TOXIC POSITIVITY IN THE WORKPLACE

ABSTRACT

Organizations often encourage the experience and expression of positive emotions among employees at work, while negative emotions are considered inappropriate. However, what happens when workers dismiss the negative experiences of others and encourage unrealistic positivity? This phenomenon, called toxic positivity in popular press, has not been theorized in management scholarship. I conduct five studies in which I develop a multi-dimensional scale to measure toxic positivity in the workplace, assess its empirical distinctiveness from existing constructs, and determine predictors and outcomes associated with enacting toxic positivity. This research paves the way for future research on toxic positivity and provides practical insight into how to effectively support and encourage healthy emotional expression in the workplace.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There exists a dominant viewpoint in management scholarship that positive emotions always result in positive outcomes at work (Ashforth & Humphrey, 2022; Hadley, 2014; Lindebaum & Jordan, 2014). Experiencing and expressing positive emotions is linked to greater productivity (Oswald et al., 2015), work motivation (Seo et al., 2010), proactive goal regulation (Bindl et al., 2012) and creativity (Baas et al., 2008). People who express more positive emotions may also receive better evaluations from their supervisors (Staw et al., 1994). As such, positive emotions tend to be encouraged or expected in the workplace (Manokara et al., 2023). For example, in some organizations, workers may be expected to be good-humoured and jovial rather than dwell on negative emotions (O'Neill & Rothbard, 2017). However, too much of a good thing can also be bad (Pierce & Aguinis, 2011). Indeed, excessive levels of positive affect can be maladaptive (see Gruber et al., 2011 for a review). In the workplace setting, overly high levels of positive affect might lead to poorer memory (Forgas et al., 2009), irrational decision-making (De Vries et al., 2012), and reduced effort on tasks over time (To et al., 2012; see also Forgas, 2014 for a review). Thus, while generally acknowledged as leading to positive outcomes, the experience and expression of positive emotions at excessive levels can also be harmful to individuals. However, little is known about how responding to others' authentic emotional experiences with excessive positivity influences important work-related outcomes for oneself and others.

Imagine being told "*when one door closes, another one opens*" by your coworker after being fired from your job, or "*everything happens for a reason*" when you tell your coworker about the death of a loved one. These platitudes do little to assuage negative feelings; in fact, they might exacerbate them. This behaviour, which has colloquially been called "toxic

positivity," both dismisses individuals' true feelings and compels them to only see the positive in their situation. While the notion of toxic positivity has surfaced in some practical settings, including self-help books (e.g., Goodman, 2022; Hill, 2021; Walker, 2022) and therapeutic practice (e.g., Princing, 2021; Quintero & Long, 2019; Wright, 2023)**,** there is little academic research assessing this phenomenon. I seek to address this gap between research and practice, by conceptually and empirically mapping out toxic positivity in management scholarship. I define *toxic positivity in the workplace* as an interpersonal behavioural response which fails to acknowledge negative emotional experiences of others, by dismissing or invalidating the experience (dismissing negativity), encouraging a positive outlook not reflective of the actual experience (encouraging positivity) or both. In this paper, I also distinguish toxic positivity from existing constructs (e.g., emotional labour, interpersonal emotion regulation). In what follows, I present the results of five studies whereby I develop and test a scale to measure toxic positivity in the workplace and assess its nomological network.

This work makes several important contributions. First, I operationalize a construct that has been used by practitioners and readily discussed in popular press, and I establish this construct in management scholarship. My research suggests that the motivations behind and consequences of toxic positivity are complex. Toxic positivity is directed at others and has the potential to harm not only targets, but also work units, and organizations. Thus, it is important to investigate why individuals enact toxic positivity and to begin to understand the severity of its impact in organizations. Second, I contribute to the existing literature on emotions by conceptualizing a construct that is empirically distinct from existing constructs, yet theoretically grounded in the emotion literature. More specifically, I respond to calls for future research that investigates how interpersonal emotion regulation (IER) is connected to and overlaps with other

related processes (Niven, 2017), by bringing toxic positivity into this dialogue. This research also responds to calls by Bradley et al. (2023) to examine discrete emotion-response strategies to understand the impact of specific strategies on various work-related outcomes and add greater nuance to the emotion-sharing literature. Third, I challenge the research on positive psychology, adding to the growing literature which suggests that high levels of seemingly positive work-related phenomena can lead to negative outcomes at extreme levels (e.g., Newman et al., 2017; Pierce & Aguinis, 2011; Tummers & Bakker, 2021). My research presents a more balanced view of emotions in the workplace, encouraging scholars to question our understanding of positive emotions and the impact of excessive positivity in interpersonal settings. This research also has practical implications for organizations, highlighting the impact of interpersonal responses to emotion sharing at work, and how organizational norms and expectations may encourage (or discourage) healthy levels of emotional expression at work (particularly for negative emotions). Finally, this research is also relevant for workers themselves, suggesting that while toxic positivity may be an easy or automatic response to others in distress, it can be quite harmful. Individuals need to be mindful of how they respond to others who disclose difficult experiences at work and consider more supportive and understanding ways of responding.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

What is toxic positivity? When does positivity become toxic?

A search of the term "toxic positivity" in an online popular press database, Nexis, generated 1873 results, 58% of which were newspaper articles. A breakdown of the types of publications can be found in Table 1. A chart showing the date distribution of publications with the term "toxic positivity" can be found in Figure 1. The earliest mention of toxic positivity in popular press was in 2015, in a news article in the Arts & Books Review section of *The Independent* (Wright, 2015). In the article, an artist is quoted describing her work: "There is a high-street, Disneyland quality, a relentless toxic positivity to the work (Wright, 2015, p.21)." Toxic positivity did not surface again in popular press until 2019, with a collection of news articles from around the world (e.g., India: *The Times of India*; the United Kingdom: *Daily Mail*; and the United States: *The New York Times*) which spoke about the ways in which toxic positivity manifests in everyday life and why it can be harmful for one's "career, relationships, and health" (Britten, 2019). For example, one news article spoke about the presence of toxic positivity norms in the U.S. military, which often manifest in response to difficult conversations, but come across as ingenuine (Charles, 2019). The topic has continued to gain traction in popular press, with a growing number of publications mentioning toxic positivity each year. There was a particularly substantial increase in the number of publications mentioning toxic positivity from 2019 to 2020, which coincides with the start of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. For example, a publication in India written in October 2020 was entitled "Yes, 'toxic positivity' is a real thing, and it's a problem during the pandemic" (Times Now, 2020). Another publication written in 2020 in *The Huffington Post* discussed how toxic positivity was particularly relevant during the pandemic in response to the "collective trauma" faced by everyone in the world

(Wong, 2020). There are three key components to toxic positivity according to popular press: 1) toxic positivity involves excessive positivity or forcing positivity on others (Quintero & Long, 2019; Walker, 2022); 2) toxic positivity involves denying authentic emotions, that are often negative (Moniuszko, 2022); and 3) toxic positivity is a response to others who are distressed (Davis, 2023), feeling "bad" (Bernstein, 2021) or experiencing "moments of struggle" (Goodman, 2022, p.12). Practitioners and popular press articles have also argued that the workplace is a key area in which toxic positivity manifests (e.g., Goodman, 2022; Syed, 2023), yet toxic positivity is not present in management scholarship.

There exists a limited number of academic articles addressing the topic of toxic positivity in select disciplines including healthcare (Collins, 2022; Cross, 2022; Shipp & Hall, 2022), linguistics (Lecomte Van-Poucke, 2022) and literature (Kimmet, 2022). A majority of these articles discuss what constitutes toxic positivity in various contexts, e.g., nursing (Shipp & Hall, 2022), terminal illness (Cross, 2022) and on social media (Lecomte Van-Poucke, 2022; Lew & Flanagin, 2023; Upadhyay et al., 2022). Further, authors discuss why individuals might enact toxic positivity (e.g., discomfort: Collins, 2022; they are unsure how to be empathetic: Cross, 2022). This literature summarizes some of the existing arguments surrounding toxic positivity from popular press, and provides an excellent starting point for understanding what toxic positivity entails. The current research builds on this discussion by operationalizing the construct of toxic positivity in the workplace and empirically assessing these arguments. As an important starting point, I propose the following scholarly definition of toxic positivity in the workplace: toxic positivity is an interpersonal behavioural response which fails to acknowledge negative emotional experiences of others, by dismissing or invalidating the experience (dismissing

negativity), encouraging a positive outlook not reflective of the actual experience (encouraging positivity), or both.

While organizations might have cultures of "*good vibes only*" (Hill, 2021) or "*don't dwell on the negative"* (Sharma, 2023), toxic positivity is an individual behaviour that might or might not occur in such an organizational culture. Toxic positivity is an individual behavioural response that occurs in social interactions and is directed at other individuals. Consider for example, an employee crying at work in front of their colleagues after receiving a negative performance evaluation. Such a situation may make some colleagues feel uncomfortable or "awkward" (Elsbach & Bechky, 2018). When a coworker tells this employee that they are overthinking the situation, or urges them to be positive, the coworker is *enacting* toxic positivity, or in other words is responding to the sharing of a difficult experience by encouraging positivity or dismissing the experience altogether. The coworker might even engage in both strategies in response to the employee's crying, e.g., *"Chin up! Brush it off* (Cooks-Campbell, 2022)".

Positivity is potentially beneficial. It allows individuals to be resilient and respond to job stress in a healthy way (see Diener et al., 2020 for a review). Positive emotions can broaden thoughts and actions, allowing individuals to build resources and skills to cope with adversity, which has positive implications for work-related outcomes such as engagement and performance (Diener et al., 2020; Fredrickson, 2000). Emotions are also contagious (Barsade, 2002; Hatfield et al., 1993); when someone exhibits positive affect at work, others may respond with similar levels of positivity (see Herrando & Constantinides, 2021 for a review).

However, extreme levels of any psychological state can become unhealthy or toxic. For example, when experiencing excessive levels of positive affect, individuals may be more likely to engage in risky behaviours like drug use and may be less likely to heed medical advice

(Gruber et al., 2011; Pressman & Cohen, 2005). This behaviour occurs because the experience of positive affect reduces inhibitions towards risk-taking and focuses attention on maintaining positive affect rather than spotting potential environmental threats (Baumeister et al., 2001; Forgas, 2014; Gruber et al., 2011; Pressman & Cohen, 2005). Further, when individuals attempt to "fake" positivity despite feeling negative emotions (i.e., surface acting), this can lead to negative outcomes including burnout and poor health and well-being (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Schmidt & Diestel, 2014). As such, positivity is not always beneficial to individuals.

So, when does positivity become toxic in the interpersonal context? First, when toxic positivity discounts individuals' true feelings, it signals a lack of acceptance of a negative experience that individuals, in a position of vulnerability, have chosen to share with another person. Individuals often seek socio-affective support when they share negative experiences (Pauw et al., 2019). That is, individuals seek empathy, social support, and validation from listeners (Rimé et al. 2020). Toxic positivity does not provide this support. Instead, it suggests that others do not care, and that individuals' negative but authentic feelings are not warranted. Toxic positivity essentially encourages individuals to suppress negative feelings around the enactor, eliciting a sense of inauthenticity in the emotion-sharer (English & John, 2013). As a result, individuals may then be more likely to internalize, and judge their own emotions as unwarranted, leading to the experience of more intense and maladaptive emotions such as shame (Marie, 2023).

Second, positivity becomes toxic when it is compelled in others. Emotions fluctuate, and people are not happy all the time; to expect this from others is unrealistic and excessive. These unrealistic expectations from others can lead to anger or frustration, as well as interpersonal conflict and feelings of isolation (Reynolds, 2022). Further, individuals may feel deficient or

lacking in some way because they are unable to feel positive about their situation (Cross, 2022; Marie, 2023). This may set a precedent for future behaviour at work, indicating that negative emotions are not accepted, creating a greater sense of isolation for individuals. Further, this may threaten an individual's sense of psychological safety at work, i.e., "the belief that the workplace is safe for interpersonal risk taking" (Frazier et al., 2017, p.114), thereby impacting the extent to which an individual takes risks such as speaking up with divergent opinions or making mistakes (Jiang et al., 2019).

