



Authoritarian leadership and employee creativity: The moderating role of psychological capital and the mediating role of fear and defensive silence[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Drawing from the transactional theory of stress, we examined the relationships between authoritarian leadership, fear, defensive silence, and ultimately employee creativity. We also explored the moderating effect of employee psychological capital on these mediated relationships. We tested our hypothesized model in two studies of employee-supervisor dyads working in Africa (Nigeria; Study 1) and Asia (China; Study 2). The results of Study 1 revealed that the negative relationship between authoritarian leadership and creativity was mediated by employee defensive silence. Extending these findings in a three-wave study in Study 2, our results revealed a more complex relationship. Specifically, our results showed that both fear and defensive silence serially mediated the link between authoritarian leadership and employee creativity. In addition, we found that this mediated relationship was moderated by employee psychological capital such that the relationship was stronger when psychological capital was low (versus high). Implications for both theory and practice are discussed.

In today's rapidly changing and increasingly competitive work environment, employees are more than ever expected to produce novel and useful ideas about new products, services and procedures (i.e., exhibit creative behaviors; Zhou & Hoever, 2014). Creativity is important not only because it increases customer satisfaction and loyalty, but it also plays a crucial role in organizational success and survival (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). As a result, organizations often seek to adopt policies that fuel employee creativity (Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009). To do so, researchers have underscored and focused on the role of positive forms of leadership (Bai, Lin, & Li, 2016; Shin & Zhou, 2003; Tierney, Farmer, & Graen, 1999). Although these studies have generated valuable insights, little attention has been paid to potentially darker or destructive sides of leadership and their relationship with employee creativity. An example of such leadership approach is authoritarian leadership (AL) (Aycan, 2006). Authoritarian leaders assert absolute authority and control over employees and expect unquestionable obedience (Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang, & Farh, 2004). Given

that the creative process often requires employees to use their own discretion to share and come up with useful ideas (Amabile, 1988; Gong et al., 2009), a growing body of work has suggested that AL can inhibit creativity (e.g., Wang, Chiang, Tsai, Lin, & Cheng, 2013; Zhang, Tsui, & Wang, 2011). Despite these important findings, there is still lack of a coherent theoretical framework that explicates the psychological processes and moderating factors of such relationship in more depth.

More specifically, aside from Zhang et al. (2011) who examined the mechanisms (i.e., reduced knowledge sharing in workgroups and collective efficacy) through which the AL – creativity link occurs at the group-level, our insight into why and when AL weaves its influence on individual employee creativity remains very limited. Such expanded insight is crucial because creativity is not merely an aggregated effort, but rather an opportunity for individuals to contribute uniquely (Amabile, 1996). Furthermore, several studies have revealed weak, and even in some cases positive associations between AL and employees' overall performance (e.g., Huang, Xu, Chiu, Lam, & Farh, 2015; Wang &

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Guan, 2018). Since creativity is a critical component of employees' performance (Raja & Johns, 2010), these mixed findings suggest that the AL – creativity link is far more complex than generally assumed by past research. They also emphasize the need for more detailed understanding of the mechanisms underlying this link as well as the moderating factors that may weaken or strengthen these processes. Such improved knowledge could then help organizations to alleviate the ill-effects of AL on creativity at work.

Accordingly, our primary goal in this paper is to develop and test a more comprehensive model linking AL to individual employee creativity. To do so, we draw from Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional theory of stress as an overarching theoretical framework to suggest two primary mechanisms: *fear* (the primarily felt emotion) and *defensive silence* (the coping mechanism adopted to reduce the potentially threatening relationship and feelings of fear) through which AL may relate to employee creativity. Briefly, Lazarus and Folkman's theory suggests that individuals who encounter stressors in the form of demanding or pressuring interpersonal interactions may experience fear and may adopt relevant coping mechanisms (e.g., reduce their work efforts). Because creativity is an important work effort that requires individuals to go above and beyond their normal job requirements (George, 2008), we suggest in this manuscript that being confronted with an authoritarian leader may be demanding, pressuring, and form a significant stressor for employees such that they experience fear and become defensively silent, which then inhibits their creativity.

Further, we examine the moderating effect of employee psychological capital (PsyCap) on the relationship between AL and fear. PsyCap is a higher-order construct combining efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). We focus on PsyCap as a moderator in our model, because it is an individual's "positive appraisal of circumstances and probability for success based on motivated effort and perseverance" (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 550) and it serves as an important psychological resource useful for dealing with stressors (see Luthans & Youssef, 2017). The transactional theory of stress suggests that individuals react differently to stressful situations and that certain personal resources are particularly useful in this regard. Consistent with the transactional theory of stress (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and research on personal coping resources (Hobfoll, 2001), we suggest that employees high in PsyCap can cope better with the stressful nature of AL, thus attenuating its effect on employee fear. In contrast, when an employee has low PsyCap, we propose that the effects of AL on employee fear will be more pronounced (compared to high PsyCap individuals).

By examining these relationships (see Fig. 1), our study makes at least four important contributions to the literature. First, to date, the literature on AL has primarily focused on social exchange and identity theories in explaining AL's effects on employee work outcomes (e.g., Chen, Eberly, Chiang, Farh, & Cheng, 2014; Schaubroeck, Shen, & Chong, 2017). While interesting insights have emerged from these theories, this limited theoretical perspective may restrict the complete understanding of how AL influences employees. Indeed, the use of a single theory is insufficient to fully capture how a specific leadership style affects employee motives, behaviors, and performance (e.g., Walumbwa et al., 2011). Against this backdrop, we aim to build upon the emerging evidence linking AL with reduced levels of creativity (e.g., Wang et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2011) by proposing a model wherein authoritarian leaders may influence employee creativity through

multiple pathways based on the transactional theory of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Second, our study contributes to AL literature, as it is one of the first to explicitly examine how authoritarian leaders influence employees' emotions and their resulting outcomes in the form of fear and defensive silence. By doing so, we add to leadership research focusing on how leader behaviors affect follower emotions and in turn follower outcomes. More specifically, we answer the call for more research on the role of negative emotions within leadership literature (Bono, Foldes, Vinson, & Muros, 2007; Gooty, Connelly, Griffith, & Gupta, 2010). Indeed, leadership literature is heavily skewed towards the beneficial effects of positive emotions, leaving negative emotions vastly understudied (Gooty et al., 2010). Although previous research has suggested that authoritarian leaders may induce fear (Cheng et al., 2004; Farh, Cheng, Chou, & Chu, 2006), to our knowledge, the role of fear has not been directly/comprehensively investigated in the link between AL and creativity. By directly testing fear and defensive silence as the underlying mechanisms through which AL influences employees' creativity, our study provides a more comprehensive understanding of AL. Indeed, examining mediating mechanisms is a critical theory-building component that expands scholars and practitioners' knowledge of *why* certain processes occur in organizations (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007).

Third, this research further contributes to the growing literature on silence by examining the antecedents of a defensive form of silence and how it can influence critical work outcomes, such as creativity. Specifically, our research answers calls to identify potential antecedents and consequences of defensive silence (Brinsfield, 2013; Morrison, 2014). As Morrison (2014) noted, addressing such calls "requires a perspective that recognizes the role of emotions and nonconscious processes, as the failure to engage in voice does not always reflect a cognitive or deliberate decision process" (p. 175). Our study addresses these calls by identifying the roles of AL and the resulting emotion of fear in the emergence of defensive silence and its effect on employee creativity.

