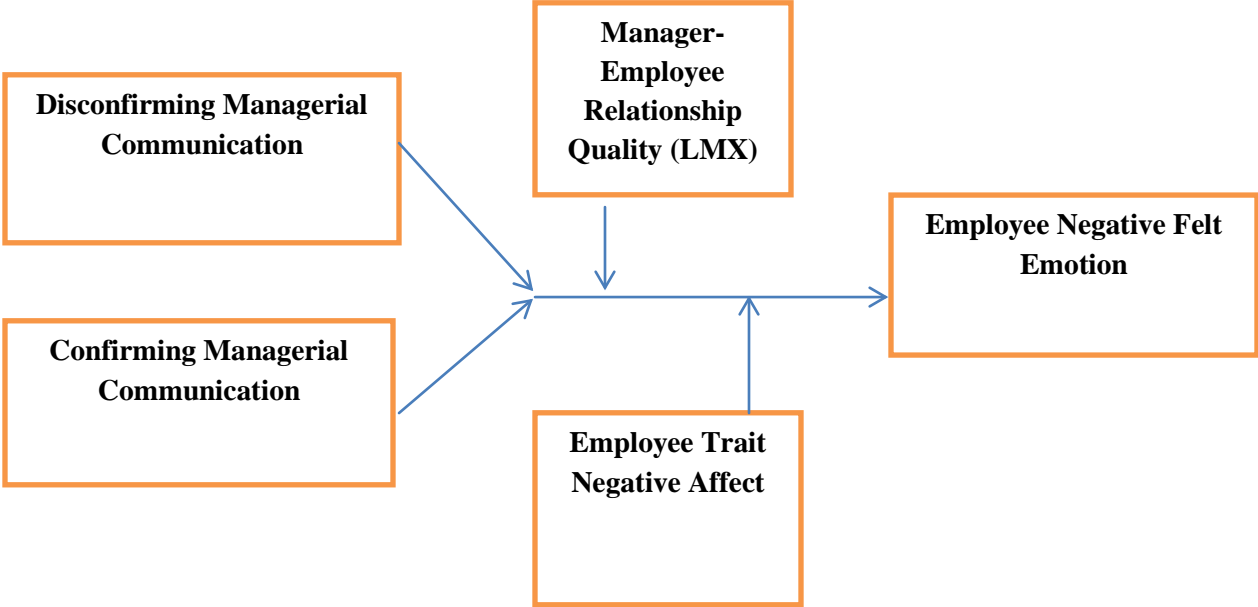


Figure 2: Interaction of Disconfirming Managerial Communication and LMX

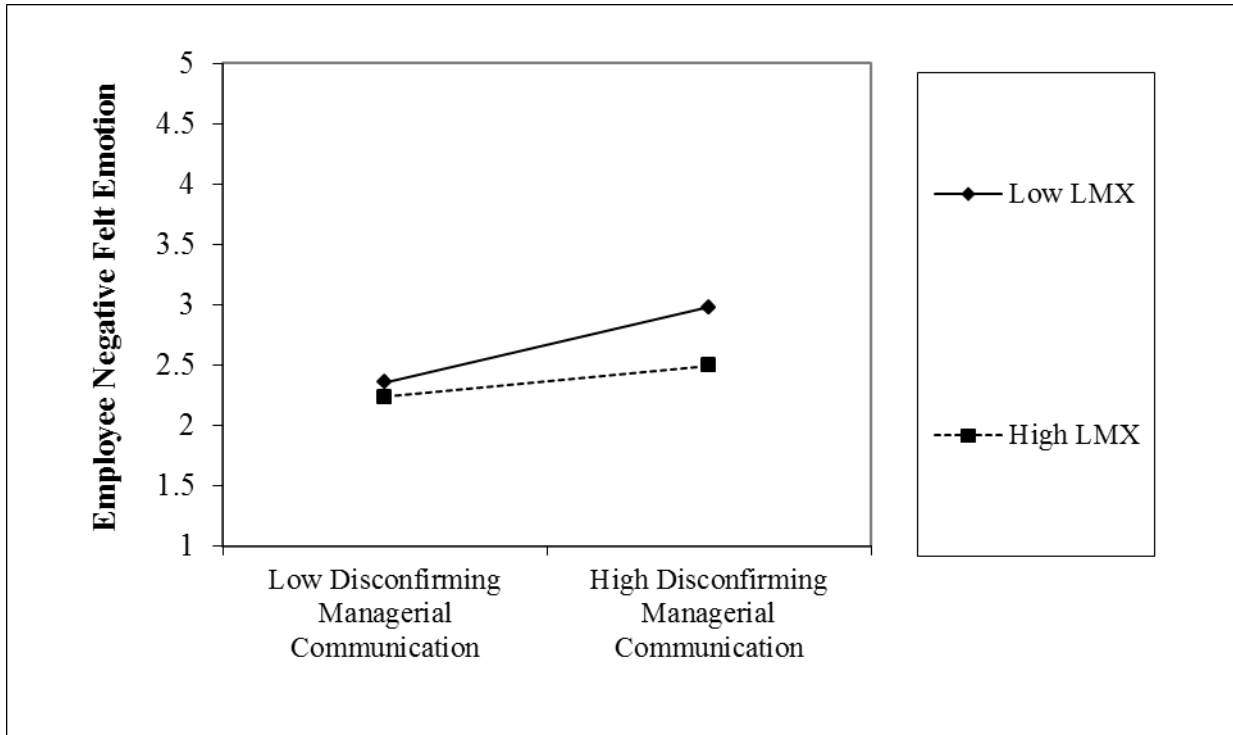