Finally, while toxic positivity may not always be intentionally harmful, failing to acknowledge someone's emotional experience may make it harder for that individual to overcome their negative feelings. Toxic positivity also signals that others do not accept emotion-sharers negative experiences, instead trying to encourage positivity or dismiss the experience altogether. This lack of acceptance threatens individuals' sense of belonging and can have a negative impact on their physical and psychological well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Richman & Leary, 2009). Individuals may then shut down, fearing further rejection when sharing vulnerable experiences with others at work in future.

Another important thing to note about toxic positivity is that it is not necessarily enacted with ill intentions. Sometimes, others' distress creates discomfort, anxiety and even fear in listeners, which can have a significant impact on how they respond to others (Leahy, 2005; Nicola et al., 2021; Wortman & Dunkel-Schetter, 1979). For example, listeners may vacillate between experiencing aversion to another person's cancer diagnosis and feeling that they must appear cheerful and optimistic in the other person's presence (Wortman and Dunkel-Schetter, 1979). In the workplace setting, supervisors may experience discomfort in the face of employee exhaustion and burnout, responding in ways to alleviate this discomfort, such as by saying "*it*

could be worse" or "*just feel grateful*", while inadvertently invalidating employees' experiences (Collins, 2022). As such, toxic positivity serves as a coping mechanism, allowing individuals to distance themselves from the discomfort or distress evoked by others' negative emotions or experiences.

A Comparison with Other Constructs

Having provided an overview of what toxic positivity consists of it is also important to outline the boundary conditions of the construct. Below I discuss how toxic positivity compares to other existing constructs, which are also interpersonally oriented, emotion-related or both. While there may be some overlap, I illustrate how toxic positivity is a unique interpersonal behaviour distinct from existing behaviours, such as interpersonal emotion regulation, emotional labour, and counterproductive work behaviour. A visual overview of the relationships between toxic positivity and these constructs can be found in Figure 2. A more detailed summary of the similarities and differences between these constructs is outlined in Appendix A.

Interpersonal Emotion Regulation

Toxic positivity is enacted by encouraging positivity and/or dismissing negativity in others. As such, I see a theoretical connection between enacting toxic positivity and the process of regulating others' emotions. Interpersonal emotion regulation (IER) occurs when "individuals turn to others to be helped or to help others in managing emotions" (Messina et al., 2021, p.1). I make three fundamental comparisons between toxic positivity and IER. First, IER is a deliberate and intentional process which is targeted at others (Niven, 2017; Williams, 2007). Individuals may engage in different strategies to regulate others' emotions: antecedent-focused strategies which attempt to prevent an emotional response from occurring (e.g., using humour to distract from potential emotion-inducing stimuli), and response-focused strategies to modulate emotional

responses once they occur (e.g., telling someone to "*relax*" when they are visibility upset: Little et al., 2012; Niven, 2017; Williams, 2007). Behaviours aimed at suppressing emotional responses in others may overlap with some behaviours characteristic of toxic positivity (e.g., denying negativity in others). However, urging positivity in others (which is a key characteristic of toxic positivity) is not a form of emotional suppression. Further, toxic positivity involves only response-focused strategies because it is enacted in response to another person's expressed emotions.

Second, individuals are driven by hedonic (i.e., maximizing pleasure and avoiding pain) and instrumental motives (i.e., attaining personal benefits) to engage in IER (Netzer et al., 2015; Niven, 2016; Tamir, 2009). When hedonistically motivated, individuals attempt to increase positive affect and/or decrease negative affect (Bernecker & Becker, 2021). When it comes to instrumental motives, individuals attempt to achieve desired personal outcomes (Higgins, 2011), such as performing well or fulfilling tasks (Kalokerinos et al., 2017; Tamir & Milgram, 2017; von Gilsa et al., 2013). People may even be willing to undermine hedonic goals of others if the end result is personally beneficial to them (Niven, 2016). I propose that toxic positivity is also motivated by similar goals; enacted for hedonic or instrumental reasons relative to the self. I discuss this proposition further in the next section.

Lastly, a key characteristic of IER is the regulation of others' affect (Niven, 2017). Regulation can be targeted at either the experience or expression of emotion or both (Gross, 2015). In addition, according to a recent review by Bradley et al. (2023), IER is an emotion-response strategy that involves high levels of involvement or engagement with others' emotions. In contrast, while IER might occur in the process of enacting toxic positivity (targets may cease expressing the negative emotion: Shipp & Hall, 2024), toxic positivity would be categorized as a

low involvement emotion-response strategy, whereby individuals do not engage with others' negative emotions (Bradley et al., 2023). Because toxic positivity does not address the target's experience of an emotion, it may prompt targets to seek emotional support elsewhere. As such, distancing oneself from others' distress is not considered a form of IER (Zaki and Williams, 2013).

Emotional Labour

Emotional labour has been defined as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display…emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value" (Hochschild, 1983, p.7). Emotional labour has three key components: 1) employees manage their emotions based on the display rules (or job-based emotion requirements) which exist at their organization; 2) employees make efforts to regulate their emotions (e.g., surface and deep acting); and 3) employees engage in an emotional performance by expressing emotions which are aligned with organizational display rules (Grandey, 2000; Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). Display rules are explicit job requirements, communicated to workers via work policies, training practices and performance evaluations (Grandey & Sayre, 2019).

The focus of emotion regulation can be on displaying positive emotions, displaying negative emotions, or displaying both. For example, many customer-service jobs require positive emotional displays (e.g., hospitality workers, flight attendants: Chu et al., 2012; Hochschild, 1983); while some occupations may require negative emotional displays (e.g., police officers, bill collectors: Glomb & Tews, 2004; Sutton, 1991), or a combination of positive and negative emotional displays (e.g., managers: Lennard et al., 2019). In contrast, toxic positivity is only concerned with the display of positive emotions, and not negative ones. In fact, toxic positivity encourages the display of positive emotions and dismisses others when they display negative

emotions. Furthermore, when one engages in emotional labour, this behaviour is directed at the self, i.e., managing one's own emotions, and expressing emotions relative to organizational display rules. However, toxic positivity is behaviour directed at others – an individual encourages others to be positive or dismisses others' negative emotional experiences. Toxic positivity is also a reactive behaviour in response to others' emotions, as discussed above. Emotional labour tends to be more proactive (see Ashkanasay, 2021 for a review). For example, leaders may engage in surface acting in an attempt to influence the emotions of their followers, i.e., "leading with emotional labour" (see Humphrey et al., 2008).

One way in which there may be a connection between toxic positivity and emotional labour is when we consider the outcomes of experiencing toxic positivity at work. Targets of toxic positivity may feel pressure to appear happy (Kelly, 2023) and "mask" their true emotions (Weeks-Bouma, 2024), suggesting that individuals may engage in surface acting in response to the experience of toxic positivity. As such, toxic positivity may communicate informal display rules to workers through interactions with others. However, targets may not always engage in surface acting following the experience of toxic positivity at work. Additional research is needed to understand the relationship between toxic positivity and emotional labour further.

Counterproductive Work Behaviours (CWB)

Because toxic positivity is purported to be harmful to others (e.g., Cross, 2022; Kelly, 2023; Shipp & Hall, 2024),I also emphasize how toxic positivity relates to other harmful workplace behaviours, namely counterproductive work behaviours (CWB). CWB are voluntary behaviours with the potential to harm others, the organization itself, or both (Fox et al., 2001). Counterproductive work behaviour is also a dimension of job performance (Sackett, 2002). When employees engage in CWB, they fail to meet minimum performance requirements of their

work (Demerouti et al., 2015), such as showing up on time or following instructions (Spector & Fox, 2002).

CWB encompass many different types of harmful behaviours, ranging from mild to severe (Namie, 2003). More extreme forms of CWB include behaviours such as workplace bullying, stealing, and physical aggression (Hewett et al., 2018; Zhou et al., 2014). While toxic positivity may have harmful consequences for targets, toxic positivity is not simply a severe form of CWB. As I discuss below, unlike more severe forms of CWB which are overt acts of harm (Spector & Fox. 2002), toxic positivity is not necessarily enacted with the intent to harm others. Toxic positivity is a failure to help, not a blatant attempt to sabotage others or the organization.

Mild forms of CWB have often been called workplace incivilities, i.e., "low-intensity deviant workplace behaviour with an ambiguous intent to harm" (Schilpzand et al., 2016, p.S57). Workplace incivilities are interpersonally oriented behaviours, such as invading others' privacy, ignoring coworkers, and gossiping (see Martin & Hine, 2005). Toxic positivity may be viewed as similar to workplace incivility in that it is an interpersonal behaviour that may not always involve an intent to harm. Further, incivility and toxic positivity also overlap when it comes to the enactors of such behaviours. Both types of behaviours can be enacted by anyone at any level in an organization (Cortina et al., 2001). However, incivility can escalate into more serious forms of mistreatment, such as aggression (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). In contrast, toxic positivity is often well-intentioned (Goodman, 2022; Weeks-Bouma, 2024); thus I do not view it as a gateway behaviour towards seemingly more harmful behaviours.

One of the most important differences between toxic positivity and any form of CWB is that CWB oppose workplace norms for accepted behaviour (Koopman et al., 2021), such as

treating others with respect (Lim et al., 2008). Thus, CWB are considered unethical and morally wrong across organizations. In contrast, while toxic positivity may at times go against workplace behavioural norms such as emotional display rules, and is by no means an appropriate response to others' negative experiences, it is not unethical behaviour.

Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

Antecedents of Toxic Positivity

Conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) provides a useful framework for understanding the motives behind toxic positivity. According to COR theory, individuals attempt to obtain, maintain, and protect important resources, including objects (e.g., car), personal characteristics (e.g., self-efficacy), conditions (e.g., employment) and energies (e.g., emotional energy: ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Loss (or threat of loss) of these resources results in stress (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Ito & Brotheridge, 2003). When faced with stress, individuals will try to avoid further resource loss (Hobfoll, 1989), and may act in defensive or irrational ways to do so (Hobfoll et al., 2018). For example, engaging in CWB allows individuals to retain or replenish resources (Spanouli & Hofmans, 2021). As a further illustration, Cropanzano and Wright (2001) suggest that individuals may be less likely to take risks at work when their resources are in short supply, such as by being more "defensive and cautious around their coworkers" (p.183). Similarly, I argue that, under conditions of resource loss and stress, individuals will be more likely to enact toxic positivity. Toxic positivity serves as a minimal involvement emotion-response strategy which allows individuals to distance themselves emotionally and cognitively from others' distress and provides them protection from further resource loss. While there are other minimal involvement emotion-response strategies an individual could choose, such as avoiding or ignoring the individual (see Bradley et al., 2023),

these responses fall into the realm of incivility and anti-social behaviour (Koopman et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2008; Martin & Hine, 2005). As previously mentioned, toxic positivity is often well-intentioned; it is meant to be helpful (Goodman, 2022; Weeks-Bouma, 2024). Thus, when individauls enact toxic positivity, they may perceive it as an effective way to minimally engage with others' emotions while at the same time providing some semblance of (what the enactor views as) support.

Indeed, toxic positivity may be enacted to end difficult conversations and withdraw from the potential anxiety and discomfort that others' distress may cause (Eisenberg & Eggum, 2009; Goodman, 2022). Alternative emotion-response strategies that require greater involvement with others' emotional experiences (e.g., empathy, IER), may further drain affective and cognitive resources (Bradley et al., 2023; Niven, 2017; Zaki, 2014). Thus, I focus specifically on these energy resources, i.e., emotional and cognitive energies, which are often state-based and fleeting (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), as antecedents of toxic positivity. I also consider how personal characteristics, which tend to be enduring resources (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), moderate the relationship between energy resources and toxic positivity.

