



# Is a happy leader a good leader? A meta-analytic investigation of leader trait affect and leadership

Dana L. Joseph <sup>a,\*</sup>, Lindsay Y. Dhanani <sup>a,1</sup>, Winny Shen <sup>b,2</sup>, Bridget C. McHugh <sup>a,3</sup>, Mallory A. McCord <sup>a,4</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Central Florida, Department of Psychology, 4000 Central Florida Blvd., Orlando, FL 32816, USA

<sup>b</sup> University of Waterloo, Department of Psychology, 200 University Avenue West, Waterloo, ON N2L 3G1, Canada

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 1 May 2014

Received in revised form 24 April 2015

Accepted 29 April 2015

Available online 21 May 2015

Editor: Shelly Dionne

### Keywords:

Transformational leadership

Positive affect

Negative affect

Leadership

Meta-analysis

## ABSTRACT

Organizational scholars have long been concerned with identifying traits that differentiate effective leaders from ineffective leaders. Although there has been renewed interest in the role of emotions in leadership, there is currently no quantitative summary of leader trait affectivity and leadership. Thus, the current paper meta-analyzed the relationship between leader trait affectivity and several leadership criteria, including transformational leadership, transactional leadership, leadership emergence, and leadership effectiveness. Results show that leader positive affect is positively related to leadership criteria, whereas leader negative affect is negatively related to leadership criteria, and regression analyses indicate that leader trait affect predicts leadership criteria above and beyond leader extraversion and neuroticism. Additionally, mediational analyses reveal that the relationship between leader trait affect and leadership effectiveness operates through transformational leadership. Taken together, these results contribute to the literature on emotions and leadership by highlighting the role of leader affect as a meaningful predictor of leadership.

© 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

## Introduction

The inception of leadership theory in the organizational sciences began with a search to identify the traits of effective leaders (Carlyle, 1841; Terman, 1904). Over a century later, and despite Stogdill's (1948) declaration that "a person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits" (p. 64), the field has amassed a substantial literature showing moderate relationships between various leader traits and leadership (see reviews by Hoffman, Woehr, Maldegan-Youngjohn & Lyons, 2011 and Zaccaro, 2007). Results suggest that a wide array of individual differences are related to various leadership criteria, including meta-analytic work demonstrating relationships between leadership and intelligence (i.e., leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness; Lord, de Vader & Alliger, 1986; Judge, Colbert & Ilies, 2004), Big Five personality traits (i.e., transformational leadership, transactional leadership, leadership emergence, and leadership effectiveness; Bono & Judge, 2004; Judge, Bono, Ilies & Gerhardt, 2002; Woo, Chernyshenko, Stark & Konz, 2014), masculinity/dominance (i.e., leadership emergence; Lord et al., 1986), and creativity (i.e., leader–member exchange and transformational leadership; Dilchert, 2008).

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 407 823 3912.

E-mail addresses: [dana.joseph@ucf.edu](mailto:dana.joseph@ucf.edu) (D.L. Joseph), [lydhanani@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:lydhanani@knights.ucf.edu) (L.Y. Dhanani), [winny.shen@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:winny.shen@uwaterloo.ca) (W. Shen), [Mchugh.bridget@gmail.com](mailto:Mchugh.bridget@gmail.com) (B.C. McHugh), [m.mccord@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:m.mccord@knights.ucf.edu) (M.A. McCord).

<sup>1</sup> Tel.: +1 321 662 7083.

<sup>2</sup> Tel.: +1 519 888 4567x31576.

<sup>3</sup> Tel.: +1 904 891 2993.

<sup>4</sup> Tel.: +1 407 782 2318.

Although this body of work has examined cognitive and personality-related correlates of leadership, only recently has scholarly work turned its attention to individual differences in emotion-related constructs and their relationship with leadership. Perhaps stimulated by the “affective revolution” in the organizational sciences (Barsade, Brief & Spataro, 2003, p. 3), this “revival of emotions and leadership” (Rajah, Song & Arvey, 2011, p. 1107) has spawned a series of meta-analyses on emotional intelligence and leadership (Harms & Credé, 2010; Martin, 2008; Whitman, 2009) as well as several comprehensive qualitative reviews on the role of emotions in leadership (e.g., Gooty, Connelly, Griffith & Gupta, 2010; Rajah et al., 2011). Despite integration of emotions and affect into modern leadership literature, one basic question remains: Is a happy leader a good leader? In other words, to what extent is leader trait affectivity related to leadership styles, leader behaviors, leadership emergence, and leadership effectiveness?

