the Effect of Age of a Leader on Conflict Involvement in the Workplace; The Mediating Role of Power Construal

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Abstract

Age of the leader as a demographic trait has been used to predict leadership abilities and diverse outcomes. However, this research is not without unanswered questions, and indeed, the research on leaders' age has not featured regularly in the contemporary research. The present study provided a unique contribution to this topic in conflict between leaders' and employees. In our current study we further investigated whether the power construal of the leader will operate as mediator between the age of the leader and leader conflict involvement. We proposed that older leaders are less inclined into conflict with their direct subordinates, and older leaders construe their power more in terms of responsibility, which in turn will decrease the conflict frequency of the leader. We conducted a field study with (N = 236: 118 dyads of leaders and employees) where questionnaires were handed out to employees and leaders. Our study showed that age of a leader was not related to leader conflict involvement. but leaders' power construal might be related to leader conflict involvement, however, more research on the topic is needed.

Keywords: power construal, age of a Leader, conflict Involvement, leadership

The Effect of Age of a Leader on Conflict Involvement in the Workplace: The Mediating Role of Power Construal

Social contact between employees can greatly shape their attitudes and behaviours in the workplace, as employees who experience more positive interactions at work with their co-workers can benefit in multiple influential ways. For example, positive social interactions at work can reduce stress, facilitate positive experiences – and motivation to be mindful of others (Fasbender et al., 2019). A particular claim has appeared frequently in the literature: older people experience less frequent conflict (Fingerman & Charles, 2010). Hence, it would be logical to assume that this age difference would also be present in the workplace setting. Multiple reasons might contribute why older leaders are expected to be less involved in conflict than younger leaders; research on developmental psychology suggests that managing conflict increases with age (Beitler et al., 2018), it is suggested older adults might be more motivated to show helping behaviours designed to maintain social connections (Lockwood et al., 2021) and, that older adults use better conflict handling strategies to handle conflict compared to younger people (Yeung et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, the overall number of studies investigating age and conflict in the workplace context is modest at its best (Beitler et al., 2018), perhaps because age of a leader has not been considered as a relevant postulation, thus, the current understanding of the relationship between age and leadership mechanisms is eminently insufficient (Walter & Scheibe, 2013). Nevertheless, links between leaders' age and an array of different outcomes have been investigated in the empirical research, highlighting age as an interesting aspect to be investigated with in the workplace setting (Walter & Scheibe, 2013). Research on conflicts have mostly focused on conflicts in close relationships such as spouses, friends, and family, leaving conflicts in the workplace neglected as a research topic (Davis et al., 2009). However, for example, authors Davis et al., (2009) found no studies examining age and conflict

behaviour within the workplace setting. A small number of research have been exploring the possible relationships between the age of the leader and conflict management and conflict management styles, but the results are inconclusive (Beitler et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2009; Yeung et al., 2015). Moreover, it is presumably the case that varied and inconsistent relationships that have been observed in the age and leadership research might be the result of unexplored factors, such as moderating factors and mediating mechanisms (Walter & Scheibe, 2013).

In the present research, we give our important contribution to the empirical literature by examining the importance of age of a leader on conflict involvement. Following from the past research, we argue that older leaders are less likely to be involved in conflicts in the workplace. Furthermore, we argue that the power construal (responsibility vs opportunity) of a leader might act as a mediating variable between the age of the leader and conflict involvement in the workplace setting. More specifically, we suggest that older leaders vs. younger leaders' power might be construed more in terms of responsibility, which in turn will lead to decreased conflict involvement in the workplace. We suggest that this is different for younger leaders, whom we see to possess a more opportunistic power construal, which in turn might increase their conflict involvement in the workplace. We decided to approach these questions by establishing a field study, in which the participants answer constructed questionnaires about their workplace setting. Importantly, we take account the possible effects of self-serving biases on self-reports of leaders by using a second person perspective as the means of subordinate. It has been common to use only self-report ratings, and research has acknowledged the possible biases in self-reports regarding to conflicts in the workplace (Yeung et al., 2015; Davis et., al 2009).