My arguments also draw on the literature on self-regulation. Self-regulation is defined as "the exercise of control over oneself, especially with regard to bringing the self into line with preferred (thus, regular) standards" (Vohs & Baumeister, 2004, p.2). Self-regulation serves to guide individual behaviour towards goal achievement (Inzlicht et al., 2021). For example, gaining social acceptance is a basic psychological need for individuals, and self-regulation is key to attaining such a goal (Gagné & Deci, 2005). However, both self-regulation and goal pursuit require resources, such as energy resources, which are finite (Brandstätter & Bernecker, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2008). When resources are depleted, this means that individuals may temporarily

shift focus from supporting the needs of others to supporting their own needs or goals (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Heatherton & Wagner, 2011). There exists a similar focus in hedonic and instrumental goals, whereby individuals are motivated to attain personally salient outcomes in the short-term (i.e., to feel good or to attain personal benefits, respectively: Bernecker & Becker, 2021; Higgins, 2011), which may at times be detrimental to others (e.g., Niven, 2016). As such, when energy resources are depleted, I expect individuals will be more inclined to act in their own self-interest. In response to emotion sharing by others, this may involve enacting toxic positivity to distance oneself from others' emotions, thereby facilitating the achievement of more personally relevant (i.e., hedonic and instrumental) goals.

It should be noted that toxic positivity is primarily impulsive and unconscious. This can be understood when we consider that while individuals may be consciously aware of their desired end states, how they go about pursuing such goals often operates outside of conscious awareness (Custers & Aarts, 2010). For example, an instrumental goal may be to avoid failure on a task, but individuals may not be consciously aware of which emotions may be useful to achieving this goal (Tamir et al., 2007; Tamir, 2009).

I discuss my hypotheses in detail below. My conceptual model, which I test in study 4, is displayed in Figure 3. This model assesses the relationships between toxic positivity and its predictors from the perspective of enactors of toxic positivity. In study 5, I assess the relationships between toxic positivity and its outcomes from the perspective of targets. An overall conceptual model summarizing the relationships across both studies can be found in Figure 4.

Negative and Positive Affect. According to Frijda (2004), motivation, emotion and action are inextricably linked – emotions are motivational states which induce particular action

tendencies. In the workplace, this may be in the form of voluntary work behaviours, such as organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB) and CWB (see Barsade & Gibson, 2007), which provide individuals with the discretion to achieve desired end states (Spector & Fox, 2002). Negative emotions are typically perceived as "harmful to the self and/or one's goal-attainment", which prompts individuals to find ways to alleviate these feelings (Eissa et al., 2020, p.581), at times in impulsive ways (Spector & Fox, 2002), such as by engaging in knowledge hiding, i.e., intentional attempts to withhold knowledge from others (Connelly et al., 2012) or CWB (see Penney et al., 2011).

According to the stressor-emotion model of CWB (Spector & Fox, 2005), engaging in harmful behaviours may sometimes be a coping strategy that individuals use to reduce stress and manage negative emotional states (e.g., Fida et al., 2014; Krischer et al., 2010; Shoss et al., 2016). Individuals may also experience relief when engaging in CWB (Bolton et al., 2012). Thus, negative affective states tend to promote CWB (Dalal, 2005). I propose a similar mechanism for toxic positivity, whereby negative affective states promote toxic positivity in response to negative emotion sharing by others at work to alleviate negative feelings or protect from further negativity. This is apparent when we consider that emotions in the workplace are contagious (Hatfield et al., 1993). Emotional contagion of negative emotions such as anxiety and anger may elicit symptoms of burnout (Omdahl & O'Donnell, 1999; Petitta et al., 2017). Thus, an individual experiencing state negative affect may use toxic positivity to minimally engage with others' negative emotions, not only to facilitate goal achievement (and alleviate the experience of negative affect), but also to avoid exacerbation of their own negative emotions.

In contrast, positive affect signals to individuals that they are on track to achieve desired end states (Carver, 2003; Sonnentag & Starzyk, 2015). People are motivated to behave in ways

that maintain positive affect (i.e., the mood maintenance hypothesis: see Carlson et al., 1988). For example, engaging in OCB, or "performance that supports the social and psychological environment in which task performance takes place" (Organ, 1997, p. 95), serves as a positive feedback loop, allowing individuals to feel good about helping others (see Hui, 2022). Thus, when people experience positive affect, they are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviours to maintain this mood (Snippe et al., 2018). The experience of positive affect also contributes to the development of personal resources, allowing individuals to respond to stress in more adaptive ways (Fredrickson, 2000, 2001). Therefore, I expect that individuals experiencing state positive affect will be less likely to enact toxic positivity.

H_1: Positive affect will negatively predict toxic positivity.

H_2: Negative affect will positively predict toxic positivity.

Emotional Exhaustion and Cognitive Weariness. Burnout, a negative state which results from work stress, consists of three components: physical fatigue (characterized by tiredness and lack of energy), emotional exhaustion (which occurs when individuals have difficulty being empathetic towards others or investing effort in relationships), and cognitive weariness (characterized by slower thought processes: Shirom, 1989; Shirom et al., 2005). The experience of burnout has a negative impact on work-related attitudes and behaviours such as job satisfaction, commitment, and performance (see Edú-Valsania et al., 2022 for a review). Burnout is also closely tied with the loss of physical, emotional, and cognitive resources according to COR theory (Freedy & Hobfoll, 1994). COR theory proposes that resource loss is highly salient to individuals, resulting in behaviours to defend against further loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018). For example, in a state of burnout, individuals may be more likely to engage in counterproductive behaviours, such as work withdrawal and workplace incivility, to protect resources, or to

replenish lost resources (Bolton et al., 2011; Krischer et al., 2010; Raza et al., 2023). Further, burned out workers are less likely to behave empathetically, distancing themselves from others to cope with resource loss and stress (Maslach et al., 2001; Trauernicht et al., 2021; Wilkinson et al., 2017).

Empathy, which tends to be the expected response from emotion sharers (Rimé, 2007), is often conceptualized as having both cognitive and affective components (Cuff et al. 2016), requiring individuals to understand and to also experience others' emotions. When cognitive and affective resources are drained, I expect individuals to enact toxic positivity in place of providing empathy, to distance themselves cognitively and emotionally from others' emotion-sharing. Thus, I focus specifically on emotional exhaustion and cognitive weariness in the current research. I propose that toxic positivity is a response to others' emotion sharing episodes when an individual's emotional and/or cognitive resources are depleted, such is the case with emotional exhaustion and cognitive weariness. Individuals may enact toxic positivity instead of providing emotional support to cope with symptoms of burnout. As such, I propose:

H_3: Emotional exhaustion and cognitive weariness will positively predict toxic positivity.

Emotional Competence as a Moderator

Emotional competence has been defined as "the ability to perceive, understand, recognize, express and practice/apply emotions in the workplace" (Ikävalko et al., 2020, p.1487) both at the intrapersonal and interpersonal level (Saarni, 1999). Emotional competence is often used synonymously with emotional intelligence; however, emotional competence is viewed as something that can be taught and learned (Brasseur et al., 2013). Several clusters of competencies make up emotional competence, including competencies related to understanding and managing one's own emotions, and those relevant to awareness and management of others'

emotions. (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017). Empathy, a competency relevant to the awareness of others' emotions, involves not only being aware of others' emotions, but also understanding the underlying cause of emotions (Goleman, 1998). Koopman et al. (2021) explain that when a highly empathic individual engages in CWB, this can trigger feelings of distress because they may be more cognizant of others' emotional states and the negative impact of their CWB on others.

I propose that individuals high in emotional competence will have a greater understanding of their influence on others' emotions in the workplace. Individuals high in emotional competence should be better able to pick up on emotional cues from others (Farh et al., 2012; Kunnannatt, 2004), and should be more aware of how and why their behaviour may affect others. In contrast, individuals low in emotional competence may be unaware whether a behaviour is appropriate or not in a given social situation (Goleman, 1998; Jureviciene et al., 2012). Further, emotional competence is an enduring personal resource that, according to COR theory, should allow individuals to cope more effectively with loss of other resources and the experience of stress (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Emotionally competent individuals are better equipped to deal with workplace stressors and may respond in more adaptive ways (Giardini & Frese, 2006). Indeed, research indicates that emotional competence mitigates the positive relationship between work-related stressors such as experienced workplace incivility and the enactment of harmful workplace behaviours including CWB and incivility (Bibi et al., 2013; Kim & Qu, 2019) Together, these findings suggest that emotionally competent individuals will be less likely to enact toxic positivity despite the loss of energy resources. As such, I propose:

H_4: Emotional competence will moderate the relationship between negative affect/emotional exhaustion/cognitive weariness (positive affect) and toxic positivity, such that at

high levels of emotional competence, the relationship between negative affect/emotional exhaustion/cognitive weariness (positive affect) and toxic positivity will be diminished (amplified).

Consequences of Toxic Positivity

Toxic positivity is enacted in self-interest (to attain hedonic or instrumental goals), which may have a negative impact on relationships with others and may result in negative outcomes for targets. I draw on the literature on emotion sharing to illustrate how toxic positivity may result in harmful consequences. Emotional experiences often elicit a process of social communication called the "social sharing of emotions" (Rimé, 2017). In fact, research suggests that approximately 80-95% of emotional experiences are shared with others, both positive and negative (Rimé et al., 1991). Sharing validates individuals' feelings and may provide a sense of relief and reassurance (see Rimé, 2007, 2009 for a review). However, it is not enough to just share a difficult experience (Nils & Rimé, 2012). How a listener responds to emotion sharing plays a key role in its effectiveness (Delroisse et al., 2022; Nils & Rimé, 2012; Wetzer et al., 2007). Individuals typically share emotional experiences shortly after they occur and at this time may be looking specifically for validation from others for their feelings (Rauers & Riediger, 2023). Toxic positivity fails to validate individuals' feelings, and instead may make individuals feel worse after the sharing episode. This may have negative repercussions not only for the emotion-sharer, but also for their relationship with the person with whom they have shared their negative experience. I discuss the interpersonal and intrapersonal outcomes of toxic positivity below. My conceptual model for the consequences of toxic positivity, which I assess in study 5, is displayed in Figure 5. This model is assessed from the perspective of targets of toxic positivity, in contrast to the previous model which is evlauted from the enactor's perspective.

Interpersonal Outcomes. Perceived responsiveness, the extent to which individuals feel that others understand and validate their feelings, influences several interpersonal outcomes, including relationship quality, relationship satisfaction, and social integration (Gordon & Chen, 2016; Maisel & Gable, 2009; Nils & Rimé, 2012). When perceived responsiveness is high, individuals feel "seen and heard" by others (Bradley et al., 2023, p.10). In contrast, when perceived responsiveness is low, this can result in feelings of distrust, perceptions of mistreatment by others, and may signal a lack of caring (Baumeister & Gitter, 2008; Kramer, 1999; Skarlicki et al., 2008; Yu et al., 2021). Toxic positivity, while not necessarily ill-intentioned, does not provide the comfort or validation that emotion sharers desire when sharing their negative emotions and may make individuals feel rejected by others at work. Being rejected by others can be very distressing for individuals (Leary, 2015) and leads to poor quality relationships (Little et al., 2016). According to Richman and Leary (2009), behaviours towards others such as disinterest, avoidance and rejection are all "threats to the goal of being valued and accepted" (p.366). This rejection leads to hurt feelings and decreased relationship quality (Connelly & Zweig, 2015; Richman & Leary, 2009). I argue that toxic positivity will lead to similar outcomes, because it signals a lack of support and suggests that others do not care about the target's feelings. Toxic positivity is a behaviour motivated by self-interest. We see similar interpersonal outcomes for other similarly self-interested behaviors such as knowledge hiding (see He et al., 2021) and workplace incivility (see Robinson et al., 2014).

H_5: Toxic positivity will positively predict hurt relationships.

When individuals feel invalidated by another person, they may disengage from them or avoid the other person to reduce their sense of experienced threat (Hershcovis et al., 2018; Hillman et al., 2023; Michalak et al., 2019; Sommer, 2001). Toxic positivity may also signal to

targets that their negative emotions are not socially desirable to the enactor. Thus, targets may respond to the experience of toxic positivity by behaving in ways that they feel are more socially desirable (Baumeister & Gitter, 2008), such as only expressing positive emotions in the other person's presence, and/or not sharing negative emotions with them in future. Thus, I propose that, after the experience of toxic positivity, targets will be less likely to share negative emotions with the enactor in future, either through presentation of only positive emotions in the enactor's presence, or through avoiding the enactor altogether.