Finally, we add to the leadership and PsyCap literatures by examining how PsyCap influences follower responses to AL. More generally, there has been very limited understanding of how PsyCap may help employees navigate different leadership behaviors (see for example, Li, Wang, Yang, & Liu, 2016; Wang, Sui, Luthans, Wang, & Wu, 2014 for exceptions). As a result, scholars have called for more research investigating PsyCap as a moderator of leadership behaviors (Dawkins, Martin, Scott, & Sanderson, 2013; Newman, Ucbasaran, Zhu, & Hirst, 2014). We address this call and contribute to this emerging line of research by shedding light on PsyCap as an important personal resource that makes some employees more resistant to the negative effect of AL. More specifically, this research examines the mitigating effect of employee PsyCap on the negative effects of AL. As PsyCap represents a positive psychological state, doing so allows us to enrich our theoretical understanding of why some individuals are more resistant to the detrimental effects of AL. Additionally, we offer practical insights on how employees can cope with AL to alleviate its negative consequences on employee creativity and in doing so, also address the call for research on boundary conditions of AL in organizations (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008).

1. Theoretical background and hypotheses

1.1. Transactional theory of stress

According to the transactional theory of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), the cognitive appraisal of stress is a two-part process consisting of primary and secondary appraisal. During the primary appraisal, an individual will first determine the relevance of an event or situation for his/her well-being, and whether it can be categorized as stressful. If the situation is perceived stressful, it may be evaluated as a threat (alternatively, the situation can also be appraised as a potential harm or

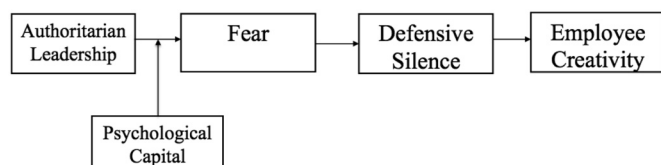


Fig. 1. Theoretical model of the current research.

challenge). Threats typically result in negative feelings such as fear. After such feelings, a secondary appraisal will be triggered, in which individuals search for a possible course of action (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). During this secondary appraisal, individuals evaluate their coping resources and available options to deal with the threat (Lazarus, 1991).

Applying this to an organizational context, the transactional theory of stress suggests that individuals cognitively appraise aspects of their work environment that are potentially threatening and stressful. Interpersonal stressors at work may elicit intense feelings of negative emotions such as fear, which can trigger coping strategies, e.g. reducing one's work efforts or communication towards the leader (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, Shorr, & Johnstone, 2001). Due to the demanding and pressuring nature of the interpersonal relationship between authoritarian leaders and their followers (Chen et al., 2014; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008), we propose that AL is a significant interpersonal stressor that may reduce employees' creative efforts by increasing fear (a result of primary appraisal) and defensive silence (a coping mechanism generated from secondary appraisal).

1.2. AL and employee creativity

Authoritarian leadership refers to a leader's behavior of asserting absolute authority and control over employees and commanding unopposed obedience by imposing strict discipline on them (Cheng et al., 2004). Leaders who demonstrate authoritarian behaviors are known for being overtly controlling and initiating structure, such that employees who do not follow procedures and rules to the letter are severely punished (Chen et al., 2014; Cheng et al., 2004). By issuing threats and subtly intimidating employees, such leaders seek to make their employees submissive to achieve organizational goals (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). The underlying idea is that AL may be more effective and efficient in situations where quick decisions are needed, as these leaders set specific and unambiguous goals (Huang et al., 2015). By setting very clear rules and issuing punishments and rewards, the leader reduces uncertainty, as followers know exactly what to do, and what not to do (Wang & Guan, 2018). In reality, however, only a few studies have provided empirical evidence of possible positive outcomes of AL (Huang et al., 2015; Wang & Guan, 2018). The vast majority of previous research showed that AL is negatively related with desirable attitudes and behaviors such as followers' trust, voice, citizenship behaviors and performance (e.g., Aycan, 2006; Chan, Huang, Snape, & Lam 2013; Chen et al., 2014; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). AL has also been related to undesirable outcomes such as turnover intentions (Wang, Cheng, & Wang, 2016). In sum, AL has often been considered an undesirable leadership style.

Leaders who are authoritative in their approach may negatively impact the opportunities of building a well performing and creative workforce. Further, authoritarian relations are control-based and employees witnessing such behavior only conform to avoid punishment (Aycan, 2006). As such, AL often comes across as too rigid, demanding and pressuring (Chen et al., 2014; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008), constituting a stressor that may reduce an employee's capability to generate novel and creative ideas. Indeed, creativity is a work effort that not only tends to emerge when individuals are faced with less demands, pressure, and rigid structure, but also requires considerable amount of emotional and mental resources (Amabile, 1996). Therefore, the pressure to conform to an authoritarian leader is likely to be counterproductive for employees' generation of creative ideas (Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002). These theoretical arguments are in line with previous research showing that the relationship between AL and employee creativity is generally negative (e.g., Wang et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2011).

However, in the present research, we suggest that AL is not a simple creativity inhibitor, but rather, we argue that the relationship between AL and employee creativity is more complex. Drawing from the

transactional theory of stress, we consider fear and defensive silence as two important underlying mechanisms that can enhance our understanding of how AL affects employee creativity. Accordingly, we develop mediating hypotheses for the role of fear and defensive silence, thereby offering a unique perspective on the AL–employee creativity link.

1.3. AL, fear, and employee defensive silence

When individuals are confronted with stressors or external threats, they may intentionally try to protect themselves from them (Schlenker & Weigold, 1989). One possible protection mechanism is being defensively silent. Van Dyne, Ang, and Botero (2003) defined defensive silence as a conscious decision where one is “withholding relevant ideas, information, or opinions as a form of self-protection, based on fear” (p. 1367). In other words, defensive silence is a behavioral response to the negative emotion of fear, and it can be viewed as a coping attempt to neutralize that situation and to restore the individual's well-being (Oh & Farh, 2017). Defensive silence is thus a conscious and active strategy to withhold relevant input. Individuals could potentially speak up, but after considering the estimated costs and benefits, they find it safer to stay quiet (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003). The experience of fear makes the alternative of speaking up less attractive, and often results in a decision to withhold relevant input. In sum, defensive silence can be described as a fear-based coping strategy that triggers an employee to withhold his/her thoughts or relevant input as a form of self-protection. Although a *general* concept of silence has already been discussed in the literature (Milliken et al., 2003; Morrison, 2011), only a few studies have directly examined this *fear-based* form of silence (Brinsfield, 2013; Kish-Gephart, Detert, Treviño, & Edmondson, 2009). We argue that defensive silence can provide a more nuanced explanation of how AL influences important employee work behaviors such as creativity.

Conceptually, AL behavior is derived from the Chinese word “*li-wei*”, meaning awe and inspiring fear (Cheng et al., 2004). On the one hand, this implies that the fear inspired by authoritarian leaders may encourage employees to stand on their toes and to give their best at work (Huang et al., 2015). On the other hand, because authoritarian leaders are very demanding and expect absolute conformity to their decisions, social interactions between such leaders and their subordinates have been described as inherently intimidating, threatening, and stressful (Chen et al., 2014; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). Such threatening and stressful relationships generate negative feelings and make employees feel at unease at work, and as such, AL behavior is likely to increase fear in employees.