Literature review

In the current research we are investigating how the age of a leader influences leaders' conflict involvement in the workplace context. Due to the unparalleled increase in chronological age within the nations all over the world, and thus, dramatic increase of the older employees in the work field, the importance of age as key explanatory variable is more important than ever (Walter & Scheibe, 2013). However, there appears to be a wide gap in the literature related to age and conflict within the workplace setting (Walter & Scheibe, 2013). More specifically, young vs. old age, has not been studied as an explanation in conflict involvement for leaders, despite, that the contemporary literature shows older people to have better relationships, and that older people have less frequent conflict (Beitler et al., 2018; Fingerman & Charles, 2010). Relatively consistent findings have been emerged that with increased age, personal relationships seem to be improving (Fingerman & Charles, 2010). Reasons for these findings might be explained by the strategies that older adults use: they are less likely to use potentially damaging strategies, and more likely to use avoidant strategies which are meant to reduce potential problems with their relationships (Fingerman & Charles, 2010; (Davis et al., 2009). Thus, research on the contexts outside of the workplace highlights the importance of age as an explanatory trait that might be crucial within the workplace setting, for leaders as well (Walter & Scheibe, 2013). Moreover, researchers have argued that for demographic traits such as age, it's imperative to take into account possible mediating variables that act as psychological mechanisms between age of the leader and possible outcomes. Hence, in our study, we used power construal of the leader as a possible mediating variable between the age of the leader and leader conflict involvement. We decided approach these various unanswered questions by constructing a field study, in which our participants were employees and their direct supervisors.

According to the authors Walter & Scheibe (2013), there is a reasonable amount of research on the role of leader's age on different types of outcomes, but like mentioned above,

much of a consensus has not been reached. Except, this research mainly shows a lower desire for change and increased tendency towards passive behaviour among older leaders compared to younger leaders. This might also be related to the fact that older leaders might have a higher tendency towards maintaining positivity (Walter & Scheibe (2013), which could be one of the factors that play a role in leaders' conflict involvement. Possibly closely related to conflict involvement is relational-oriented leadership, which reflects behaviours from a leader who displays concern for positive interpersonal relationships. Findings on the role of leaders' age for this type of leadership style are unfortunately limited and inconsistent (Walter & Scheibe, 2013). Taking account, the diversity of findings on the role of leader's age on different outcomes, more research is clearly needed in this topic.

In line with the past research, Yeung et al., (2015) specified this effect on leadership styles by showing that older employees used more avoiding (person has weak concern about both self and other's outcomes) when negotiating with supervisors, moreover, older supervisors used fewer dominating strategies (person attempts to satisfy his/her own concern) when they dealt with their subordinates. It has also been hypothesized that older workers have higher emotional competence, which in turn allows them to be more effective in interpersonal conflict management (Beitler et al., 2018). Effective conflict management behaviours reduce the conflict and possible conflict escalation which can improve the relationship between parties (Beitler et al., 2018). Lockwood et al., (2021) showed that older people are more motivated to behave in a prosocial manner. Such as, older people show less self-favouring bias compared to younger adults by choosing actions that benefit others. Furthermore, as the authors explain, only for younger adults, the effort they put into themselves lead to more positive feelings about the rewards. Vast amount of interpersonal conflict research has relied on socioemotional selectivity theory (SST), and its' predictions for age differences in conflict behaviour (Davis et al., 2009; Li & Tsang 2016). The theory