H_6: Toxic positivity will negatively predict future emotion sharing intentions with the enactor.

Intrapersonal Outcomes. I draw on the ironic effect of emotional intensification (see Dalgleish et al., 2009; Lennard et al., 2019; Wegner et al. 1993) to illustrate how toxic positivity may lead to an increase in negative affect and a decrease in positive affect in targets of such behaviour. The ironic effect of emotional intensification occurs when efforts made to increase the experience or display of an emotion intensifies the experience of the underlying opposing emotion (Lennard et al., 2019). This is because the act of suppressing emotions is cognitively draining (Richards & Gross, 2000), and when cognitive load is overextended, intensification of underlying emotions is more likely to occur (Wegner et al., 1993). For example, Scott and Barnes (2011) discovered that underlying affect worsened on the days when bus drivers made mental efforts to display positive emotions and suppress negative emotions. I expect such an intensification for targets when they encounter toxic positivity. Targets are explicitly encouraged by enactors to be positive and to forget about their underlying negative emotions; a feat which may be cognitively costly for targets.

Toxic positivity also invalidates individuals' experiences, and threatens their need for inclusion at work, both of which may result in negative affective states (Baumeister & Gitter, 2008; Leary, 2015; Leary et al., 1998; Leary et al., 2006; Shenk & Fruzzetti, 2011). Indeed, according to Richman and Leary (2009), an individual's immediate response to a rejection experience is negative affect, usually in the form of hurt feelings. Other emotional reactions to rejection include sadness and anger (Buckley et al., 2004). Sadness may result from loss of valuable connections to others, when individuals feel that "others do not sufficiently value them as relational partners" (Leary et al, 2001, p. 150). Anger may occur when individuals feel they have been unjustly hurt by another person (Leary, 2015). I predict that toxic positivity will lead to several negative emotions, including hurt feelings, sadness, and anger because it rejects individuals' desire to feel accepted and to have their experiences acknowledged in interpersonal relationships (see Richman & Leary, 2009).

H_7: Toxic positivity will negatively predict positive affect.

H_8: Toxic positivity will positively predict negative affect.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD & RESULTS

Study 1

The main goal of this study was to understand how toxic positivity manifests itself in the workplace setting so that I could develop a set of clear behaviours that would translate into scale items. Because toxic positivity is a nascent construct, I initially gathered qualitative data in the form of critical incidents to understand the breadth of workplace toxic positivity, contextual factors which influence the enactment of toxic positivity, and the outcomes of such behaviours. Most importantly, the generation of critical incidents aided my development of scale items by

elucidating behaviours characteristic of toxic positivity (Bott & Tourish, 2016). The critical incident technique (CIT: Flanagan, 1954), while originally designed as a participant observation approach to discern the key activities of a profession for job analysis (Viergever, 2019), is often used to understand participants' thoughts, feelings, and behaviours retrospectively (Butterfield et al., 2005). For example, the CIT has been used to assess behaviours such as knowledge hiding (Connelly et al., 2012), and workplace incivility (Hershcovis et al., 2018). This technique prompts participants to isolate an incident in their mind, allowing the researcher to categorize behaviours that occurred during the incident and discern the purpose and consequences of that particular incident (Viergever, 2019; Flanagan, 1954). The critical incident technique has been found to be a valid and reliable data collection method (see Michalak et al., 2019; Motowidlo et al., 1992).

Design and Sample

I collected anonymous critical incident data from a sample of working adults (N = 161), employed with an organization (and not self-employed). Fifty-eight responses were removed from the dataset because the behaviours described were not indicative of toxic positivity (described in more detail below). Participants reported on only one incident in which they either enacted toxic positivity at work, were a target of the behaviour, or observed the behaviour at work. If participants could not recall an experience in any of these conditions, they were asked to report on a hypothetical incident. Each of these conditions (enactor, target, observer, hypothetical) allowed me to gather data from several points of reference.

Procedure

A recruitment advertisement with a link to the survey was shared with alumni of two large Canadian universities and posted on LinkedIn. Interested parties clicked on the link, which took them to an online survey platform, SoSci Survey, where they reviewed the letter of information and consented to the study (see Appendix B). On the first page of the survey, participants were provided the following prompt: *Please think about a time when another individual at work (e.g., colleague, supervisor) shared a negative experience/emotion with you and you responded by telling them to be "positive", "look on the bright side", not to dwell on the30ataset30gn, or 30ataset30gg along those lines.* Participants were then asked if they could recall such an incident. If yes, participants were asked a series of follow-up questions to get a clearer picture of what led up to the situation, and the outcomes of their behaviour.

If participants could not recall a time when they responded to another person at work in such a way, they were provided a similar prompt question as above, but from the perspective of a target of the behaviour. If participants could not recall a particular incident, they were asked if they had observed this behaviour, otherwise they answered follow-up questions. If participants could not recall incidents for any of the above conditions, they were asked to imagine a hypothetical situation in which another individual engaged in this behaviour towards them. Follow-up questions prompted participants on how they *would* feel in response to such behaviour (see Appendix C for a copy of the survey).

Results

I received a total of 161 responses (enactor = 94; target = 37; observer = 4; hypothetical = 26). Results suggest that toxic positivity appears to occur in many different work contexts (e.g., healthcare, military, human resources) and at many levels of an organization (e.g., among

colleagues, between a supervisor and employee, and at the senior management level). Toxic positivity also has the potential to cause serious harm to individuals (e.g., minimizing and invalidating experiences), interpersonal relationships (e.g., distrust) and organizations (e.g., disengagement from work). In some instances, individuals used a combination of approaches to respond to other's experiences. At times, this may have started as a supportive or validating response but ended with enacting toxic positivity. For example, one observer indicated that a coworker shared with another coworker that they were caught in the middle of a difficult family situation. They observed the other coworker responding in the following way: "*They said how that seemed like a tough situation to be in, but also said not to worry too much about it as everything will work out over time*." . This implies that toxic positivity may be more subtle at times and that ineffective responses to emotion sharing at work fall along a continuum.

Some participants reported other behaviours which fell out of the scope of toxic positivity. For example, some participants in the enactor condition indicated that they expressed empathy or sympathy in response to others' emotion sharing. Other participants reported additional behaviours that were not empathy, but also did not fall under the umbrella of toxic positivity. For example, in the enactor condition, one participant reported responding to another individual's family troubles by telling a joke. This is indicative of a poor response to another's distress but also falls outside the scope of toxic positivity. These responses were removed from the31atasett (n = 58: see Table 2 for a breakdown of these responses). The remainder of the responses were analyzed (N = 103) and scale items were developed per below. Hypothetical responses Provided support for the responses attained in other conditions.

Item Generation

I recorded participants' responses, taking note of the reference-point (i.e., target, enactor, observer, or hypothetical). Following guidelines laid out by Bott and Tourish (2016), I engaged in inductive coding by reading through each incident multiple times, and remained open to alternative explanations while being mindful of my own preconceived expectations. Following this, I summarized the key behaviour(s) that each participant reported. For example, when their colleagues reported being exhausted and understaffed at work, one individual responded by saying: "*at least we have our job and that we have shifts considering that others are not getting shifts."* This was summarized as "*telling others it could be worse*". Some participants also reported more than one type of behaviour. For example, one target discussed how their feelings were dismissed, they were told to move on from the situation, and to focus on other things. These were included as separate behaviours because other participants indicated one of the above but not all three at times. I generated a list of 24 preliminary items (see Appendix D) which fell into four clear behavioural categories: dismissing the experience (e.g., *I told them to move on from the experience*), minimizing the experience (e.g., *I told them that "it could be worse"*), present-tense positivity (e.g., *I shared the silver lining in their situation*), and future-tense positivity (e.g., *I told them that things would work out*).

Study 2

The goals of this study were to assess content validity and factor structure of the scale developed in study 1, to ensure that the developed items adequately captured all aspects of the construct of toxic positivity (Boateng et al., 2018).

Design and Sample

Participants were recruited via Prolific, a UK-based online panel which has been found to be comparable to conventionally sourced data in representativeness of the working population and in psychometric rigor (Porter et al., 2019). Further, Prolific has been found to produce higher quality data than other online platforms such as Amazon Mechanical Turk (Peer et al., 2017). Eligibility was pre-determined through the Prolific platform based on my selection criteria: participants must be of working age and currently employed at an organization (and not self-employed). A total of 201 participants filled out the survey: 101 participants (50.2%) identified as male, 98 (48.8%) identified as female, one participant identified as non-binary and another as gender fluid (1%). The average age of participants was 35.65 years (*SD* = 10.58).

Procedure

Eligible participants clicked on the link via SoSci survey where they reviewed and downloaded the consent form (see Appendix E). Participants were asked to think about the last time that someone at work shared a negative emotion or experience with them. Participants were then prompted to provide an open text response on the situation and specifically how they responded to this individual. Following this, participants filled out the 24-item toxic positivity scale developed in study 1. Participants were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”) the extent to which they agreed with each statement regarding their response to the other Individual in the situation they described (see Appendix F). An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with an oblique rotation was conducted to assess item loadings (Watkins, 2018).

Results

The initial EFA resulted in a four-factor solution explaining 63.68% of the variance. However, after closer examination of the scree plot and the factor loadings, it was clear that the solution was over-factored. Items did not load cleanly onto factors three and four. As such, items with high cross-loadings and low factor loadings (i.e, lower than 0.55) were eliminated (n = 14). A second EFA with the remaining items resulted in a two-factor solution explaining 63.05% of the variance, with five items loading cleanly onto each factor. The two factors corresponded to encouraging positivity and dismissing negativity, with no cross loadings above 0.17 (see Table 3). Because the item "*I did not acknowledge their negative experience*" had the lowest factor loading (0.57) with dismissing negativity, but fit theoretically with the existing items, I reworded this item to "*I ignored the negative parts of what they told me*". The resulting scale consisted of 10 items (see Appendix G).

Study 3

Study 3 involved confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and assessment of discriminant and convergent validity using SPSS Amos version 29. The 10-item reduced scale from study 2 was compared with existing scales for emotional labour, interpersonal emotion regulation, and counterproductive work behaviours. In line with my theorizing above, I expected to see small but significant positive associations between interpersonal emotion regulation, counterproductive work behaviours, and positive affectivity with the newly developed scale. Because emotional labour is targeted at the self and focuses on both positive and negative emotions, I expected this scale to be unrelated to toxic positivity.

Design and Sample

The survey was administered to participants via Prolific using the same eligibility criteria as studies 1 and 2 (see Appendix H for a copy of the consent form). Participants who completed study 2 were ineligible for study 3 (a setting on the Prolific platform allows you to exclude prior participants). A total of 202 participants filled out the survey: 99 participants (49%) identified as male, 100 (49.5%) identified as female, two participants identified as non-binary and another as agender (1.5%). The average age of participants was 32.98 (*SD* = 8.74).

Procedure

Eligible participants clicked on a link to the survey via Prolific. Participants were then asked to report on the last time someone at work shared a negative emotion or experience with them. They were prompted to provide a brief open-text response regarding the situation and their response to this other person at work. They then filled out the 10-item scale refined in study 2. Following this, participants were asked to fill out scales on emotional labour, interpersonal emotion regulation and counterproductive behaviours (see Appendix I).

Measures

Toxic Positivity. I used the 10-item measure developed in study 2, with five items assessing encouraging positivity, and five items assessing dismissing negativity. The same instructions were provided to participants as above. Reliabilities of the subscales were $\alpha = 0.87$ and $\alpha = 0.81$ for encouraging positivity and dismissing negativity, respectively.