In turn, employees may withhold relevant ideas and information due to the feeling of fear resulting from their interactions with authoritarian leaders. That is, fear is likely to be associated with the desire to engage in defensive silence. Employees may reason that it is better to remain silent and “play it safe” out of fear of making the relationship with an authoritarian leader worse than it is, or out of fear of negative career consequences (e.g., losing the opportunity to get better compensation or promotion, or even worse: job loss). Such fear is likely to reduce the extent to which employees speak up about their concerns or problems in the workplace. This view is in line with the work of Van Dyne et al. (2003), who showed that defensive silence is especially used as a response to external threats that are related with fear (cf. Brinsfield, 2013). In sum, we propose that defensive silence is a coping strategy resulting from an employee's fear and it may be used as a form of protection against the pressuring or dominating relationship experienced when an employee is exposed to an authoritarian leader.

Supporting these arguments, previous research has indeed shown that an employee's decision to remain silent is an avoidance strategy to cope with the fear resulting from the interpersonal relationship with a superior (Kiewitz, Restubog, Shoss, Gracia, & Tang, 2016). Therefore, based on previous research and our theoretical arguments above, we predict that an exposure to a highly demanding and pressuring leader

who expects absolute and unquestionable obedience (i.e., an authoritarian leader) is likely to be associated with employee fear, and in turn, defensive silence. Consequently, we advance the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1. Authoritarian leadership will have a positive indirect relationship with employee defensive silence via fear.

1.4. Implications for employee creativity

Thus far, we have argued that AL is associated with employee defensive silence via fear. In turn, we propose that defensive silence is likely to be associated with reduced levels of creative behaviors. Generally, silence refers to the withholding of potentially relevant and important inputs or situations in which an employee refuses to share what (s)he has in mind (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Pinder & Harlos, 2001). As Morrison (2014) puts it, “it is not merely a lack of speech, as not speaking can occur for many reasons, including having nothing meaningful to convey” (p. 174). However, being defensively silent implies that an employee is not speaking up when (s)he has suggestions, information, or useful ideas to tackle a potential problem due to fear. Such an employee may for instance lack sufficient courage or mental energy to put forward his or her creative ideas to a fear-triggering authoritarian leader. More specifically, because exhibiting creative behavior requires employees to move beyond their tasks to look for new ways of doing things and generating ideas (Neubert, Kacmar, Carlson, Chonko, & Roberts, 2008), employees who choose to remain silent because of fear are less likely to show creative behaviors. This is in line with previous research indicating that innovation is reduced when employees remain silent at work (Brinsfield, 2013).

In sum, defensive silence represents a fear-based coping strategy linking AL to employee creativity. Additionally, to the extent that an authoritarian leader invokes fear, and consequently defensive silence, we expect that employees confronted with AL should exhibit lower levels of creative behaviors. Accordingly, we propose fear and defensive silence as the underlying mechanisms through which AL suppresses employee creativity, leading to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2. Authoritarian leadership will have a negative indirect relationship with employee creativity via defensive silence.

Hypothesis 3. Authoritarian leadership will have a negative indirect relationship with employee creativity, via employee fear and defensive silence, serially.

1.5. The moderating role of employee psychological capital

The transactional theory of stress indicates that individuals' characteristics can mitigate the extent to which they are affected by stressors or threats in their immediate environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1991). These characteristics are particularly linked to individuals' resources, which can be anything that help an individual to attain his or her goals (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Because PsyCap is a “positive appraisal of circumstances and probability for success based on motivated effort and perseverance” (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 550), we identify and focus on employee PsyCap as an important personal resource that can attenuate the negative effects of AL. When confronted with an authoritarian leader, we suggest that PsyCap is likely to buffer the feelings of fear that encourage defensive silence and in turn, reduce employee creativity.

According to Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2015), PsyCap is “an individual's positive psychological state of development that is characterized by: (1) having confidence (efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and

adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success” (p. 2). The combination of efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (i.e., high PsyCap) is positively related with desirable organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, citizenship behaviors, and job performance (Dawkins et al., 2013; Newman et al., 2014; Peterson, Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, & Zhang, 2011), and negatively related to undesirable outcomes such as absenteeism, turnover, job stress, burnout, cynicism, and job deviance (Dawkins et al., 2013; Newman et al., 2014). As individuals develop higher levels of PsyCap, the quality of their personal lives and overall well-being is enhanced (Luthans, Youssef, Sweetman, & Harms, 2013). High PsyCap also helps individuals to better cope with stressors in their immediate work environment (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009; Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011; Baron, Franklin, & Hmieleski, 2016; Luthans et al., 2007).

Because AL can be viewed as a significant stressor (Chen et al., 2014; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008), we argue that PsyCap mitigates the effects of AL on employee emotional reactions. That is, with higher levels of PsyCap, employees should be able to cope better with the stressful experiences from an authoritarian leader. More specifically, when they are confronted with AL, employees with high PsyCap are more likely to keep the right mindset and a positive outlook on their abilities to reach their work goals under such a leader. As such, high PsyCap should reduce the fear that working with an authoritarian leader might generate. In contrast, employees with lower levels of PsyCap are less likely to effectively cope with the pressuring and demanding nature of AL because these employees find it difficult to maintain a positive outlook and to persevere in the face of challenging and stressful situations. As a result, low PsyCap is likely to exacerbate the fear employees may experience under an authoritarian leader.

Although we are unaware of any previous studies examining the moderating effect of PsyCap on AL, there is indirect support for our proposition. For instance, previous research shows that individuals with higher levels of PsyCap are able to cope better with stressful situations at work and keep an optimistic outlook above all odds by responding with positive rather than negative feelings (Roberts, Scherer, & Bowyer, 2011). Similarly, Li et al., (2016) found that employees with lower levels of PsyCap were more affected by the negative interpersonal relationships between them and their immediate supervisor. Here, we argue that PsyCap is likely to operate in a similar way. Specifically, for those with lower levels of PsyCap, AL is expected to exacerbate their feelings of fear, which subsequently encourages defensive silence and reduces creativity. Therefore, we predict that PsyCap provides the necessary resources needed to cope with AL and thus mitigates the fear resulting from such leaders.

Hypothesis 4. Employee PsyCap will moderate the serially mediated relationship between authoritarian leadership and employee creativity, such that the positive relationship between authoritarian leadership and fear is stronger when PsyCap is low.

1.6. Overview of the research

Below, we present two field studies designed to test our theoretical model. Study 1 is a cross-sectional study involving employees and their immediate supervisors working in Nigerian-based organizations, while Study 2 is a time-lagged field study conducted in Chinese-based organizations. In both studies, we used a multi-source design where ratings from multiple sources were used to reduce same-source bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). In Study 1, we first tested whether defensive silence mediates the relationship between AL and employee creativity. Here, employees responded to measures of AL, whereas leaders responded to measures of their employees' defensive silence and creativity. We also controlled for employees' ratings of abusive supervision to account for the unique effects of AL and assess the robustness of our findings. We further tested our full theoretical model in Study 2

Table 1
Comparison of measurement models for main variables in Study 1.