postulates that older adults maintain emotionally important goals profoundly more than younger adults (Li & Tsang 2016), indeed, research has shown support for the SST which explains older individuals to adjust their behaviours more to one's advantage to maximize positive rewards (E.g., Fingerman & Charles, 2010; Beitler et al., 2018). SST has been recently used to predict outcomes also in the workplace setting, and it's argued that older employees deal with conflicts in the workplace in a different manner, such as more passively (Yeung et al., 2015; Li & Tsang 2016). SST predictions were tested on another study by (Davis et al., 2009), and to their surprise, SST did not transform to the workplace setting as clearly as expected. They did not find support for leaders' age differences for active-destructive behaviour responses (e.g., winning at all costs, showing anger or demeaning) as older adults were not seen as less destructive during conflict. These results are opposite of what SST predicts, and their results contradict with most of the past research that has shown older adults being less likely to express anger or disrespect (Beitler et al., 2018). For these unexpected results, the authors make two important points of past research: first, the heavy reliance of self-reports and second, the usage of workplace setting in their own research (Davis et al., 2009). Interestingly, the authors propose that workplace setting might provoke destructive patterns even for older leaders, on the grounds that these relationships might not be as important than those with family members or friends, or that self-reports are inclined to self-serving biases and prior research might not flawlessly reflect the actual behaviours of the leaders (Davis et al., 2009). These results seem to differ from other studies that did not use second evaluator perspective to evaluate the leader, such as research from Fingerman & Charles, (2010), who found that older people use more avoidance and less confrontation in their conflict behaviour. Indeed, most prior research about conflict within the workplace has been conducted with the usage of self-report data and thus the results of previous research might not show the actual difference between young and older adults (Davis et al., 2009).

Self-reports regarding conflict have been criticized because of people's self-serving tendencies. This might be one reason that some of the new studies using another person perspective are showing different results (Davis et al., 2009; Yeung et al., 2015). This interesting observation was also related to and important when designing our own research, where we used the perspective of a subordinate, to remove possible self-serving biases. Thus, it seems that all life-span aging theories do not necessarily translate well to age-leadership associations and possible reasons are still uninvestigated.

The Mediating Role of Leader's Power Construal

The outcomes of how power of a leader is manifested can lead to different outcomes depending on how power is construed (Scholl et al., 2018). Two types of construals' of power of a leader have been proposed by the previous research, namely *opportunity* (to focus on the achievement of one's own goals which results from the control of other's outcomes) and *responsibility* (to exert oneself to protect the well-being of others instead of focusing on own interests) (Sessenberg et al., 2011; De Wit et al., 2017; Scholl et al., 2018).

Leaders' construal of power as opportunity vs. responsibility has been suggested in the recent studies to explain different kinds of outcomes: Research from Sessenberg et al., (2011) was the first known research where construal of social power was manipulated by making opportunity or responsibility salient for the participants. The authors found out that attraction to social power depends on the way it's constructed and came to conclusion that opportunity (vs. responsibility) as power was seen more attractive of the two. De Wit et al., (2017) studied the relationship between the tendency of advice taking and construal of power. They found that the tendency to take advice depends on how leaders construed their power; people in high power positions who construed their power more in terms of responsibility (vs. opportunity) were inclined to take more advice from other people. More specifically, in participants who construed their power in terms of responsibility,

increased tendency to take advice was noticeable, importantly, there wasn't lowered tendency to take advice for participants who construed their power as opportunity. According to the authors, interesting implication might be that leaders should be more aware of the of their own power, because this might have benefits for an organization, such as in enhanced joint performance.

Holders of power generally recognize one of these conditions (opportunity or responsibility), however, the two are not necessarily separate from one another (Scholl et al., 2018). Research from Van Kleef et al., (2006) revealed that people in high-power positions make smaller concessions, and participants with high power were unaffected by the emotions displayed by their opponent. Furthermore, their five studies seem to generalize well across different contexts. The authors explain that power moderates the effects of emotions on concession making. Against the common belief and previous findings, Piff et., al (2010) revealed that people in a lower socioeconomic class were more generous, gave more money to charity (relative to income), were evaluated as more trustworthy by strangers, and also expressed more helping behaviour towards a person in distress. The authors speculate, that lower class individuals might construe themselves more in terms of their relationships with others. Having social power, often goes conjointly with having the opportunity to build one's situation in a way which servers' own goals and interests. However, power does not necessarily only entail having the opportunity to achieve own goals or outcomes, it can be construed under the condition of elevated responsibility for the outcomes of others (Sassenberg et al., 2011). In the latest research by the authors Scholl et al., (2018), they showed that the construal of power might influence how much challenge leaders perceive, which in turn might influence the responses of stress. They demonstrated that the mare way of construing power can evoke stress responses. Called by the authors "burden" of power is physiological pattern that can appear for responsible power holders, as for those people

demands (e.g. task requirements and task effort) might increase. Their reasoning comes from studies that show how the evaluation of ones' resources can influence how one reciprocates to stressful tasks, and if the demands of this judgement are too high, it can result in a threat response. Furthermore, the authors argue that similar patterns with responsible power holders may be compared to a person in low power position (high demands & low resources) (Scholl et al., 2018).