Interpersonal Emotion Regulation. I used the Modulating the Emotional Response dimension of Little et al.'s (2012) Interpersonal Emotion Management scale. Participants were asked on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree") the degree to which they

engage in various strategies to manage others' emotions. A sample item from this dimension is: "*When others are experiencing undesirable emotions, I tell them not to express them."*

Emotional Labour. I used the Surface Acting (three items) and Deep Acting (three items) dimensions of the Emotional Labour scale developed by Brotheridge and Lee (2003). Participants were asked to indicate on an average day at work, how frequently they engaged in various behaviours on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 ("never") to 5 ("always"). Sample items include: "*Resist expressing my true feelings*" and "*Make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display to others*" for surface and deep acting, respectively.

Counterproductive Work Behaviours. To assess CWBs, I used the five items representing CWB directed at others from the short form version of the counterproductive work behaviour checklist (CWB-C: Spector et al, 2010). Participants were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 ("never") to 5 ("every day") how often they engaged in a set of behaviours at their present job. A sample item is: "*Ignored someone at work"*.

Positive Affectivity. I used the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS: Watson et al, 1988) to assess positive affectivity. Participants were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("extremely") the extent to which they generally feel 20 different emotions, such as excited and afraid.

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis. The 10-item Toxic Positivity scale was evaluated using maximum likelihood CFA. Based on CFA guidelines, the fit of several models was assessed, and multiple fit indices were used (Kline, 2015; Williams et al., 2004). A two-factor oblique model demonstrated superior fit, $\chi^2(34) = 126.48$; GFI = 0.89; CFI = 0.89, RMSEA = 0.12, over 1-

factor, $\chi^2(35) = 326.31$; GFI = 0.70; CFI = 0.67; RMSEA = 0.20, and 2-factor orthogonal, $\chi^2(35) = 166.06$; GFI = 0.87; CFI = 0.85; RMSEA = 0.14, models. Two items were removed, "*I ignored the negative parts of what they told me*" (R = 0.22) and "*I tried to dismiss their negativity*" (R = 0.34) because the model did not explain 50% or more of the variance of these indicators (Kline, 2015). The resulting model showed improved fit, $\chi^2(19)= 78.44$; GFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.13 (see Table 4).

Convergent and Discriminant Validity. I also conducted a CFA to assess convergent and discriminant validity (Williams et al., 2004). The oblique model showed a stronger fit to the data, χ^2 difference (df difference = 40) = 107.24; $p < 0.01$. IER and positive affectivity showed significant associations with some toxic positivity scale items, (e.g., IER and "*I told them that they were overthinking the situation*": R = 0.39; positive affectivity and "*I encouraged them to make the best of their situation*": R = 0.25), suggesting some influence of these constructs on the measurement of toxic positivity. However, the associations were small (< 0.50), and all parameter estimates among encouraging positivity and dismissing negativity factors remained significant. Correlations among the scales supported these findings (see Table 5 for validity results and Table 6 for the correlation table**)**. In conclusion, the measurement of these constructs is not biased by IER or positive affectivity.

Study 4

For study 4, I assessed predictors of toxic positivity using qualitative incidents and tested the first theoretical model (see Figure 3). Participants were asked to recall a time when a coworker shared a negative experience with them at work. Those who could not recall a particular incident were asked to respond to a hypothetical scenario of a coworker being passed over for a promotion. Participants then reported on emotional and cognitive energies prior to the

incident to assess under what conditions individuals may be more likely to enact toxic positivity. Hypothetical data were collected so that all eligible and interested parties were able to participate in the research. These data were not used in the main analysis, but as a comparator to the real-life incidents in a post-hoc analysis, and as an exploratory investigation of additional variables of interest for future research.

Design and Sample

I collected data from 427 participants via Prolific. Screening criteria were the same as studies 2 and 3, and participants who completed earlier studies were excluded from participating in survey 4 (see Appendix J for a copy of the consent form). I received a total of 226 critical incidents. Participants were asked to provide qualitative responses to some questions in the survey which served as attention checks. Twenty-six participants failed the attention check, and their responses were removed from the dataset. The final sample consisted of 200 participants in the critical incident scenario; 95 participants identified as male (47.5%), 99 as female (49.5%), 4 participants identified as other (trans, non-binary: 2%), and 2 participants chose not to respond to this question (1%). The average age of participants was approximately 33 years old (*SD* = 10.39).

I received 201 responses to the hypothetical scenario. After attention checks, one participant was removed from the dataset because they misread the scenario and responded as if the other person *did* get the promotion. The final sample consisted of 200 participants in the hypothetical condition; 92 participants identified as male (46%), 105 as female (52.5%) and 3 as non-binary (1.5%). The average age of participants was approximately 31 years old (*SD* = 10.94).

Procedure

After consenting to the study, participants were asked to recall a particular time when a coworker shared something negative that happened to them. If participants could recall a particular situation, they were asked to report how they felt immediately before the incident (e.g., negative affect, emotional exhaustion). I then prompted participants on when this situation occurred and how they responded to their coworker. This provided context and served as qualitative data for the attention checks. Following this, participants were presented with the toxic positivity scale. If participants could not recall a particular situation, they responded to a hypothetical scenario (described below). Participants in the hypothetical condition were asked to report how they were currently feeling (e.g., negative affect, emotional exhaustion) prior to being shown the scenario. Participants were asked to think of the last person they spoke with at work (a coworker but not a client or customer), and created a pseudonym for this coworker, which was populated in place of [this person] in the hypothetical scenario. They were then asked to indicate how they would respond in the situation and filled out the toxic positivity scale. The scenario read as follows:

> *[This person] was passed up for a promotion they were excited about and thought they deserved. They are disappointed and frustrated and share this with you. [This person] says to you, "I never thought this would happen. I worked really hard for this promotion and spent a lot of time preparing for the interview. I just can't believe it. I'm so frustrated. I really feel like I deserved it."*

All participants were asked to provide details about their coworker including how close they are with the other person, how often they interact with them, and the other person's gender (used as

controls). All participants were also asked to report their own gender, age, and occupation (see Appendix K).

Measures

Emotional Exhaustion and Cognitive Weariness. I adapted the Shirom-Melamed Burnout measure (Shirom, 1989) to assess emotional exhaustion and cognitive weariness. Participants were asked to indicate, on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("very much"), the extent to which they felt emotional exhaustion (3 items) and cognitive weariness (5 items) immediately before the incident with their coworker.

Positive and Negative Affect. I used the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS: Watson et al, 1988) to assess state positive and negative affect. Participants were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("extremely") the extent to which they felt 20 different emotions, such as excited and afraid. For participants who reported real-life incidents, wording on these questions was modified to capture how they felt immediately before the incident with their coworker. For those who responded to hypothetical questions, participants were asked to report how they felt in that moment before being presented with the hypothetical scenario.

Emotional Competence. I adapted the Awareness of Others' Emotions subscale from the Workgroup Emotional Intelligence Profile short version (WEIP-S: Jordan & Lawrence, 2009) to assess emotional competence. Participants were asked to indicate, on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree") their level of agreement with each statement regarding their feelings when working with others. A sample item includes: "*I am able to describe accurately the way others at work are feeling*".

Toxic Positivity. I used the refined scale from study 2 to assess the two dimensions of toxic positivity. Participants were asked to what extent each statement reflected their response in the real-life situation, or how they *would* respond in the hypothetical scenario.

Control variables. I adapted the Liking scale developed by Wojciszke et al. (2009) to assess to what extent individuals liked or had a close relationship with their coworker. Items on this scale included: "*I have warm feelings about [this person]"*, "*I like [this person]"*, "*I feel close to [this person]"*. I also controlled for the frequency of interactions between participants and their coworker. Participants were asked to indicate how often they interacted with their coworker. Response options included: *every day, most days – 2 or 3 days a week, sometimes – once a week, occasionally – 2 or 3 times a month, rarely – once a month or less, never – this was a one-off situation*. Participants were also asked to report the gender of their coworker in the situation (coded as 1 = male; 2 = female; 3 = other, please specify). I used the same wording used in Statistics Canada's 2021 Census. Response options included: male, female, and other (participants were asked to specify the other person's gender identity in this case).

Analysis

I conducted a CFA to re-assess the hypothesized model. Results from the CFA (see Table 7) indicated that the two-factor oblique model demonstrated superior fit $\chi^2(19) = 50.81$; GFI = 0.94; CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.09, to a one-factor $\chi^2(20) = 219.82$; GFI = 0.79; CFI = 0.76, RMSEA = 0.22, and two-factor orthogonal model, $\chi^2(20) = 74.36$; GFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.12 [χ^2 difference (df difference = 1) = 23.55; $p < 0.01$].

For the main analysis, I used only the data obtained from the critical incident condition (N = 200). I assessed differences between the critical incident responses and hypothetical

scenario responses in a post hoc analysis (see below). Descriptive statistics for the critical incident data can be found in Table 8.

I performed multiple hierarchical regressions separately for each of the two dimensions of toxic positivity and the four interaction terms to assess their individual predictive power (see Tables 9-12). The control variables (interpersonal liking, frequency of interactions and coworker gender) were entered in the first step. The four predictor variables (positive affect, negative affect, emotional exhaustion, cognitive weariness) were entered in the second step, and the interaction term was entered in the third step.

Results

Hypothesis Testing. After controlling for interpersonal liking, frequency of interactions and coworker gender, positive affect independently predicted encouraging positivity ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$); negative affect ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.05$) and emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$) independently predicted dismissing negativity. Thus, I received support for hypothesis 2 and partial support for hypothesis 3, but no support for hypothesis 1. Moderation was supported for emotional competence on the relationship between negative affect and encouraging positivity ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$), emotional exhaustion and encouraging positivity ($\beta = 0.11$, $p < 0.05$), and cognitive weariness and encouraging positivity ($\beta = 0.10$, $p < 0.05$). At high levels of emotional competence, the relationship between these predictor variables and encouraging positivity was diminished, providing support for hypothesis 4 (see Figures 6-8).

Post Hoc Analysis. I conducted independent samples *t* tests on the variables of interest to assess differences between participants who provided critical incident responses and those who provided hypothetical scenario responses (see Table 13). Participants in the hypothetical condition reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion, $t(398) = -3.62$, $p < 0.05$, and cognitive

weariness, $t(398) = -5.59$, $p < 0.05$, and had lower mean scores for emotional competence $t(398) = 2.99$, $p < 0.05$. Participants in the hypothetical condition also had higher mean scores for encouraging positivity $t(398) = -3.44$, $p < 0.05$. These results suggest that how people *think* they would respond differs significantly from how they actually respond to others' negative experiences.

I also conducted post hoc analysis to assess gender differences in the enactment of toxic positivity using the critical incident data. In the main analysis, coworker gender (although used as a control) significantly predicted encouraging positivity ($\beta = -0.70$, $p < 0.05$) and dismissing negativity ($\beta = -.60$, $p < 0.05$). These results suggest that individuals are more likely to encourage positivity and dismiss negativity towards their male coworkers. Based on these findings, I also wanted to investigate differences in the enactment of toxic positivity across genders. Because only four participants identified as trans or non-binary, I compared only those participants who reported as either male ($n = 95$) or female ($n = 99$). Results of independent samples *t* tests indicated that men were more likely to dismiss negativity than women, $t(192) = 2.68$, $p < 0.05$, i.e., men were more likely to enact toxic positivity in the form of dismissing negativity than women. Results for encouraging positivity approached significance, $t(192) = 1.95$, $p = 0.05$ (see Table 14), suggesting that toxic positivity may be a gendered behaviour.

Study 5

For study 5, I assessed outcomes of toxic positivity using qualitative incidents similar to above from the perspective of targets, i.e., those who shared a negative experience with a coworker. This study allowed me to assess the impact of toxic positivity on targets of the behaviour and to test my second theoretical model (see Figure 2). Similar to study 4, participants were asked to respond to a hypothetical scenario if they could not recall a particular incident, so

that all eligible and interested parties could participate in the research. The hypothetical scenario (discussed below) described a coworker responding to the participant being passed over for a promotion, by encouraging positivity and dismissing negativity.