Model	Factors	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	Satorra–Bentler Scaled $\Delta \chi^2$	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model 1	Three factors: Creativity, Defensive Silence, and AL	223.28	132	1.69		0.92	0.08	0.07
Model 2	Two factors: Creativity and Defensive Silence were combined into one factor	423.43	134	3.16	167.38***	0.75	0.14	0.10
Model 3	Two factors: Creativity and AL were combined into one factor	460.56	134	3.44	355.48***	0.71	0.15	0.12
Model 4	Two factors: Defensive Silence and AL were combined into one factor	369.74	134	2.76	59.16***	0.79	0.12	0.10
Model 5	One factor: all three factors were combined into one factor	584.61	135	4.33	231.78***	0.60	0.17	0.13

Note: We used a robust maximum likelihood estimator to take the clustered nature of our data into account. Following methodological recommendations (Satorra & Bentler, 2010), we corrected the χ^2 using the Satorra–Bentler scaling correction when comparing the proposed measurement model with the alternative nested models.

*** = $p < .001$.

by including the measures of employee fear and PsyCap and assessing our measures in three waves. More specifically, AL and PsyCap were assessed at Time 1, fear was assessed at Time 2 (two weeks after Time 1), and employee ratings of defensive silence as well as supervisor ratings of creativity were assessed at Time 3 (two weeks after Time 2).

2. Method

2.1. Study 1

2.1.1. Sample and procedure

We collected data from three organizations in Lagos-Nigeria, as part of a large research project on developing effective leadership. These organizations were involved in hospitality, financial, and consulting services. Before administering the surveys, one of the authors contacted an organizational member from the participating organizations, who then facilitated the data collection. Two separate surveys were distributed to employees and their direct supervisors. Respondents were informed through a cover letter that their responses would only be used for research purposes and that individual responses would not be shared with their organizations. We also noted that participating in the study was voluntary. The surveys included a unique identification code written on the top-right of each survey that enabled us to match employee and supervisor responses. After completion, the questionnaires were directly handed over to one of the research team members. In appreciation of participants' involvement, they entered a raffle draw to win one of four online shopping vouchers priced at approximately \$15 each.

Of the 200 employees-supervisor surveys distributed, 133 employees together with their corresponding supervisor surveys were returned (approximately a 68% response rate). Of these 133, only 115 employee-supervisor surveys were matchable (for an overall response rate of 56%). We found that there were no statistically difference between the valid respondents and those invalid in terms of age ($t = -0.39, p > .05$) and of gender ($t = 0.30, p > .05$). In total, all employees were nested under 28 supervisors. On average, 4 employees worked under the same supervisor. Of the 115 employees, 46% were male and reported working under their respective supervisors for an average of 2.6 years. Among the supervisors, 50% were male. Employees provided ratings of their supervisors' authoritative leadership behaviors, as well as their perceptions of abusive supervision, whereas supervisors rated employees' defensive silence and their creative behaviors.

2.1.2. Measures

All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). We used established scales for measures.

2.1.2.1. Authoritarian leadership. To measure AL, we used Cheng et al.'s (2004) scale. A sample item of this scale is "My supervisor always behaves in a commanding fashion in front of employees." The Cronbach's alpha was 0.89.

2.1.2.2. Defensive silence. Supervisors rated employees' defensive silence using 5-item scale developed by Van Dyne et al. (2003). A sample item includes: This employee... "Withholds relevant information due to fear." The Cronbach's alpha of this scale was 0.86.

2.1.2.3. Employee creativity. Supervisors rated employee creativity using Baer and Oldham's (2006) 4-item scale ($\alpha = 0.88$). A sample item includes, "This employee often comes up with creative solutions to problems at work."

2.1.2.4. Control variable. We controlled for abusive supervision, which is defined as the "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which their supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178). We decided to control for abusive supervision considering previous research showing that AL positively correlates with such negative supervisor behavior (Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007). Moreover, abusive supervision tends to influence employee fear-based cognitions (Kiewitz et al., 2016) and creativity (Zhang, Kwan, Zhang, & Wu, 2014). Therefore, by including abusive supervision as a control variable, we account for the unique influence of AL and provide evidence of the robustness of our predictions. We measured abusive supervision using Mitchell and Ambrose's (2007) 5-item scale ($\alpha = 0.94$). A sample item was, "My supervisor makes negative comments about me to others."

2.1.3. Measurement model

Prior to testing our hypothesized model, we assessed the validity and appropriateness of our measurement model by conducting a robust confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in MPLUS 6.0, taking into account the clustered nature of our data. As shown in Table 1, our proposed measurement model with three distinct factors (Model 1) had a better fit than two-factor models (Models 2–4), or a model where all items are loaded onto the same factor (Model 5).

2.1.4. Hypotheses testing

Descriptive statistics and correlations of all study variables at the individual level are presented in Table 2.

Because the 115 employees were nested under 28 supervisors, our sample does not consist of independent observations. Multilevel analysis solves the violation of this independence assumption by taking the clustering of employees within a work unit (i.e., employees working for the same supervisor) into account in that it allows a randomly-varying intercept between work units. We conducted multilevel regression analysis using the *lme4* and *mediation* package in R (Bates, Maechler, Bolker, & Walker, 2015; Tingley, Yamamoto, Hirose, Keele, & Imai, 2014). To test our proposed mediation model (Hypothesis 2), we focus on the paths that constitute the indirect effect (Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998; see also Aguinis, Edwards, & Bradley, 2016). That is, we test whether AL is related to defensive silence and that, in turn, defensive silence is related to employee creativity.

Table 2
Means, standard deviations, scale reliabilities, and correlations of the variables.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Study 1								
1. AL	3.01	0.90	(0.89)					
2. Defensive Silence	2.51	1.04	0.55***	(0.86)				
3. Abusive Supervision	2.80	1.18	0.69***	0.51***	(0.94)			
4. Creativity	2.38	1.06	-0.32***	-0.40***	-0.35***	(0.88)		
Study 2								
1. AL	4.61	1.60	(0.83)					
2. Defensive Silence	4.34	1.64	0.35***	(0.90)				
3. Abusive Supervision	3.29	1.69	0.36***	0.22***	(0.91)			
4. Creativity	4.29	1.98	-0.20**	-0.27**	-0.19**	(0.91)		
5. Fear	4.13	1.68	0.46***	0.36***	0.31***	-0.27***	(0.86)	
6. PsyCap	5.65	1.01	0.06	-0.05	0.01	0.11	-0.04	(0.84)

Numbers in parentheses on the diagonal are reliabilities of the scales.

Study 1, *N* = 115; Study 2, *N* = 192. In Study 1 the scale ranged from 1 to 5, while in Study 2 the scale ranged from 1 to 7.

** *p* < .01.

*** *p* < .001.

Table 3
Results for Study 1.

Predictors	Criterion variable	
	Employee defensive silence	Employee creativity
Intercept	0.71* (0.35)	3.57*** (0.42)
AL	0.43** (0.14)	-0.01 (0.16)
Abusive Supervision	0.18 (0.10)	-0.17 (0.11)
Defensive Silence		-0.27** (0.10)
Marginal R ² (model fit for fixed effects)	0.29	0.16
Conditional R ² (overall model fit)	0.43	0.44

Unstandardized coefficients are reported. Standard errors are in the brackets.

* *p* ≤ .05.

** *p* ≤ .01.

*** *p* ≤ .001.

Results are presented in Table 3.² Our results showed that AL was positively related to employee defensive silence, (*b* = 0.43, *p* = .001). Next, defensive silence was negatively related to creativity, (*b* = -0.27, *SE* = 0.10, *p* = .006). To provide a complete test of our mediation model, we calculated a 95% confidence interval³ for the proposed indirect effect. Results revealed a significant indirect effect, indicating that defensive silence mediates the relationship between AL and employee creativity (indirect effect = -0.12; 95% CI = [-0.25; -0.02]). This confirms Hypothesis 2.