The current paper seeks to quantitatively summarize prior work on the relationship between leader trait affect and leadership in order to examine the extent to which a happy leader is a good leader. Ultimately, we seek to contribute to the trait leadership literature in the following ways. First, we estimate the relationship of leader trait positive and negative affect with several leadership criteria (i.e., transformational leadership behaviors, transactional leadership, leadership emergence, and leadership effectiveness). Second, we examine whether the relationship between leader trait affect and leadership criteria varies by the motivational focus of trait affect. Specifically, in addition to the valence of affect (i.e., positive vs. negative), we note that trait affectivity can also be classified as either approach-focused (i.e., the tendency to experience emotions that motivate one towards a desired end state; e.g., trait happiness and anger) or avoidance-focused (i.e., the tendency to experience emotions that serve to avoid negative outcomes; e.g., trait relaxation and anxiety), which we examine as a moderator of the relationship between leader trait affect and leadership. Third, because prior research has questioned the extent to which positive affect and negative affect are distinct from extraversion and neuroticism, respectively (e.g., Tellegen, 1985), we investigate whether leader trait positive and negative affect exhibit incremental validity above and beyond extraversion and neuroticism in the prediction of leadership criteria. Finally, given prior research on leadership effectiveness as an outcome of transformational leadership behaviors (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), we also examine whether the relationship between leader trait affect and leadership effectiveness is mediated by transformational leadership behaviors (i.e., Are happy leaders more effective because they display more transformational behaviors?). In sum, the current paper serves to empirically evaluate the intuitive notion that a happy leader is a good leader; in doing so, we contribute broadly to theoretical work on emotions in organizational behavior and trait theories of leadership and to more specific literatures on antecedents of transformational leadership and trait affect by examining both valence and motivational focus of trait affect.

## Leader trait affect

Although prior research has disputed the exact definition of affect (Feldman-Barrett & Russell, 1999; Watson & Clark, 1999), trait affect can be described as a person’s “affective lens on the world” (Barsade & Gibson, 2007; p. 38), or a dispositional tendency to feel positive emotions (i.e., trait positive affect) or negative emotions (i.e., trait negative affect; Watson & Clark, 1984). In contrast, state affect refers to a more short-term affective experience that can be described as either a mood or an emotion. Moods involve diffuse affective states that are of shorter duration than trait affect, but of longer duration than emotions (Frijda, 1993), whereas emotions tend to have specific targets and are more brief and intense in comparison to mood and affect (Fisher, 2000; Frijda, 1993). Due to our interest in the trait theory of leadership (and insufficient numbers of primary studies to quantify links between leader state affect and leadership), the current paper focuses on leader trait affect as a stable, dispositional influence on leadership.

Although debates abound over the exact structure of affect, the current paper employs Watson and colleagues’ conceptualization of affectivity (Watson & Clark, 1984; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988; Watson & Tellegen, 1985) in which positive affect and negative affect represent two unipolar dimensions. Under this formulation, high positive affect involves the experience of elation, enthusiasm, and excitement, and high negative affect involves feelings of distress, fear, hostility, and nervousness (Watson, Wiese, Vaidya & Tellegen, 1999). The decision to adopt Watson and colleagues’ conceptualization of affectivity was primarily guided by the literature that was included in the current meta-analysis; a preponderance of the studies included in the current paper employed Watson and Clark’s formulation of affect, which is consistent with the prevalence of this approach in psychology and management science (Schimmack & Grob, 2000). Moreover, our conceptualization of affect is consistent with evidence that has supported the dispositional nature of positive and negative affect, including evidence of its heritability (Tellegen et al., 1988) and stability over time (Watson, 2004), supporting the use of positive and negative affectivity as traits in the current study.

In addition to considering the relationship between leader trait affect and leadership, we note that recent literature has begun to offer a more fine-grained classification of affect that is based on regulatory focus (Baas, De Dreu & Nijstad, 2008). Specifically, regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997; Idson, Liberman & Higgins, 2000) suggests that emotional states may be classified into promotion-focused emotions, or those emotions that motivate one towards a desired end state, and prevention-focused emotions, or emotions that motivate one to avoid negative outcomes. As such, trait positive affect can be divided into promotion-focused trait positive affect, or the tendency to experience approach-oriented positive emotional states (e.g., happiness, elation), and prevention-focused trait positive affect, or the tendency to experience avoidance-oriented positive emotional states (e.g., relaxed, calm). Similarly, trait negative affect can also be broken down into promotion-focused trait negative affect (e.g., anger, sadness) or prevention-focused trait negative affect (e.g., anxiety, fear, disgust; Baas et al., 2008). Given that promotion- and prevention-focused affect differ in their motivational consequences (i.e., promotion-focused trait affect motivates proactive, approach-oriented behaviors whereas prevention-focused trait affect motivates avoidance-oriented behaviors; e.g., Lanaj, Chang & Johnson, 2012) and prior meta-analytic work supports the differences in predictive validity for promotion- and prevention-focused affect (Baas et al., 2008), we examine the regulatory focus of leader trait affect as a moderator of the relationship between leader trait affect and leadership. We note that although the current study focuses on prevention- and promotion-oriented affect, scholars have additionally classified emotions based on their level of activation (i.e., high or low arousal;

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/887759>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/887759>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)