Design and Sample

I collected data from a sample of 495 participants via Prolific using the same eligibility criteria as mentioned above (the same consent form was used as study 4 – see Appendix J). A total of 281 participants could recall a particular situation when they shared a negative experience with a coworker. After attention checks using qualitative data similar to study 4, 81 participants were removed from the dataset. Many of these participants reported on situations when they had a conflict with this coworker which was outside the scope of the question (and was explicitly indicated in the question instructions to participants). The final sample of critical incidents consisted of 200 participants; 82 identified as male (41%), 115 identified as female (57.5%), and 3 participants identified as non-binary (1.5%). The average age of participants was approximately 32 years old (SD = 8.97). A total of 214 participants responded to the hypothetical scenario. One participant was removed from further analysis because, after indicating they could not recall a particular situation when they shared a negative experience with a colleague, they then proceeded to write about this situation when prompted to create a pseudonym for their coworker. The final sample in the hypothetical condition consisted of 213 participants; 86 participants identified as male (40.4%), 125 identified as female (58.7%), and 2 participants identified as other (genderqueer, non-binary: 0.9%). The average age of participants was 32 years old (SD = 10.08). These data were not used in the main analysis, but in post-hoc comparisons.

Procedure

Participants were asked to recall a particular time when they themselves shared something negative that happened to them with a coworker. If they could recall a particular situation, they were then asked to provide details about the situation. Participants filled out the toxic positivity scale based on how their coworker responded to them. I asked participants how their coworker's response made them feel following the situation, as well as whether the situation led to hurt relationships, and whether they would share negative experiences with this coworker again in future. If participants could not recall a particular situation, they were then provided with a hypothetical scenario (described below). Participants were prompted on how the response *would* make them feel, whether it would lead to hurt relationships, and whether they would share negative experiences with this coworker again. The scenario read (participants created a pseudonym which populated in place of [this person]):

> *You've just found out that you were passed over for a promotion at work that you were excited about and thought you deserved. You are disappointed and frustrated and share this with [this person]. [This person] responds by saying "You're overthinking the situation. It's not that big of a deal. Try to forget about it and stay positive. You should be grateful for the opportunity. Look on the bright side, at least you still have your job."*

Similar to study 4, all participants were asked to provide details about the coworker and their relationship which were used as control variables. Participants also completed demographic questions at the end of the survey (see Appendix L).

Measures

Toxic Positivity. Participants were asked to what extent each statement reflected how the other person responded in the real-life situation when the participant shared a negative experience with their coworker. A sample item includes: "*[This person] told me to stay positive*". Those who could not recall a real-life incident, and instead responded to the hypothetical questions, were not presented with this scale.

Positive and Negative Affect. I used the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS: Watson et al, 1988) to assess state positive and negative affect. Participants were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("extremely") the extent to which they felt 20 different emotions immediately after the incident with their coworker, such as excited and afraid. Participants who answered the hypothetical questions were asked to indicate to what extent they *would* feel each emotion as a result of their coworker's response in the hypothetical scenario.

Hurt Relationships. I adapted the scale developed by Connelly and Zweig (2015) to assess the extent to which coworkers' responses to participants' negative experience sharing influenced their interpersonal relationship. A sample item includes: "*This situation permanently weakened my relationship with [this person]"*. Participants who responded to hypothetical questions were asked to indicate to what extent their coworker's response in the hypothetical scenario *would* influence their relationship. A sample item includes: "*This situation would permanently weaken my relationship with [this person]"*.

Future Emotion-Sharing. I used one item to assess how likely participants would be to share negative experiences with their coworker in future, rated on a scale from 1 ("very unlikely") to 5 ("very likely").

Control variables. I used the same items as mentioned in study 4 to assess interpersonal liking, frequency of interactions and coworker gender.

Analysis

Similar to study 4, for the main analysis, I only used the data gathered from critical incidents (N = 200). I assessed differences between the critical incident responses and hypothetical responses in a post hoc analysis (see below). Descriptive statistics, including scale reliabilities, for the critical incident data can be found in Table 14.

I performed multiple hierarchical regressions separately for each of the outcome variables (positive affect, negative affect, hurt relationships and future sharing: see Table 15). The control variables (i.e., interpersonal liking, frequency of interactions and coworker gender) were entered in the first step and the two predictor variables (encouraging positivity and dismissing negativity) were entered in the second step.

Results

Hypothesis Testing. After controlling for interpersonal liking, frequency of interactions and coworker gender, encouraging positivity independently predicted positive affect (β = 0.44, p < 0.05). Thus, hypothesis 7, which stated that toxic positivity would be negatively associated with positive affect was not supported. Dismissing negativity independently predicted hurt relationships (β = 0.24, p < 0.05), future sharing (β = -0.12, p < 0.05), and negative affect (β = 0.14, p < 0.05), providing support for hypotheses 5, 6 and 8.

Post-hoc Analysis. Similar to study 4, I conducted t tests to compare mean differences between participants who responded to the critical incident questions and those who responded to the hypothetical scenario. There were significant differences across both groups on all

outcome variables. Participants in the hypothetical condition reported higher levels of negative affect, $t(411) = -9.90$, $p < 0.05$, and hurt relationships, $t(411) = -15.92$, $p < 0.05$, and lower levels of positive affect, $t(411) = 6.65$, $p < 0.05$, and future sharing, $t(411) = 17.07$, $p < 0.05$, than those who responded to the critical incident questions (see Table 16). The hypothetical scenario involved high levels of both encouraging positivity and dismissing negativity, suggesting that the combination of both may lead to particularly negative outcomes for targets of toxic positivity.

CHAPTER 4: GENERAL DISCUSSION

Toxic positivity has surfaced in several key areas of life, including the world of work (Collins, 2022; Goodman, 2022; Kelly, 2023). Most people have likely encountered toxic positivity and may have enacted it on occasion. Yet, despite burgeoning practical interest in toxic positivity (e.g., Hill, 2021; Quintero & Long; Syed, 2023), it has yet to be formally conceptualized in management scholarship. As such, my first goal was to establish toxic positivity in management scholarship and provide a foundation for future research on the topic. As noted earlier, I define toxic positivity as an interpersonal behavioural response which fails to acknowledge negative emotional experiences of others, by dismissing or invalidating the experience (dismissing negativity), encouraging a positive outlook not reflective of the actual experience (encouraging positivity) or both.

My second goal was to ground toxic positivity in existing literature but establish it as a unique and distinct construct. Following the development and refinement of an 8-item scale of toxic positivity in the workplace in studies 1 and 2, findings from study 3 indicate that the two dimensions of toxic positivity, encouraging positivity and dismissing negativity, are related but discrete behaviours. Furthermore, toxic positivity is distinct from existing constructs measuring positive affectivity, interpersonal emotion regulation (IER), counterproductive work behaviour (CWB), and emotional labour. Thus, this research responds to calls from Niven (2017) and Schilpzand et al. (2016) to distinguish IER and workplace incivility from other related constructs, respectively.

My third goal was to assess antecedents and outcomes of toxic positivity in the workplace. In study 4, I evaluated whether lack of emotional and cognitive resources predicted the enactment of toxic positivity. I found that loss of emotional resources in particular (i.e.,

negative affect and emotional exhaustion) predicted dismissing negativity. However, surprisingly, lack of resources did not predict encouraging positivity. Instead, when individuals experienced positive affect, they were more likely to encourage positivity. These findings suggest that toxic positivity is not always a defensive reaction to others when experiencing stress and resource loss. Instead, encouraging positivity on its own may be an intentional response to others. Further, emotional competence shapes this relationship. When experiencing low levels of negative affect, emotional exhaustion or cognitive weariness, individuals who are high in emotional competence are less likely to encourage positivity. Thus, individuals who have a greater understanding of others' emotions and how to appropriately respond to them, are less likely to enact toxic positivity. Finally, post hoc comparisons indicate that how individuals *think* they would respond differs from how they actually respond to others' negative emotional experiences. These results provide credence to the notion that toxic positivity may be impulsive and context specific. Post hoc results also suggest that toxic positivity may be a gendered behaviour in that men may be more likely to enact toxic positivity than women. This may be because gender role stereotypes often dictate how men and women should behave in the workplace (Eagly & Koenig, 2021). Women may be expected to behave in more supportive and caring ways (i.e., taking on a caregiving role: Diekman & Goodfriend, 2006), thus may be more likely to provide empathy than men. Additional research is needed to validate these findings.

Together, these findings reveal that toxic positivity is a multi-faceted construct and does not fit neatly into existing categories of voluntary workplace behaviours such as CWB or OCB. Indeed, individuals are more likely to dismiss negativity in others when experiencing emotional exhaustion or negative affect, conditions which also make it more likely that individuals will engage in CWB (Bolton et al., 2012). In contrast, individuals are more likely to encourage

positivity when experiencing positive affect, which aligns more closely with conditions under which individuals may be more likely to engage in OCB (Spector & Fox, 2002). Thus, toxic positivity can be both a constructive and destructive behaviour (Spanouli & Hofmans, 2021), drawing attention to the complexity of motivations underlying toxic positivity, and adding nuance to the literature on discretionary work behaviours (Reynolds et al., 2015).

Study 4 also provides empirical support for Zaki's (2014) theoretical model of empathy as a motivated phenomenon, suggesting that the affective costs of empathy in particular may be central to the avoidance of empathy and the enactment of toxic positivity. Indeed, findings from the current study indicate that individuals are more likely to dismiss negativity in others when they possess insufficient emotional resources (i.e., emotional exhaustion and negative affect). Thus, toxic positivity serves as a way for individuals to distance themselves from others' negative affect and avoid empathy. Cognitive weariness did not predict the enactment of toxic positivity, which implies that individuals may still engage with other's emotional experiences following a social sharing episode, despite the additional mental effort required to do so. These findings align with arguments by Cameron et al. (2019) that cognitive costs associated with empathy (e.g., mental effort) may not always deter empathic behaviour. There may be additional intervening factors, such as the perceived opportunity costs of not responding empathically, which influence motivation to provide empathy to others (Kurzban et al., 2013). Similar contextual factors may influence the motivation to enact toxic positivity.

Findings from this study also allude to the salient role of hedonic motivation in the enactment of toxic positivity. Individuals are more likely to dismiss negativity in others when experiencing negative affect and encourage positivity when experiencing positive affect, both of which highlight the role of hedonic motivation to avoid pain and approach (or maintain) pleasure

(Bernecker & Becker, 2021). While positive affect was hypothesized to negatively predict toxic positivity, these findings are in line with research by Sabato and Kogut (2021) which suggests that when in a positive mood, individuals may be less willing to help others because they are concerned it will "spoil their mood" (p.4). As such, this study illustrates the influence of hedonic motivation on behaviour, responding to a call by Williams (2018), who argues that hedonic motivation deserves greater attention in behavioural science research.

Findings from study 4 also contribute to the literature on harmful workplace behaviours, by providing insight into why and when individuals may enact such behaviour. According to Ferris et al. (2017), research on workplace mistreatment tends to focus on characteristics of targets (e.g., personality) which make them susceptible to victimization. As such, scholars have argued for future research to understand harmful workplace behaviours from the perspective of the "perpetrator", to gain a more nuanced understanding of workplace mistreatment (e.g., Howard et al, 2019; Jensen & Raver, 2018). Study 4 addresses these calls by clarifying under what conditions individuals may be more likely to enact toxic positivity. However, while toxically positive behaviour may fail to help others, it is not intentionally harmful. This research illustrates that dismissing negativity in others serves a self-protective function, in that individuals attempt to protect or replenish limited resources by distancing themselves from others' distress. Thus, I caution scholars on the use of "perpetrator" language, as some harmful workplace behaviours are not necessarily enacted with malicious intent. The current study deepens our theoretical understanding of the intentionality behind harmful workplace behaviours, shifting focus towards ways to support workers who enact harmful workplace behaviours, rather than simply labeling them as perpetrators.