Study 1 showed that AL might decrease employees' creativity because employees are more likely to withhold valuable information. Interestingly, this effect still held up when we took a closely related construct, abusive supervision, into account. This indicates that the mechanism of AL on defensive silence is independent from that of abusive supervision. Now that we know that defensive silence is a mechanism behind the relationship between AL and employee creativity, we are able to look at this process more in depth, as we only tested defensive silence as a coping strategy that employees adopt in response to AL and as such did not test the emotions they feel in

² The statistical significance of our hypothesized effects did not change when we did not control for abusive supervision.

³ To our knowledge, there is no program that can calculate a nonparametric bootstrapped confidence interval for multilevel modelling. Therefore, we used a quasi-Bayesian Monte Carlo approximation with 5000 simulations to calculate a 95% confidence interval of our proposed indirect effect (see King, Tomz, & Wittenberg, 2000).

response to AL in line with transactional theory of stress. In Study 2, we build upon these findings by examining when and why AL is positively related to employee defensive silence. More precisely, we integrate fear in our model as a proximal antecedent of defensive silence, and assess psychological capital as a boundary condition of this negative indirect effect.

Further, although same-source bias was reduced in Study 1 as the data was collected from multiple sources (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), the cross-sectional nature of the study and the fact that leaders provided measure of defensive silence could raise some concerns. However, past research has demonstrated the appropriateness of using other ratings of defensive silence. More specifically, previous research showed that organizational members with whom employees closely interact with on a day-to-day basis can detect defensive silence (Kiewitz et al., 2016). In our sample, the supervisors who provided the ratings defensive silence closely interacted with focal employees and have worked together for over two and half years. Nevertheless, to mitigate these concerns, we obtained employee ratings of defensive silence in Study 2. In addition, we employed a time-lagged research design of employee-supervisor dyad in Chinese organizations, allowing us to separate our measurements in time. As Podsakoff et al. (2012) noted, the use of a temporal design and multisource ratings “diminishes the respondent's ability and motivation to use his or her prior answers to answer subsequent questions” (p. 888).

2.2. Study 2

2.2.1. Sample and procedure

We collected data from four organizations (finance, advertising, web service and retailing organizations) in Chengdu, a southwest metropolitan area in China. A consulting firm was commissioned to conduct the data collection task. Two separate surveys were distributed to employees and their direct supervisors based on the list provided by a contact person in each organization. Based on this list, 479 employees and their supervisors were paired and they received the surveys in three waves. Respondents were aware of the voluntary nature of participation and the strict confidentiality of this survey. In appreciation of participants' voluntary involvement, the respondents who had completed all three waves entered into a raffle draw to win one of 20 shopping vouchers of an e-commerce company priced at RMB 200 (approximately \$ 30) each.

Of the 479 employees and 479 supervisors to whom the survey was distributed, we received 198 employee-supervisor matches at the end of the third wave (approximately a 41.33% response rate). Of these 198 matches, 192 employee-supervisor surveys were usable because in six dyads, either the key variables were missing, or the participants

returned an almost blank survey in any of the three waves (overall response rate was 40.08%). We compared respondents with missing data to those respondents with fully completed data and there were no significant differences in terms of age ($t = -0.1893, p > .05$) and gender ($t = -0.12, p > .05$). Of the employee respondents, 43.8% were male and reported working under their supervisors for an average of 3 years. Among the supervisors, 67.2% were male. Employees provided ratings of PsyCap, their supervisors' AL, and abusive supervision as a control variable at Time 1, fear at Time 2, and defensive silence at Time 3. Also at Time 3, supervisors provided us with ratings of employee creative behaviors.

2.2.2. Measures

The measures for AL, defensive silence, creativity, and abusive supervision are the same as in Study 1. All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*), because participants in Asia are more likely to select the mid-points and avoid extreme responses on 5-point Likert scales (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995; Hamamura, Heine, & Paulhus, 2008). As such, we used a 7-point Likert scale as it provides higher scale granularity that reduces response bias. The Cronbach's alphas of AL, defensive silence, creativity, and abusive supervision are 0.91, 0.89, 0.91, and 0.89 respectively.

2.2.2.1. Psychological capital (PsyCap). At Time 1, we measured employee PsyCap using a 12-item scale (Avey et al., 2011). Sample items are (a) "I feel confident contributing to discussions about the organization's strategy" (self-efficacy); (b) "If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it" (hope); (c) "I can get through difficult times at work because I have experienced difficulty before" (resilience); (d) "I am optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work" (optimism). The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.84. Consistent with previous research on PsyCap (e.g., Rego et al., 2017), we used the overall PsyCap score in our analyses, because we did not theorize the sub-dimensions of employee PsyCap to have differentiated effects.

2.2.2.2. Fear. At Time 2, we measured employee fear using the 4-item scale from Kiewitz et al. (2016). Employees were asked to report the extent to which they had been feeling "scared," "nervous," "afraid," and "fearful" (ranging from 1 = *very slightly* to 7 = *very much so*). The Cronbach's alpha of this scale was 0.86.

2.2.2.3. Control. As we did in Study 1, we also controlled for abusive supervision using the same 5-item scale used in Study 1 to account for the unique effect of AL.

2.2.3. Measurement model

We evaluated the factorial structure of our research models using nested CFA models approach. However, given that there are five constructs and 34 items, our sample-to-item ratio is quite small (5.65), which is much lower than 10, as recommended by Everitt (1975). A small ratio will cause less precise and less reliable factor loadings (MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, & Hong, 1999). To minimize potential estimation issues and aid an appropriate indicator-to-sample ratio, we followed the recommended procedure of MacCallum et al. (1999); Landis, Beal, and Tesluk (2000), and Little, Cunningham, and Shahar (2002) to create parcels for measures with more than five items (i.e., AL and PsyCap).

We acknowledged that from an empiricist-conservative perspective, parceling may prevent modeled data from fully representing the responses of the individual (Little, Rhemfulla, Gibson, & Schoemann, 2013). However, the advantages of parceling in this study outweigh the disadvantages for two empirical reasons. First, compared to parcels, item-level data are usually of low reliability, low communality and a smaller ratio of common-to-unique factor variance (see Bagozzi & Heatherton, 1994; Kishton & Widaman, 1994; MacCallum et al., 1999;

Hau & Marsh, 2004; Little et al., 2002). This is especially true in a small sample size study like ours. Second, compared to the models with items, the models with parcels are more parsimonious and have less parameters to be estimated. Therefore, there are less chances for residuals to be correlated, for dual loadings to emerge, or for more sampling errors (MacCallum et al., 1999).

Parceling has been used in past research in organizational studies in general (e.g., Akgün & Keskin, 2014; Farh, Hackett, & Liang, 2007; Hornung, Rousseau, Glaser, Angerer, & Weigl, 2010; Wu, Parker, Wu, & Lee, 2018) and in leadership research in particular (Cooper, Kong, & Crossley, 2018; Lam, Lee, Taylor, & Zhao, 2018; van Prooijen & de Vries, 2016). Here, we used the random assignment method widely used in previous studies to generate three different types of parcels for each construct. We did not bundle items to parcels based on EFA loadings because on the one hand, EFA results indicate that these items should be loaded to one common factor; and on the other hand, purposely parceling may change the original factorial structure of constructs. Therefore, a random assignment approach is more appropriate. If all the three types of parceling lead to similar results, we can safely conclude that the random parceling mechanism is robust and will not alter the conclusion that the five-factor model is the best model.