Following from vast research on age and conflict, and past research on age of the leaders and leaders' power construal, we argue that the way power-holders construe power, is an important mechanism in determining the frequency of conflicts in the workplace. More specifically, we argue that older leaders (vs. younger leaders) construe their power more in terms of responsibility, which may have important implications on the relationship between the leaders age and conflict involvement. We expect that older leaders compared to younger leaders use their power more in terms of responsibility and this will decrease the frequency of conflict in the workplace setting.

Hypothesis 1. Older age of a leader relates to less involvement in conflicts with their subordinates.

Hypothesis 2. Power construal of a leader will mediate the effect of age of a leader on conflict involvement, such that older leaders will perceive their power as responsibility rather than opportunity, and will, in turn, get involved in less conflict with their subordinates.

Method

Participants

A total of 242 employees and leaders participated in the study. The mean age of the participants in the leadership position was (M=39.23, $SD = 12.63$) and consisted of 44 females and 74 males. The mean age for the subordinate group was ($M = 28.73$, $SD = 10.43$) and consisted of 60 females and 55 males, and 1 participant identified as other. Out of 121

participants identified as supervisors, three had to be removed due to missing value of the age of the participant.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics Including Means and Standard Deviations of Combined Total Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
RE_avg	115	1.00	7.00	4.5783	1.4018
OE_avg	117	1.00	7.00	2.9630	1.3574
RL_avg	118	1.67	7.00	4.8701	1.2503
OL_avg	118	1.00	6.67	3.2782	1.2191
CE_avg	118	1.00	4.57	1.6271	.7797
CL_avg	118	1.00	4.57	1.7873	.7597
Age of the leader	118	18.00	72.00	39.2288	12.6305
Valid N (listwise)	115				

Note. RE_avg = responsibility of the leader (employee perspective) OE_avg = opportunity of the leader (employee perspective), RL_avg = responsibility of the leader (leader perspective), OL_avg = opportunity of the leader (leader perspective), CE = conflict involvement of the leader (employee perspective), CL = conflict involvement of the leader (leader perspective).

Procedure

Potential participants were approached among randomly selected companies in the proximity of - or in the city of Groningen in the Netherlands. They were asked to voluntarily participate in our bachelor thesis research about the workplace. The participants had to be a dyad consisting of a supervisor and a subordinate. The supervisors were asked to fill out the questionnaire regarding themselves and the subordinates were asked to fill out the questionnaire regarding their supervisor, corresponding with the research from Davis et al., (2009). In total, 242 or participants completed a 10-minute questionnaire. All the participants gave written consent for their participation and the study was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Groningen.

Moreover, the questionnaires were handed over to a staff member that was present at the work location during working hours. They were instructed to find a supervisor with one of their subordinates who would form a dyad and fill in the questionnaires independently from each other. After completion, the questionnaires were kept in sealed envelopes to ensure the privacy of the information and prevent subordinates from answering in a way that their supervisor would desire. A period of time which was usually a few days, was agreed upon after which the questionnaires had to be ready for recollection.

Materials

All of the questionnaires except questions about the demographics used likert-scale with a range of one to seven. The first questionnaire used in the study was the interpersonal conflicts at work with colleagues. It measures the frequency of conflict between a supervisor and a subordinate in the workplace (Spector & Jex.1998). The next questionnaire was managers' construal of power, which measured managers' construal of power in terms of opportunity vs. responsibility (De Wit et al., 2017). The same questionnaires were used for both supervisor and subordinate versions. The subordinate versions were transformed from the original supervisor versions to an acceptable language to be used for the subordinate versions as well.

<div align="center">

Results

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Below, showing the correlations from the employee perspective (see table 2) and correlations from the leaders perspective (see table 3).

Table 2.