In study 5, I was interested in understanding the influence of toxic positivity on targets of the behaviour. Similar to study 4, encouraging positivity and dismissing negativity were associated with different outcomes. Contrary to practical assertations regarding the impact of toxic positivity on targets (e.g., Syed, 2023), encouraging positivity on its own did not predict any negative outcomes in targets. In fact, targets felt positive affect following the encounter. In contrast, and as expected, dismissing negativity predicted negative affect in the target, greater hurt relationships and decreased intent to share future emotions with the enactor. These findings provide important insight into the implications of toxic positivity in the workplace. Toxic positivity appears to be a double-edged sword, in that it may lead to positive outcomes in some circumstances and negative outcomes in others. Indeed, enactors may not intentionally act in ways that cause harm to others and their intent may be to help rather than to harm. Results from study 5 suggest that encouraging positivity on its own may be helpful, while dismissing negativity on its own is harmful. Post-hoc findings suggest that exposure to high levels of encouraging positivity and dismissing negativity together may be the most harmful, as this may signal a complete failure to acknowledge others' negative experiences. This study contributes to our knowledge of interpersonal responses to emotion sharing at work and serves as a response to calls by Bradley et al. (2023) to study the impact of discrete emotion response strategies and the combined impact of these strategies on targets. Future scholars should consider whether the use of several emotion response strategies in conjunction serves to exacerbate negative outcomes for targets (as the current research suggests) or enhance positive outcomes by signaling to targets that listeners are making a conscious effort to help.

Findings from study 5 also add to our knowledge of the intrapersonal and interpersonal outcomes of social sharing in the workplace context. According to Rimé (2009, 2020)

individuals share emotions with family, partners, or close friends in addition to work colleagues (especially when the emotional experience occurs at work). Despite the ubiquity of emotional experiences at work, minimal research has investigated how sharers perceive the success of social sharing in the workplace context (Reynolds-Kueny & Shoss, 2021). This study provides insight into the outcomes associated with social sharing of emotions at work, from both an intrapersonal and interpersonal standpoint. Indeed, the results indicate that sharing emotions may be perceived as helpful at times for sharers, resulting in positive intrapersonal outcomes. In contrast, individuals may perceive that social sharing is not always beneficial, indicated by reports of reduced relationship quality with the listener, and reduced likelihood of sharing with the listener in future. Thus, this study provides empirical evidence that the social sharing of emotions at work may not always be perceived as a positive experience for workers, and that listener responses are just as, if not more, important than the sharing itself (Nils & Rimé, 2012; Reynolds-Kueny & Shoss, 2021).

This research also contributes to another area of inquiry in the social sharing of emotion literature, that of the different forms of support provided to emotion-sharers. Research has tended to focus on two forms of support provided by listeners: socio-affective support (i.e., validation, comfort) and cognitive support (i.e., reappraisal and constructing meaning: Batenburg & Das, 2014; Pauw et al., 2019; Rimé, 2009). Pauw et al. (2018) argue for the evaluation of other forms of support which may be beneficial to individuals in distress. Encouraging positivity does not fit cleanly into either of these categories, but targets seem to view it as supportive behaviour, as evidenced by its influence on positive affect. Further, different forms of listener support may have varied effectiveness depending on the way in which emotion-sharers disclose their emotions. For example, Batenburg and Das (2014) found that when participants were asked to

share their deepest feelings about a negative experience, cognitive support provided greater relief from negative emotions than socio-affective support. In contrast, when asked to only share the consequences of a negative experience, participants benefitted from cognitive and socio-affective support equally. While encouraging positivity may not always be viewed as supportive, it may be beneficial under certain circumstances, such as in situations where the severity of the shared emotional experience is low, or when emotion-sharers are seeking distraction from their distress. As such, toxic positivity may be an effective way to end a conversation (Goodman, 2022), allowing both the sharer and the listener to escape negative emotions.

The results of studies 4 and 5 combined also provide further insight into the motives and consequences of negative behaviour. Zhong and Robinson (2021) propose that additional research is needed to understand how motives (both enactor-attributed motives and target-attributed motives) shape the relationship between the enactment of negative workplace behaviours and interpersonal outcomes. For example, if targets suspect an individual has a self-focused motive (e.g., power) for engaging in a negative behaviour such as knowledge hiding, this may lead to retaliation (Connelly & Zweig, 2015; Evans et al., 2015). Findings from study 4 suggest that individuals' motives for dismissing negativity may be to relieve negative affect or cope with stress, something which enactors may see as a legitimate rationale for enacting toxic positivity. However, findings from study 5, which assessed the targets' perspective, indicate that targets perceive dismissing negativity as harmful. As such, targets may ascribe selfish and/or antisocial motives to the enactor for such behaviour. This research provides a starting point for clarifying the attributed motives behind toxic positivity. Additional research is needed to further understand how such perceived motives influence the severity of outcomes that ensue. Do ascribed motives differ depending on whether someone encourages positivity or dismisses

negativity? Do enactors' understandings of their motives change if targets respond negatively to toxic positivity? Qualitative methods may be suitable for investigating such questions and gaining deeper insight into the ascribed motives of toxic positivity.

Overall, these studies serve as a first foray into the study of toxic positivity in the workplace. Results suggest that the enactment of toxic positivity and its outcomes are complex and state dependent, adding nuance to the literature on responses to emotion sharing at work (Bradley et al., 2023). The current research also contributes to growing literature which suggests that seemingly positive work-related phenomena can lead to negative outcomes for individuals (Pierce & Aguinis, 2011). Furthermore, this research challenges positive organizational scholarship which tends to endorse unrealistically positive ideologies across various research domains (Alvesson & Einola, 2019; Eagly, 2016), by calling attention to the potential negative implications of toxic positivity and bringing authentic experiences to the forefront.

Limitations

Despite the above contributions, there are some limitations to the current research. First, my use of single-source self-report data means that participants may have underreported the extent to which they enacted toxic positivity. However, participants reported on these behaviours anonymously, which may reduce the likelihood of socially desirable responding (Michel et al., 2016). Further, items in the toxic positivity scale were designed such that the wording was neutral rather than overly negative or positive to reduce questionnaire item social desirability (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Self-report data was also the most effective means to collect data for the development of the toxic positivity scale and to compare the scale with other self-report measures. Future research could expand on these findings by collecting responses from multiple

sources (e.g., enactors and their targets). For example, researchers could gather data within work teams to better understand how an enactor's behaviour influences a target directly.

Second, participants responded to state-based questions (e.g., state positive affect, emotional exhaustion) retroactively, increasing the potential for recall bias. Participants may have over or under-estimated how they felt prior to enacting toxic positivity or how toxic positivity made them feel. However, this was exploratory research to assess the nomological network of toxic positivity, and to understand whether the two dimensions of toxic positivity relate differently to different antecedents and outcomes. As such, this design is appropriate for exploratory research where the pattern of relationships is unclear (Spector, 2019). Future research could employ more sophisticated data collection methods, such as experience sampling, to gain a more accurate picture of the antecedents and outcomes of toxic positivity as the behaviour unfolds.

Third, it is important to consider the potential limitations of using online panel data which I relied on for studies 2 through 5. First, online panel data has been judged for being poor in terms of quality of responses (e.g., inattentive participants, lack of effort) in comparison to conventionally sourced data (see Aguinis et al., 2021). However, research indicates that online panel data quality may meet or exceed that of traditional data (Porter et al., 2019). Further, my use of qualitative attention checks (as recommended by Aguinis et al., 2021), and my thorough review of the qualitative data, demonstrated that participants took the survey seriously and provided thoughtful responses. Responses that demonstrated otherwise were removed from the dataset. Second, there are concerns that online panel participants may be "experienced" or "professional" survey takers who regularly participate in surveys (Hillygus et al., 2014). However, these concerns are primarily associated with experimental research, where participants

may be exposed to the same task across a variety of studies (Chandler et al., 2019; Cheung et al., 2017). Further, there appears to be less professional survey takers on the Prolific platform. Prolific participants "use the site much less, and very few use it as their main source of income" in comparison to other platforms (Peer et al., 2022, p.1657).

Finally, while online panel data has been found to be comparable to conventionally sourced data (Goodman et al., 2013), there may still be differences in the population of participants available through online panels and the population of working age adults in Canada. For example, the average age of the Canadian population is approximately 42 years old (Statistics Canada, 2022), and approximately 20% of the Canadian workforce is close to retirement (Zimonjic, 2022). The average age of participants in my sample was approximately 32 to 36 years old, which may be because younger individuals are normally more technologically savvy (Shoss et al., 2016). Results may vary in samples where the average age is higher. For example, research suggests that older adults may be more inclined to express "positive and cheerful interpretations" of difficult situations in comparison to young adults (Diehl et al., 1996, p.134). Such positive evaluations may be a result of greater lived experience and age-related insight into dealing with difficult situations (Charles, 2010). As such, older adults may be more likely to encourage positivity in others. However, additional research is needed to assess these potential differences.

Future Research

The developed scale and findings from the current research serve as a foundation for future research on toxic positivity in the workplace. While I controlled for relationship-specific variables (e.g., frequency of interactions) in my studies, organization-specific factors, such as organizational norms around emotional expression in the workplace, may also influence

workers' propensity to enact toxic positivity and the outcomes of such behaviour. There are often norms surrounding which emotions are to be expressed or suppressed at work (Ashforth & Humphrey, 2022; O'Neill et al., 2023). These norms form the emotional culture of the organization, i.e., the "shared affective values, norms, artifacts, and assumptions that govern which emotions people have and express at work" (Barsade & O'Neill, 2016, p.4). In positive emotional cultures, employees express compassion and support for one another and are more likely to engage in extra-role behaviours such as OCB (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014, 2016; Men & Robinson, 2018; Men & Yue, 2019). In contrast, in negative emotional cultures, expression of emotions such as joy or compassion may be viewed as inappropriate and people may avoid interactions or distance themselves from others (O'Neill et al., 2023). Therefore, emotional culture might encourage or discourage the enactment of toxic positivity. A qualitative case study approach may lend itself well to evaluating the role of emotional culture in depth. Future research should also consider additional contextual factors which influence the extent to which toxic positivity is enacted in the workplace.

Second, future research should assess additional consequences of toxic positivity in the workplace, particularly from the perspective of the enactor. Study 5 demonstrated that dismissing negativity has negative consequences for targets and for the relationship between the enactor and target, from the perspective of the target. This begs the question: *what are the consequences of toxic positivity for enactors?* Study 4 illustrated that individuals dismiss negativity in others when they have insufficient emotional resources to deal with others' negative emotions. This suggests that dismissing negativity may allow enactors to protect themselves from further emotional resource loss in the face of others' negative emotions. However, *are there long-term repercussions for enacting toxic positivity towards others at work?* This question is especially

important when we consider that organizations are “interpersonal spheres of functioning” (Reynolds-Kuney & Shoss, 2021, p.461), and interpersonal relationships can influence individual-level outcomes such as job satisfaction, work motivation and thriving (see Dimotakis et al., 2011; Feeney and Collins, 2015; Tschan et al., 2004). Therefore, poor quality relationships resulting from the enactment of toxic positivity may have detrimental consequences for individuals in the long-term. Further, toxic positivity may serve as an ineffective coping mechanism to deal with work stress and negative affect, potentially amplifying the experience of negative affect for enactors in the long-term (i.e., the ironic effect of emotional intensification: see Dalgleish et al., 2009; Lennard et al., 2019). Intensive longitudinal studies, such as diary studies, may provide insight into fluctuations in the enactment of toxic positivity and shed light on the long-term impact of such behaviour for enactors. In addition, studies which evaluate the impact of various interventions, such as emotional competence training, in reducing the likelihood of toxic positivity at work or mitigating its potential long-term consequences may be warranted.

Third, future research should consider characteristics of enactors and targets, such as the formal status of the enactor in relation to the target, which may influence reactions to and consequences of toxic positivity. For example, toxic positivity may have a greater effect on targets when enacted by a supervisor in comparison to a coworker. Supervisor behaviours and attitudes can have a major impact on worker outcomes because of their authority over performance evaluations, rewards, and formal sanctions of workers (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Employees expect their supervisors to look out for their best interests at work and to be treated with respect as per the psychological contract (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Rousseau, 1990). Toxic positivity enacted by a supervisor may thus signal a breach of the psychological contract,

resulting in harmful consequences not only for the target of the behaviour but also for the larger work unit. Anonymous survey studies within work teams, where individuals could provide honest reports on their experiences with others at work, would permit researchers to assess the impact of toxic positivity when enacted by a supervisor in comparison to a team member.