We then conducted measure model analyses with the full combinations of these three types of parcels (45 models: five CFA models \times three types of AL parcels \times three types of PsyCap parcels).⁴ The three types of parcels yielded quite similar results, indicating the robustness of our random parceling strategy. Results were summarized in Table 4. As in Study 1, our proposed measurement model (Model 1) had an adequate fit, and fitted better than a model where defensive silence and employee fear were loaded onto one factor (Model 2), a model where AL and PsyCap were loaded onto one factor, while defensive silence and employee fear were loaded on the other factor (Model 3), a model where variables that focused on the employee were loaded onto one factor (Model 4), and a single factor model (Model 5).

2.2.4. Hypotheses testing

Descriptive statistics and correlations of all study variables are displayed in Table 2. We tested our proposed mediation model using SPSS PROCESS macro developed by Hayes, 2013 and the *lavaan* package in R (Rosseel, 2012). The results⁵ are presented in Tables 5 and 6. We followed the same analytical strategy as in Study 1 by examining the paths that constitute of the serial mediated effect (see Fig. 2) and controlling for abusive supervision. Finally, we test whether this serial indirect effect is conditional upon employees' PsyCap (Hypothesis 4) due to its moderating effect on the relationship between AL and employee fear.

Our results showed that AL was positively related to employees' defensive silence ($b = 0.32, SE = 0.08, p < .001$). Further, AL was also positively related to employees' felt fear ($b = 0.42, SE = 0.07, p < .001$) and, in turn, employees' felt fear was positively related to defensive silence ($b = 0.24, SE = 0.07, p = .001$). The indirect effect of AL on defensive silence through employee fear was significant (indirect effect = 0.10, 95% CI = [0.03, 0.20]), showing evidence for Hypothesis 1.

As in Study 1, defensive silence was negatively related to employee creativity ($b = -0.21, SE = 0.09, p = .024$). Next, we tested the serial mediated effect (AL \rightarrow Employee Fear \rightarrow Defensive Silence \rightarrow Creativity; Hypothesis 3). A 95% bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence interval, based on 5000 simulations, showed a significant serial indirect effect (indirect effect -0.02 , 95% CI = $[-0.06, -0.004]$). This confirms Hypothesis 3. The simple mediated effect tested in Study 1 (Hypothesis 2) was also significant (indirect effect -0.05 , 95% CI = $[-0.13,$

⁴ The formulas are available upon request from the corresponding author.

⁵ The statistical significance of our hypothesized effects did not change when we did not control for abusive supervision.

Table 4
Comparison of measurement models for main variables in Study 2.

Models	χ^2	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
1(df = 179)	317.603–387.036	0.92–0.94	0.06–0.08	0.05
$\Delta \chi^2$	312.94–313.63, $p < .01$			
2(df = 183)	631.117–700.00	0.78–0.82	0.11–0.12	0.11
$\Delta \chi^2$	253.25–306.06, $p < .01$			
3(df = 186)	888.45–992.42	0.67–0.71	0.14–0.15	0.14
$\Delta \chi^2$	291.85–418.43, $p < .01$			
4(df = 188)	1214.65–1389.236	0.53–0.56	0.17–0.18	0.15
$\Delta \chi^2$	463.48–473.82, $p < .01$			
5(df = 189)	1682.50–1853.30	0.35–0.36	0.20–0.21	0.17

Model 1 (Five Factors): Creativity, Defensive Silence, Fear, AL and PsyCap; Model 2 (Four Factors): Defensive Silence and Fear were combined into one factor; Model 3 (Three Factors): AL & PsyCap, Defensive Silence & Fear, and Creativity; Model 4 (Two Factors): Variables focusing on the employee (AL, PsyCap, Fear, Defensive Silence) were combined into one factor; Model 5 (One Factor): all items were combined into one factor.

Results of each model were summarized from nine combinations of the three types of parcels of AL and of three types of parcels of PsyCap.

Table 5
Mediated regression results for Study 2.

Predictors	Criterion variable			
	Employee fear	Employee defensive silence	Employee creativity	
Intercept	1.65*** (0.34)	2.53*** (0.36)	2.13*** (0.37)	6.55*** (0.50)
AL	0.42*** (0.07)	0.32*** (0.08)	0.22** (0.08)	-0.04 (0.10)
Abusive Supervision	0.17* (0.07)	0.11 (0.07)	0.06 (0.07)	-0.11 (0.09)
Fear			0.24** (0.07)	-0.20* (0.10)
Defensive Silence				-0.21* (0.09)
R ²	0.23	0.13	0.18	0.12

Unstandardized coefficients are reported. Standard errors are in the brackets.
* $p \leq .05$.
** $p \leq .01$.
*** $p \leq .001$.

Table 6
Moderated mediation results for Study 2.

Predictors	Criterion variable		
	Employee fear	Employee defensive silence	Employee creativity
Intercept	3.63*** (0.25)	3.18*** (0.37)	6.22*** (0.55)
AL	0.45*** (0.07)	0.23** (0.08)	-0.08 (0.11)
Psychological Capital	-0.16 (0.11)	-0.10 (0.11)	0.22 (0.14)
AL × Psychological Capital	-0.13* (0.06)	-0.03 (0.07)	0.07 (0.08)
Abusive Supervision	0.16* (0.07)	0.06 (0.07)	-0.10 (0.09)
Fear		0.23** (0.08)	-0.18 (0.10)
Defensive Silence			-0.20* (0.09)
R ²	0.25	0.18	0.13

Unstandardized coefficients are reported. Standard errors are in the brackets.
* $p \leq .05$.
** $p \leq .01$.
*** $p \leq .001$.

-0.005]), suggesting that employee fear only partially mediated the indirect effect between AL and employee creativity through defensive silence.

We proceeded to test the full serial moderated mediation (Hypothesis 4). Results are presented in Table 6. In line with Aiken,

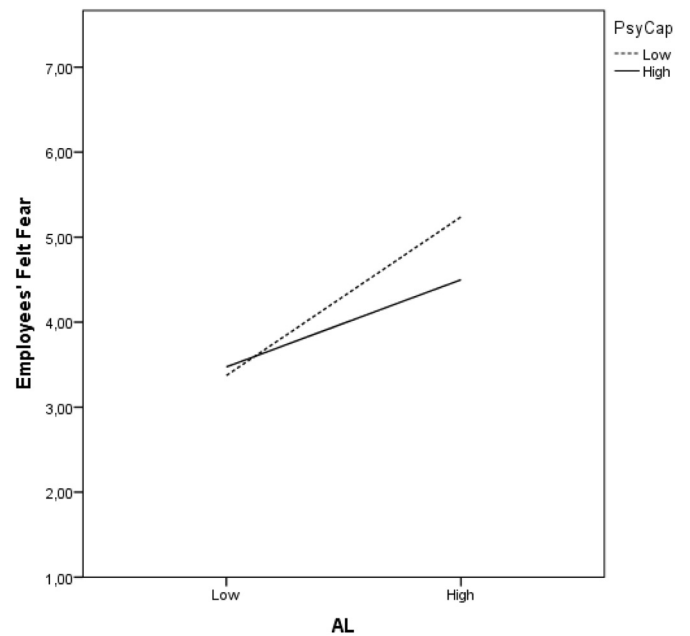


Fig. 2. The effect of AL on Employees' Felt Fear at different levels of PsyCap.