Figure 3: Interaction of Confirming Managerial Communication and LMX

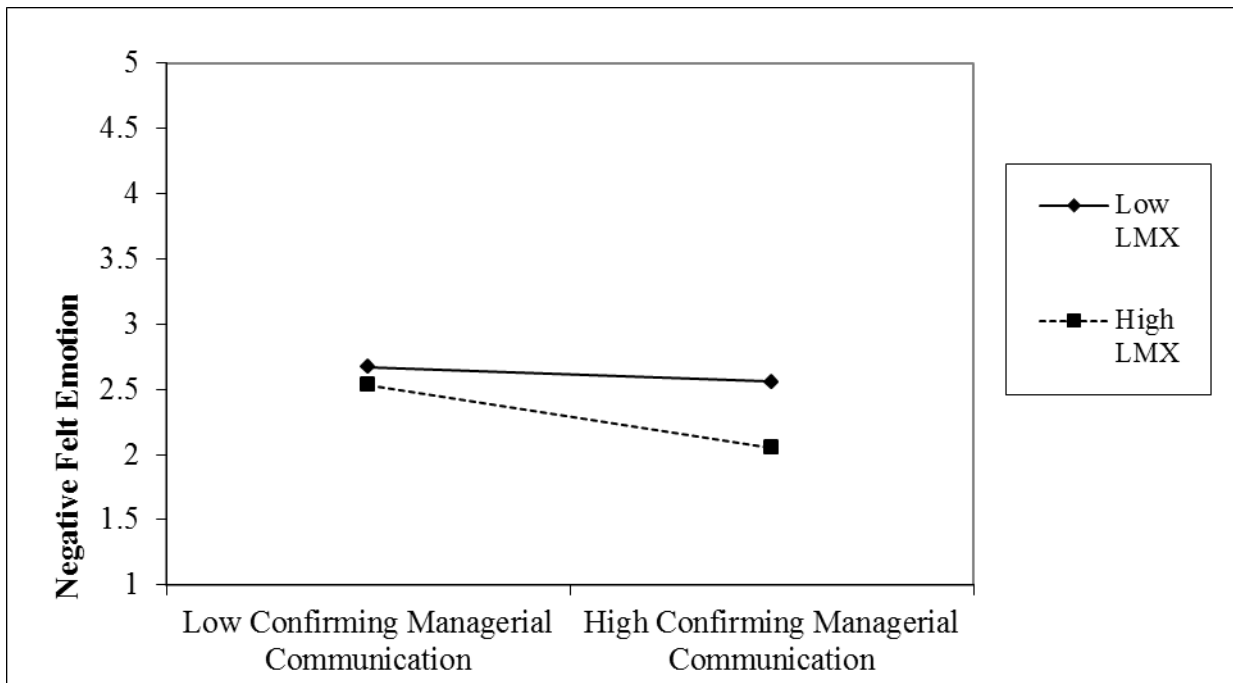
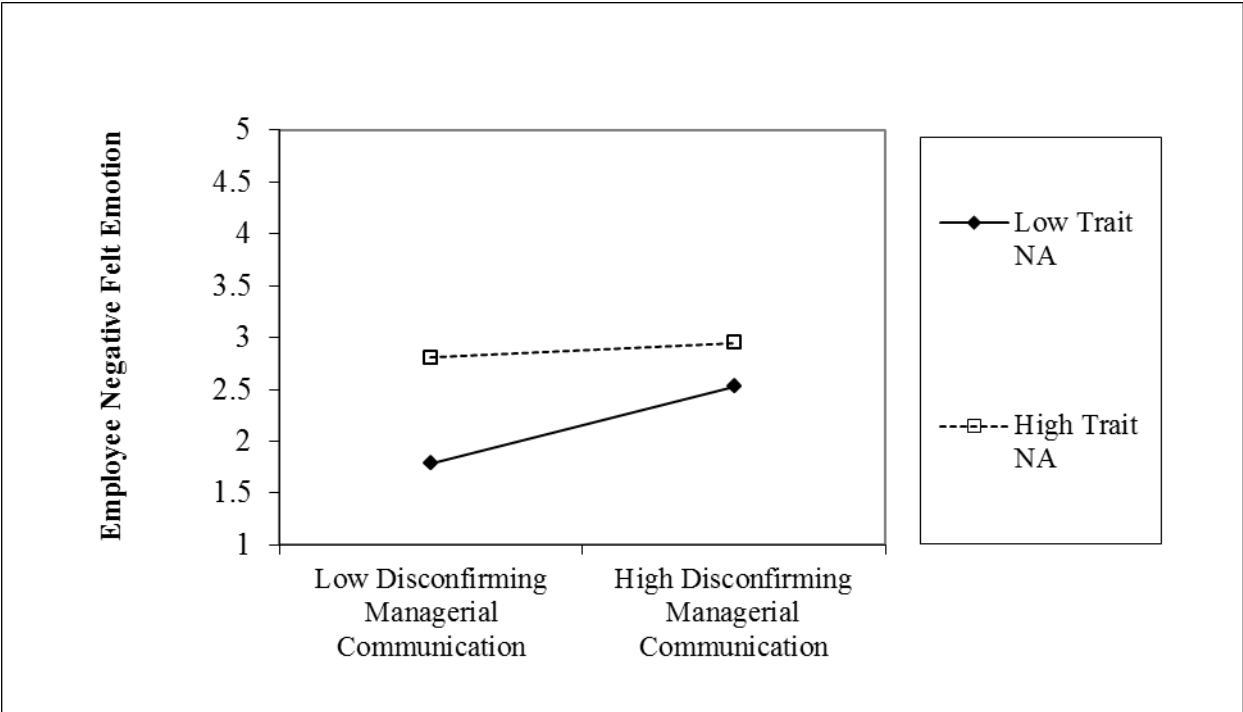