Correlations with the Variables from the Employee Perspective

Correlations

		Age of the leader	RE_avg	OE_avg	CE_avg
Age of the leader	Pearson Correlation	1	-.190	-.012	.091
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.021	.450	.164
	N	118	115	117	118
RE_avg	Pearson Correlation	-.190	1	.146	-.206
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.021		.060	.014
	N	115	115	115	115
OE_avg	Pearson Correlation	-.012	.146	1	.183
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.450	.060		.024
	N	117	115	117	117
CE_avg	Pearson Correlation	.091	-.206	.183	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.164	.014	.024	
	N	118	115	117	118

Note. RE_avg = responsibility of the leader (employee perspective) OE_avg = opportunity of the leader (employee perspective), CE = conflict involvement of the leader (employee perspective).

Table 3.

Correlations with the Variables from the Leaders Perspective

Correlations

		Age of the leader	RL_avg	OL_avg	CL_avg
Age of the leader	Pearson Correlation	1	.000	-.096	.176
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.500	.149	.028
	N	118	118	118	118
RL_avg	Pearson Correlation	.000	1	.163	-.020
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.500		.039	.417
	N	118	118	118	118
OL_avg	Pearson Correlation	-.096	.163	1	-.005
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.149	.039		.478
	N	118	118	118	118
CL_avg	Pearson Correlation	.176	-.020	-.005	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.028	.417	.478	
	N	118	118	118	118

Note. RL_avg = responsibility of the leader (leader perspective), OL_avg = opportunity of the leader (leader perspective), CL = conflict involvement of the leader (leader perspective).

Preliminary assumption tests were performer, to test normality, Q-Q plots were constructed (figure 1 in the appendix), the plot shows slight skewness in the data, the same skewness is visible in the histogram (figure 2 in the appendix). For all four multiple regressions these plots were used, and results are almost identical. This might be due to the fact, that participant responses for both employees and leaders for the conflict involvement questions were heavily skewed on the left, ($M = 1.6271$ for employee answers, $M = 1.7873$ for leader answers). To check the homoscedasticity assumption, a residual vs. predicted plot was created (figure 3 on the appendix), this assumption is not violated. There do not seem to be a distinct pattern in the plot, indicating that the prediction equation works equally well for all the values in the data set from low to high.

Not as expected, the mean values between the groups for leader perspectives and employee perspectives did not show much of a difference in our variables, instead the mean values for leader perspectives were just slightly higher for all three values, namely, opportunity of the leader, responsibility of the leader - and conflict involvement.

Leader perspective

All the main analyses were calculated using two multiple regressions, for the model in leader perspective - and employee perspective. The result for the first main effect between independent variable age of the leader and dependent variable conflict involvement, leaders' perspective (CL), was different from expected; this relationship was nonsignificant with $b = 0.106$, $s.e = .0055$, 95% CI [-.0003, .0215], $p = .0564$. The effect between age of the leader and responsibility of the leader, leaders' perspective (RL), was nonsignificant with $b = 0.000$, $s.e = .0092$, 95% CI [-.0182, .0182], $p = .9992$, - and between age of the leader and opportunity of the leader, leaders' perspective (OL), $b = -.0093$, $s.e = .0089$, 95% CI [-.0270, .0084], $p = .2986$. Furthermore, the mediation model direct effect was nonsignificant with $b = 0.0107$, $s.e = .0056$, 95% CI [-.0004, .0217], $p = .0576$, the indirect effect was nonsignificant

with $b = -.0001$, 95% CI [-.0021, .0017]. Lastly, the total effect was nonsignificant with $b = 0.0106$, $s.e = .0055$, 95% CI [-.0003, .0215], $p = .0564$, ($R^2 = .0316$, $F(2, 118) = 1.2413$, $p = 0.2981$). The leader perspective of our analysis did not produce any statistically significant effects, and the mediation using the leaders' perspective is not supported.