West, and Reno (1991), we mean centered the predictors involved in the interaction so that main effects reported in Table 6 are easier to interpret. We found a significant interaction between AL and PsyCap on employees' felt fear, ($b = -0.13$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = .04$; see Fig. 2). Simple slope tests revealed that the effect of AL on employees' felt fear was stronger at low levels of PsyCap (1 SD below the mean; $b = 0.59$, $SE = 0.11$, $p < .001$) and weaker at high levels of PsyCap (1 SD above the mean; $b = 0.32$, $SE = 0.09$, $p < .001$).

We further explored Hypothesis 4 by testing whether PsyCap moderated the serial indirect effect of AL on employee creativity. We used the lavaan package in R (Rossee, 2012) to calculate the index of moderated mediation (Hayes, 2015). If this index is different from zero, the indirect effect differs across levels of PsyCap. Results revealed a significant index of moderated mediation (index = 0.01, 95% bootstrapped CI = [0.001, 0.024]), showing that the serial indirect effect was stronger and more pronounced at low levels of PsyCap (indirect effect = -0.027, 95% bootstrapped CI = [-0.079, -0.003]) and weaker at high levels of PsyCap (indirect effect = -0.015, 95% bootstrapped CI = [-0.050, -0.002]). In sum, these analyses support Hypothesis 4.

3. General discussion

Employee creativity is critical for organizational success and survival (Amabile, 1988; Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). Yet, although much is known about the benefits of employee creative behavior and how positive forms of leadership can stimulate such behavior (e.g., Bai et al., 2016; Gong et al., 2009; Li, Zhao, & Begley, 2015), we have relatively less understanding of how potentially darker sides of leadership such as AL might hinder individual employee creativity. In this research, we argued that authoritarian leaders inhibit employee creativity by increasing employee fear, which, in turn, encourages defensive silence, resulting in reduced levels of creativity. We further argued that employee PsyCap mitigates the fear triggered by authoritarian leaders. Across two field studies conducted in Africa and Asia, we found full support for our proposed theoretical model. Specifically, the results obtained showed that AL undermines employee creativity, with the relationship between AL and creativity serially mediated by employee fear and defensive silence. Our results further suggested that employee PsyCap moderated the relationship between AL and employee fear,

such that the relationship was stronger when PsyCap was low rather than high. These moderated mediation results were strongly supported even after controlling for abusive supervision, providing evidence for the robustness of our findings. Below, we discuss the implications of these findings.

3.1. Theoretical implications

Our research findings offer important contributions to extant literature. First, our study corroborates emerging research suggesting that AL can hinder employee creativity (Wang et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2011). Despite existing research, there is still a lack of a cogent theoretical framework that provides an in-depth understanding of precisely why and when authoritarian leadership may inhibit individual employee creativity. Accordingly, we developed a transactional theory of stress perspective (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) to advance our understanding of the link between AL and individual employee creativity. Our findings suggest that employees form a stressful and demanding appraisal of AL to the extent that it becomes detrimental for stimulating employee creativity. Our study therefore provides an alternative theoretical perspective that future research interested in exploring other consequences of AL can draw upon.

Second, rather than portraying just a direct relationship, our research provides a richer insight into why authoritarian leaders affect individual employee creativity. In doing so, we address the insufficient attention devoted to the underlying mechanisms linking the AL - creativity relationship by examining both fear and defensive silence. Until now, the AL literature has been limited in that it speculates that fear and fear-based coping mechanisms trigger employees' behavioral reactions to such leadership without explicitly testing this speculation (e.g., Cheng et al., 2004; Farh et al., 2006). By drawing on the transactional theory of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and empirically testing this perspective, our study demonstrates that fear and fear-based coping mechanisms (defensive silence) play a central role in linking AL to employee creativity. That is, the pressure to obey and submit to an authoritarian leader induces the emotion of fear in employees, which results in defensive silence and further makes it less likely for them to engage in creative behaviors. In doing so, we also answer the call for more research on the role of emotions within leadership literature (e.g., Gooty et al., 2010).

More broadly, our study provides additional insights and expands what we know about employees' behavioral reactions to AL. In this regard, we also emphasize the importance of investigating more than one mechanism in the same study to deepen our understanding of the processes through which leadership influences work outcomes (Hannah, Schaubroeck, & Peng, 2016). On the flip side, even though we showed that AL could reduce employee creativity via fear and defensive silence, it would be interesting to examine whether AL can also reduce or enhance deviant creativity (i.e., the violation of a leader's order to stop pursuing a new idea; Mainemelis, 2010). Deviant creativity is set to occur when an employee already generates new ideas and violates the leader's instructions to stop pursuing such ideas. As we found that AL negatively influences creativity, employees working under authoritarian leaders may also engage in less creative deviance. In contrast, it could also be possible that employees engage in deviant creativity to "get back" to or impress the leader (Mainemelis, 2010). Exploring both possibilities would be a fruitful line of research.

Third, we also add to the literature on silence by examining the antecedents and consequences of defensive silence in our model. With our findings suggesting both AL and employee fear as antecedents, and employee creativity as a consequence of defensive silence, we address the recent calls made by Brinsfield (2013) and Morrison (2014) for scholars to devote more attention to this line of research because of its potential to help reduce its occurrence and potential negative effects. The present research presents a significant contribution to silence literature in this regard as our findings suggest that authoritarian

leaders, by pressuring employees to obey "their last command", are even more capable of inhibiting creativity than a related leadership style approach, abusive supervision, which we controlled for in both studies. As such, our research underscores the need to encourage leaders to be less authoritative in their approaches.

Fourth, we also contribute to the literature by examining employee PsyCap as a moderator of AL's impact. Although PsyCap has been identified as an important personal resource that could be useful in navigating different leadership - employee relationships (see Dawkins et al., 2013; Newman et al., 2014), to date, we only found two studies focusing on these relationships. For instance, Li et al. (2016) found that abusive supervision resulted in more psychological distress for followers who have low rather than high levels of PsyCap. Wang et al. (2014) also found that the relationship between authentic leadership and followers' job performance was stronger for those low rather than high in PsyCap. Wang et al. (2014) reasoned that although authentic leadership has a positive effect on followers' performance, this effect becomes less strong when followers already have a high level of PsyCap, and thus are less in need of positive psychological resources from their leader. Here, our research suggests that not all employees are susceptible to the same degree to the fear triggered by authoritarian leaders. In particular, it suggests that employees low in PsyCap are more likely to experience fear resulting from AL, whereas high PsyCap mitigates such detrimental effect. Accordingly, our study offers new insights into individual factors that may make employees more susceptible to the negative effects of AL. This also corroborates the emerging research showing the importance of PsyCap in helping employees deal with destructive leadership at work (e.g., Li et al., 2016).

Finally, by examining AL in both the African and Chinese contexts, our study also contributes to AL literature. To date, extant literature has examined the effects of AL in an Asian, especially Chinese, context. As such, little is known about the effects of AL beyond this context, particularly where AL is equally prevalent (e.g., Africa) (Zagorsek, Jaklic, & Stough, 2004). Chen et al. (2014) noted that more research on AL is needed in cultures outside of the Chinese context, especially in cultures that share similar characteristics to examine the theory's generalizability. Given that Nigeria is a society that is also characterized by high power distance where people generally accept authority dominance (Hofstede, 2001), our study responds to Chen et al.'s call by examining the consequences of AL on employee creativity using a sample from Nigeria. In fact, China and Nigeria both have an identical power distance index score of 80. Considering its rapidly growing economy and burgeoning presence of both Eastern and Western multinational companies in the country (Babalola, Stouten, Euwema, & Ovadje, 2016), Nigeria provides an ideal setting for extending AL research. Thus, our study enriches our understanding of AL outside the Chinese context and serves as a useful starting point to establishing the generalizability of the construct in other societies.