Figure 4: Interaction of Disconfirming Managerial Communication and Employee Trait NA



**TABLES**

**Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations and Scale Reliabilities <sup>a</sup>**

	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1</b> Contact Time	1.77	1.16									
<b>2</b> Direct Interaction Frequency	5.31	1.86	.23**								
<b>3</b> Employee Gender	n/a	n/a	.19**	.11**							
<b>4</b> Manager Gender	n/a	n/a	.07	.06	.11						
<b>5</b> Relationship Quality (LMX)	3.48	.83	.23**	.24**	.10	-.06	(.89)				
<b>6</b> Trait Negative Affect (NA)	1.67	.58	.02	-.03	-.05	.10	-.27**	(.84)			
<b>7</b> Disconfirming Managerial Communication	2.74	1.30	-.13*	-.12	-.07	-.04	-.61**	.27**	(.91)		
<b>8</b> Confirming Managerial Communication	4.81	1.39	.21**	.18**	.04	.05	.70**	-.18**	-.67**	(.92)	
<b>9</b> Negative Felt Emotion (NFE)	2.47	.90	.01	-.11	.04	.07	-.55**	.43**	.60**	-.57**	(.90)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). n=275 for all variables except contact time (267), Direct interaction and employee gender (273), manager gender (274) <sup>a</sup> Alpha reliability coefficients appear on the main diagonal in parentheses;

**Table 2: Moderated Hierarchical Regression Predicting Negative Felt Emotion: Omnibus Model**

	Step 1	t-value	Step 2	t-value
<b>Step 1: Main</b>				
Contact Time	.13**	2.86	.13**	2.89
Trait NA	.26**	5.68	.27**	5.95
Relationship Quality (LMX)	-.19**	-2.94	-.16*	-2.56
Confirming Managerial Communication	-.22**	-3.18	-.23**	-3.13
Disconfirming Managerial Communication	.29**	4.71	.29**	4.60
<b>Step 2: Interactions</b>				
Disconfirming Managerial Communication x LMX			-.13*	-2.01
Confirming Managerial Communication x LMX			-.12*	-2.00
Disconfirming Managerial Communication x Trait NA			-.14**	-2.84
Confirming Managerial Communication x Trait NA			-.03	-.50
R <sup>2</sup> (Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )	.51(.50)		.54 (.52)	
ΔR <sup>2</sup>			.03*	
Degrees of freedom	5, 261		9, 257	
F (F Change)	55.06		33.33(3.52**)	

Dependent Variable = Negative Felt Emotion. Entries represent standardized regression coefficients and all predictors are mean-centered. n=267; \*\* p < 0.01 \* p < 0.05