Employee perspective

The result for the first main effect in the employee perspective between independent variable age of the leader and dependent variable conflict involvement, employee perspective (CE), was different from expected, this relationship was nonsignificant with $b = 0.0057$, $s.e = .0058$, 95% CI [-.0058, .0173], $p = .3254$. The effect between age of the leader and responsibility of the leader, employee perspective (RE), was significant with $b = -.0211$, $s.e = .0102$, 95% CI [-.0.0414, -.0008], $p = .0418$, however, the relationship between age of the leader and opportunity of the leader, employee perspective (OE), was nonsignificant with $b = -.0026$, $s.e = .0101$, 95% CI [-.0226, .0174], $p = .7985$. Furthermore, the effect between RE and CE was significant with $b = -.1268$, $s.e = .0522$, 95% CI [-.2303, -.0234], $p = .0167$, also the effect between OE and CE was significant with $b = .1223$, $s.e = .0530$, 95% CI [.0174, .2273], $p = .0228$. The model direct effect was nonsignificant with $b = .0034$, $s.e = .0057$, 95% CI [-.008, .0147], $p = .5557$, the indirect effect was nonsignificant with $b = .0024$, 95% CI [-.0015, .0078], $p = .0564$. Lastly, the total effect was nonsignificant with $b = .0057$, $s.e = .0058$, 95% CI [-.0058, .0173], $p = .3254$, ($R^2 = .0892$, $F(2, 115) = 3.6215$, $p = 0.0154$). Results from the employee perspective do not give support for our mediation model, however, the path between leader power construal and leader conflict involvement is supported. Interestingly, the effect of age on construal of power seems to be the opposite than expected, as age of the leader is a predictor of responsibility of the leader with small correlation of ($r = -.190$).

Results from neither of the perspectives gives support to the hypothesis 1; age of the leader was not related to leaders' conflict involvement, as we found no differences in conflict involvement for older vs. younger leaders. Our results are partly in line with the hypothesis 2. For the leaders' perspective, age of the leader was not a significant predictor of leader power construal. For the employee perspective, age of the leader was negatively related to leader power construal as responsibility, however, this effect seems to be opposite of the expected. Moreover, power construal (responsibility and opportunity) in the employee perspective was a significant predictor of leader conflict involvement. Thus, giving full support to a path that construing power as responsibility might be related to less conflict involvement for the leaders.

Discussion

In this study, we investigated how the age of the leader will influence the conflict involvement of the leader, and how the power construal of the leader might influence this relationship as a mediator. We followed the research from age-conflict interplay (e.g., Fingerman & Charles, 2010), and argued that older leaders are involved less in conflict than younger leaders in the workplace. We also suggested that older leaders construe their power construal more in terms of responsibility. Furthermore, we hypothesized that power construal is an important mechanism between leaders' age and conflict involvement, and older leaders who construe their power as responsibility are less inclined to conflict involvement.

Unexpectedly, the results from our study did not provide support for the Hypothesis. 1. Older leaders did not seem to be less involved in conflict than younger leaders. This was true for both, leaders evaluating themselves and employees evaluating the leaders. We also expected the employees to rate their supervisors to be more involved in conflict than the supervisors would rate themselves, however, this was not the case, but supervisors rated themselves to be slightly more involved in conflict, however, this difference seems to be

marginal (see table 1). These results differ from that of general understanding of older people to be less involved in conflict (e.g., Beitler et al., 2018). Nevertheless, these results are partly in line with research from Davis et al., (2009), showing that workplace context and second evaluator perspective might be the reasons for unexpected results.

For the second hypothesis, we found partial support. Interestingly, within the employee perspective, age of the leader was negatively associated with the leader power construal as responsibility; younger age of the leader was a predictor of construing power as responsibility, thus, this finding conflicts with our second hypothesis where we argued that older leaders would construe their power more in terms of responsibility. It is possible, that this result might be a consequence of the employees evaluating their supervisors, as the results show no effect in the leaders' self-evaluations. However, age of the leader was not related to construal of power as opportunity in the employee perspective. In the second path of the mediation, again in the employee perspective, leader responsibility was related to leader conflict involvement, and leader opportunity was related to leader conflict involvement. We found both relationships to be significant, with small correlations. Nevertheless, these results give support to the idea that leaders' power construal might be related to leaders' conflict involvement, in a way that leaders' construing power in terms of responsibility have less conflict involvement compared to the ones that construe their power more in terms of opportunity. However, this was not the case for the leader perspectives, as we did not find support for the relationship between power construal of the leader and conflict involvement within the leaders' perspective. These results are interesting and unexpected, as one would expect leaders to rate themselves as more responsible and employees to rate their leaders as more opportunistic for self-serving purposes.