3.2. Practical implications

Beyond the theoretical implications of the present study, our findings also hold significant practical implications. Although a recent study suggests that AL behavior could be effective in soliciting conformity and potentially improving productivity (Huang et al., 2015), our findings suggest that authoritarian leaders fall short in enhancing employees' creativity by unintentionally silencing them based on fear and triggering defensive silence. Hence, our findings serve as a caution to organizations about the potentially detrimental effects of AL and suggest that they pay closer attention to the overly controlling manner of their leaders. That is, leaders should be encouraged to give room for employees' inputs and feedback to stimulate creativity. In addition, organizations could also implement training programs to educate people holding leadership positions about the importance of building an appropriate climate that encourages positive interpersonal treatments and relationships at work (Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Misati, 2017)

as well as pay more attention to the selection criteria of new leaders to avoid AL.

The significance of the AL–fear relationship for employee and organizational functioning cannot be overstated, as fear resulting from working under intimidating and authoritative supervisors can trigger defensive silence, which in turn inhibits creativity in the workplace. Given that creativity plays a vital role in organizational success and survival (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009), our findings that AL induces fear and defensive silence thus suggest the need for practical interventions aimed at creating a psychologically safe work environment. Beyond this practical intervention, top management themselves can create work environments that encourage employees to express their opinions and be proactive. This is especially important, because middle and lower-level managers tend to draw from the actions of their top management teams to derive cues about existing work climates and norms for appropriate behaviors (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009). A more psychological safe and open climate can be helpful in reducing employee fear (Edmondson, 2003) and in doing so, increase the creativity in the workplace.

In addition, employees should also be assisted to develop their abilities to cope with stressors and potentially demanding workplace relationships (such as AL). Our findings in this regard suggests that organizations could benefit from helping employees develop their PsyCap as it was found to buffer the negative impact of AL. The development of PsyCap seems viable as it is considered to be ‘state-like’ in nature. On a continuum perspective dichotomized by ‘pure’ poles of state and trait, PsyCap is positioned as midrange and therefore a ‘state-like’ construct that is relatively malleable and open to development and performance management (Luthans et al., 2007; Newman et al., 2014). Indeed, empirical evidence has demonstrated significant increases in PsyCap through external influences such as interventions in as little as one to three hours of training (Dawkins et al., 2013; Luthans, Avey, Avolio, & Peterson, 2010; Luthans & Youssef, 2017), even if these training sessions happen online (Luthans, Avey, & Patera, 2008). Interestingly research has shown that leaders’ PsyCap are also ‘contagious’ and can result in higher levels of followers’ PsyCap (Chen, Wen, Kong, Niu, & Hau, 2017; Story, Youssef, Luthans, Barbuto, & Bovaird, 2013). As such, organizations would benefit from not only focusing on developing subordinates’ PsyCap, but also the PsyCap of their daily supervisors. Developing organizational members’ PsyCap could alleviate the negative impact of AL and thus foster employee creativity over time.

3.3. Potential limitations, future research directions, and conclusions

The strengths of our research lie in testing our hypothesized model across two studies, utilizing two complementary research designs, as well as obtaining data from multiple sources (i.e., employees and their direct supervisors) and multiple waves, which reduces same-source bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Moreover, we also controlled for employees’ ratings of abusive supervision to assess the robustness of our findings. Despite these strengths, our study is not without some limitations. One of the limitations is that the cross-sectional design of Study 1 precludes us from fully drawing causal conclusions. In order to overcome this limitation, we separated our measurements across three different times in Study 2. Even though the relationship order of our model is theoretically driven, future research should consider an experimental research design or collect all data included in our model repeatedly across time to strengthen causal inferences.

An interesting next step for future research is to test how our theoretical model could help shed light on other outcomes of AL, such as employee performance, deviance, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Future research along this line could also focus on the impact of the other dimensions of paternalistic leadership such as benevolent leadership. While it is useful to include these dimensions in future research, research suggests that the overall paternalistic leadership construct is not very useful and that its scales should be used separately

(Chou, Cheng, & Jen, 2005; Farh et al., 2006). Recent studies have equally yielded to this suggestion by focusing solely on AL (e.g., Schaubroeck et al., 2017). For example, it may be that leader benevolence can buffer the negative consequences of AL, as benevolence refers to an individualized concern for subordinates’ personal well-being (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). This reasoning is in line with a study that showed that leader benevolence facilitates employee creativity (Wang & Cheng, 2010).

Future research should also explore the role of other theoretically driven moderating variables that could impact the AL – creativity link. For example, future research could focus on the impact of, for example, individual power distance orientation or other personal resources that enhance employees’ ability to deal with stressors. This suggestion is in line with recent research suggesting that, under certain circumstances, AL may be positively related to followers’ outcomes (Huang et al., 2015; Wang & Guan, 2018). That is, AL may not always be detrimental for followers or the organization. For example, Huang et al. (2015) showed that AL had a positive impact on revenue growth at the firm level in a harsh economic environment (i.e., when external resources are scarce). Wang and Guan (2018) also showed a positive relationship between AL and employee performance, but especially when power distance is high. Examining under which circumstances AL may be less detrimental, or even positive, for employees is something future research should explore.

For instance, it would be interesting to examine employee *mindfulness* as a buffer for fearful reactions to AL. Research indicates that “mindfulness” - a conscious state of mind that allows individual to stay in the present moment without expressing judgment or reaction (Glomb, Duffy, Bono, & Yang, 2011) - mitigates defensive reactions (Niemiec et al., 2010) and emotional responses (Long & Christian, 2015) to stressors. Thus, it is possible that mindfulness buffers the mediating roles of fear and defensive silence in the relationship between AL and employee creativity. Therefore, examining the role of mindfulness on the AL – creativity link would be a valuable line of research.

We tested our model in Nigeria and China, which are societies characterized as high power distance cultures. Power distance may be associated with high tolerance for authoritarian leaders, and thus may reduce the adverse employee reactions to such leaders. Even though we expect our findings to be applicable for organizations in Western culture where AL is predominant, future research should replicate and extend our current findings to other cultures. For future studies conducted in low power distance cultures, such as most Western cultures, it could be that the predicted relationships are stronger. For instance, authoritarian leaders might have more detrimental effects on employee creativity in Western cultures, because of followers’ low tolerance for hierarchy and authority dominance (Zagorsek et al., 2004). Such research could for instance not only examine power distance orientation at the national level but also examine the role of individually held cultural orientations in employee reactions to AL.

In conclusion, our study of how AL undermines employee creativity through its relationship with fear and defensive silence makes significant contributions to leadership and creativity literatures by offering a more elaborate view on how AL hinders employee creativity. Moreover, we also highlight the role of employee PsyCap, mitigating the negative effect of AL. We urge researchers to devote more attention to this line of research, considering the potential opportunities for future research in this area especially focusing on antecedents of AL, other psychological mechanisms, and potential boundary conditions on important work and organizational outcomes.

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