For neither of the perspectives, we found support for our mediation model; age of the leader did not significantly predict the power construal of the leader the way we expected.

Instead, in the employee perspective we found three significant results: the age of the leader to be negatively related to power construal as responsibility and we found indication that, power construal as responsibility and opportunity might be related to leader conflict involvement. We believe this is an interesting finding and might serve as important beginning to investigate more on the effects of leaders' power construal on their conflict involvement. Clearly more research on the topic is needed, nevertheless, we add important contribution to the ever-growing new research on the age of the leader on the workplace.

Limitations

There a at least two potential limitations concerning the results of our study. A first limitation refers to the data collection process: The questionnaires were handed out openly to an employee or a supervisor in a company, without necessarily knowing which persons within the company are going to fill them out. This might lead the supervisors to choose a certain employee to fill out the questionnaire, who is going to answer more favourable about them, taking account the fact that the supervisor had the chance to see what the employee questionnaire contains. This might be a possible reason why we did not see that big of a deviance between the supervisor answers and the employees evaluating the supervisors, even though the difference was noticeable. This limitation could have been (at least in theory) be eliminated by handing the questionnaires out in closed envelopes, which would decrease the chance that the supervisor would pick a favourable employee to answer. Furthermore, the overall values for conflict involvement of the leader were surprisingly small. It is possible that these represent the real values, and conflict involvement is not that frequent for a leader. It might be a possibility that these values do not reflect how much conflict there actually is in the workplace, and for the future research it would be suggested to try to eliminate the effect by making the data collection procedure more random. Another limitation refers to the length of the questionnaire. Participants were told that answering the questionnaire would take

approximately 10 minutes. Based on the answer sets on the questionnaires that were collected from the participants, it is possible that some of them had experienced respondent fatigue, especially towards the end of the questionnaire where it is noticeable that participants might have been answering the questions quickly as possible. However, these questions were not related to this current paper. Thus, for the future research, respondent fatigue should be evaluated, and researchers should develop questionnaires that are more compact and possible consist of less variables to measure.

Theoretical and practical implications

Despite these limitations, these results suggest important theoretical and practical implications. The present study represents one of the first attempts to study the relationship between leaders' age - and conflict involvement in the workplace, as well as using the leader power construal to predict conflict involvement. Our study further suggests that second evaluator perspective might be an important perspective to be used when studying these kinds of relationships in the workplace, compared to research using only self-perspective, as the results clearly suggest a difference in the supervisor responses and the employee responses. We feel that the future research examining these relationships will benefit on our rather unique contribution and more research on the topic will shed light to these relationships, perhaps by using similar methods for their investigation, with slight adjustments, such as that regarding to the data collection procedure. Furthermore, within the aging population and people working later in life than ever, the age of managers and higher position workers is higher than ever. This is an important aspect for companies to consider, as research has been demonstrating many possible age-effects within the leaders in the work field (Walter & Scheibe (2013).

Conclusions

      Considering the past research and results from our study, we provided an important contribution to the research, and we hope that our investigation will encourage further research on this important area. Moreover, the present research will hopefully provide important insights into the work field, and companies would be up-to-date with the latest research related to the workplace setting.

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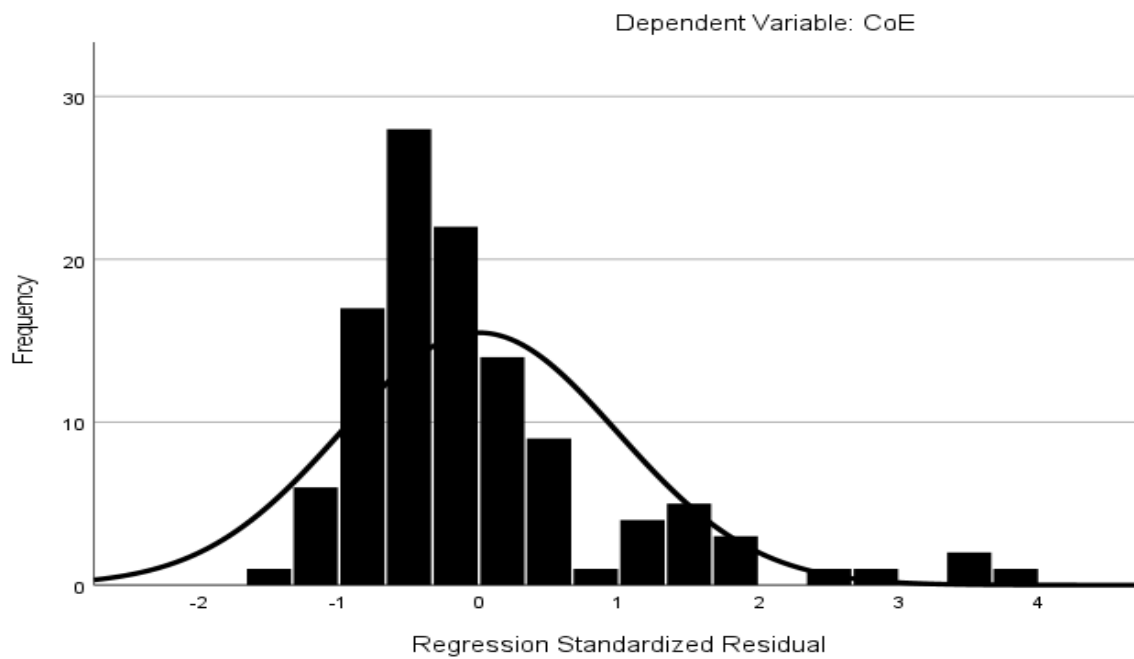
Appendix

Figure 1

Q-Q Plot using the Model from Employee Perspective for Normality Assumption

Dependent Variable: CoE
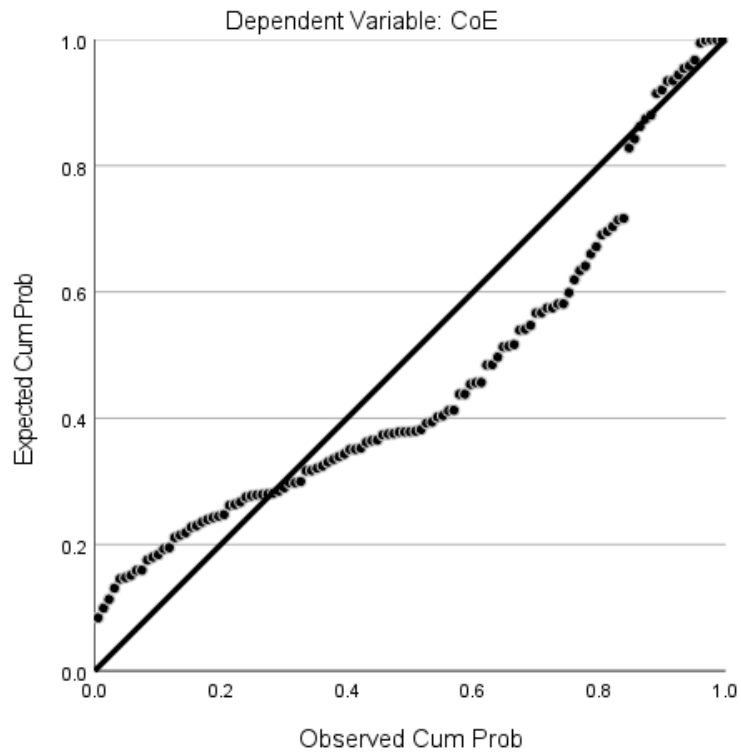
Figure 2

Histogram using the Model from Employee perspective for Normality Assumption

Dependent Variable: CoE

Figure 3

Predicted vs. Observed Plot of the Residuals Using the Model from Employee Perspective

Dependent Variable: CoE