Lastly, certain groups of individuals may be more at risk of experiencing toxic positivity at work. For example, the literature on disability disclosure indicates that others may respond to the disclosure of a disability in ways which invalidate the experiences of the individual with a disability (see Lefcoe et al., 2023 for a review). We see similar invalidating responses to individuals with cancer diagnoses (e.g., Dakof & Taylor, 1990), and those who experience chronic physical pain (Nicola et al., 2021). This response may be due to anxiety, discomfort, or lack of understanding rather than malice (Nicola et al., 2021; Wortman & Dunkel-Schetter, 1979). However, the way in which others respond to the disclosure of a stigmatized identity may have a significant influence on the discloser, an important future research direction posed by Mohr et al. (2019). Responses such as enacting toxic positivity following disclosure of potentially stigmatizing information may cause even greater harm to targets. Experimental research would allow for an initial exploration of group differences in the experience of toxic positivity, followed by qualitative or quantitative field studies to validate these findings.

Implications for Practice

This research also has important implications for practice. First, findings from the current studies suggest that workers may benefit from training in several key areas. Training in emotional competence may not only help individuals to identify and understand the emotional experiences of others but may also teach individuals how to offer support to others during difficult emotional experiences (Ikävalko et al., 2020). Diversity, equity, and inclusion training

may also serve as a way for individuals to gain an understanding and appreciation for diversity, providing them with the resources and knowledge to validate others' unique experiences rather than enacting toxic positivity. Further, findings from this research suggest that individuals may dismiss others' negative experiences when they themselves are experiencing negative affect and emotional exhaustion, suggesting that some forms of toxic positivity may serve as a (poor) coping mechanism. Additional training and support in effective coping may help workers deal with work stress in an adaptive way and may reduce the occurrence of toxic positivity in the workplace.

Second, in promoting positivity at work and denying negativity, organizations may be inadvertently encouraging toxic positivity. Leaders need to be mindful of the emotional and attitudinal norms they may create and/or perpetuate at work. As an important first step, leaders need to recognize that negative emotions are a natural human experience and that expressing negativity at times can be helpful rather than harmful. Further, it is imperative that leaders and supervisors possess the skills to respond to workers' negative emotions in supportive ways. Toxic positivity enacted by a supervisor may be perceived as a sanction for expressing negative emotions. Consequently, an isolated incident of toxic positivity between the supervisor (enactor) and employee could have negative repercussions for a larger work unit or team (see Bradley et al., 2023). As an illustration, workplace mistreatment can have harmful consequences for witnesses of such behavior, including decreased task performance and job satisfaction, and poorer well-being (see Dhanani & LaPalme, 2019 for a review).

Finally, contrary to practitioner beliefs (e.g., Quintero & Long, 2019; Syed, 2023), toxic positivity is not always necessarily harmful to targets. In fact, it may be helpful at times, such as when individuals encourage positivity. While it does not address individuals' underlying

negative experiences, encouraging positivity may be seen as more well-intentioned by targets than dismissing negativity which outright dismisses the experience. These findings are similar to those found for knowledge hiding behaviours, where some forms of knowledge hiding result in more positive reactions in targets (Connelly & Zweig, 2015). The concern, however, is that frequent responding with encouraging positivity may have a negative impact on targets in the long term. If an individual responds to someone by encouraging positivity after one difficult experience, targets may view this as supportive behaviour. However, being told to look on the bright side after every negative experience may become tedious and even frustrating over time. Indeed, research indicates that subtle and innocuous forms of interpersonal deviance at work (such as gossiping) may lead to negative consequences over time when these behaviours occur frequently (Baur et al 2022; Pinto, 2014). As such, the occasional enactment of toxic positivity in the workplace may be relatively harmless (especially when individuals encourage positivity). However, because of our insufficient knowledge of the long-term impact of toxic positivity, organizations should not encourage, or normalize, the behaviour.

CONCLUSION

In the current research, I introduced the topic of toxic positivity in the workplace to management scholarship. Toxic positivity involves failing to acknowledge the authentic human experience of negative emotions. In line with practitioner claims, my findings suggest that toxic positivity has the potential to harm relationships and may increase the experience of negative emotions in targets. However, the current research demonstrates that toxic positivity may not always be harmful and may in fact be helpful at times. Additional research is needed to further understand the complex motivations behind and consequences of enacting toxic positivity in the workplace. Further, organizations need to be mindful of the impact of a toxically positive

workplace culture, instead encouraging healthy emotional expression of both positive and negative emotions in the workplace setting. Negative emotions are “understandable manifestations of the human condition” (Leahy, 2005: p. 201) and should thus be handled as such.

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FIGURES

Figure 1

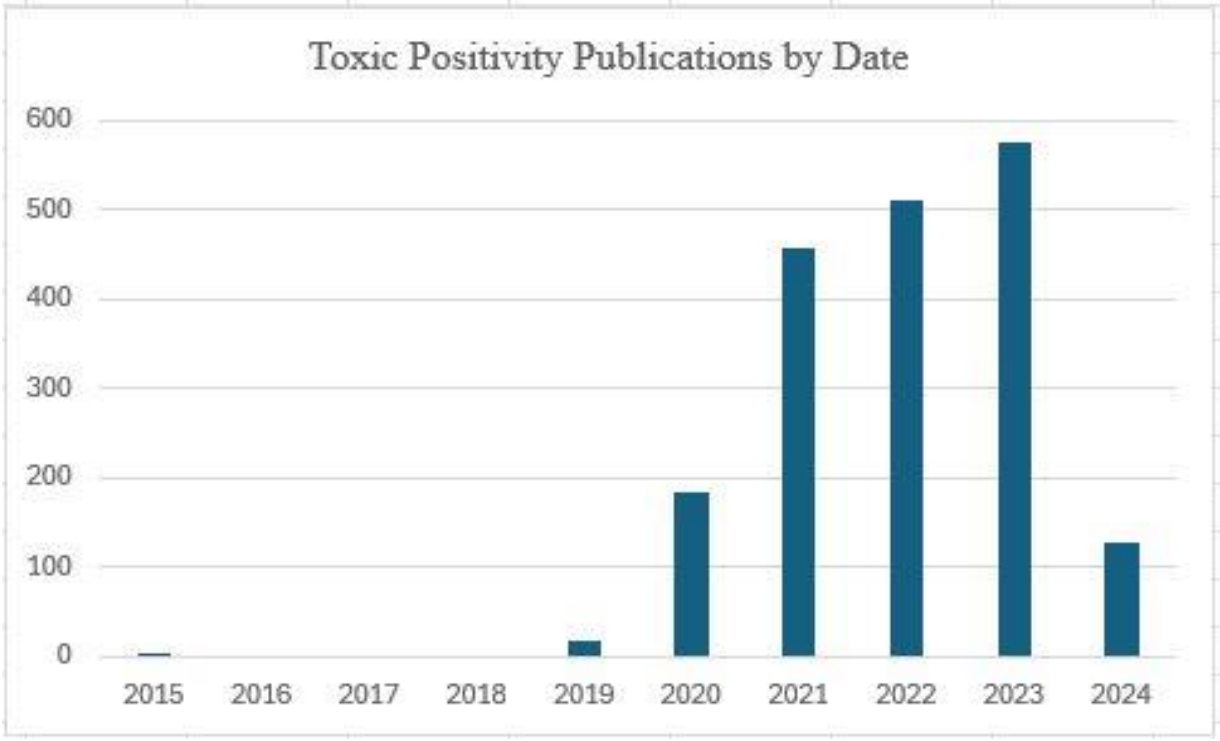
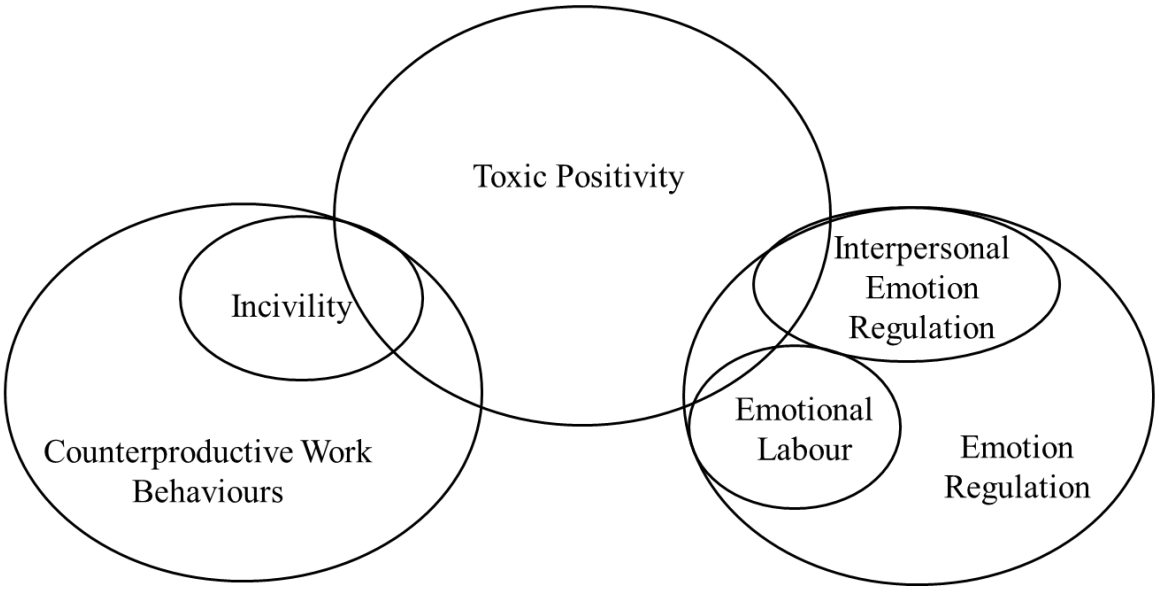


Figure 2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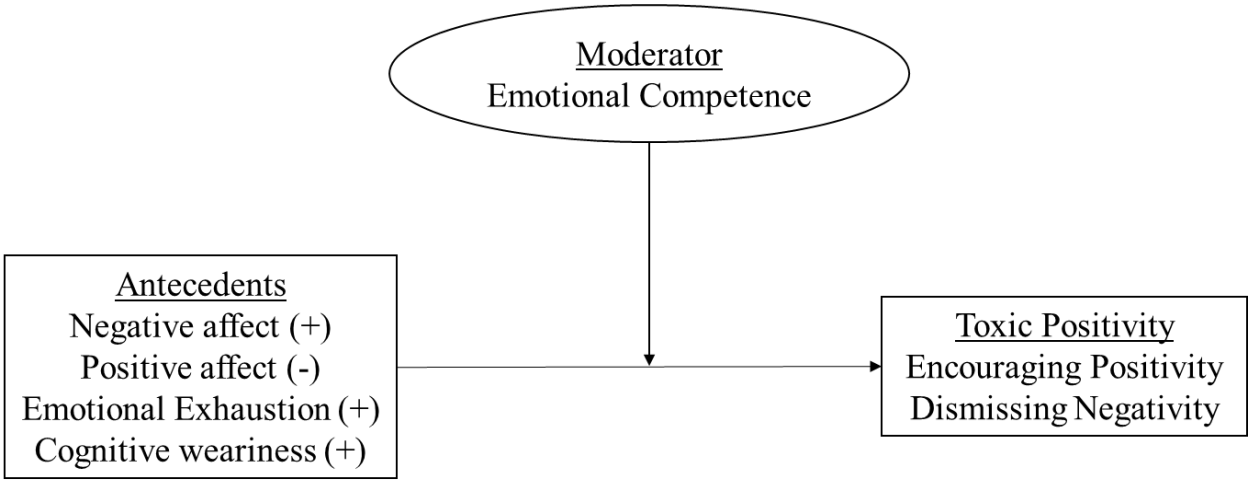
Interpersonal Emotion Regulation
Emotional Labour
Emotion Regulation

Figure 3


Moderator
Emotional Competence
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Negative affect (+)
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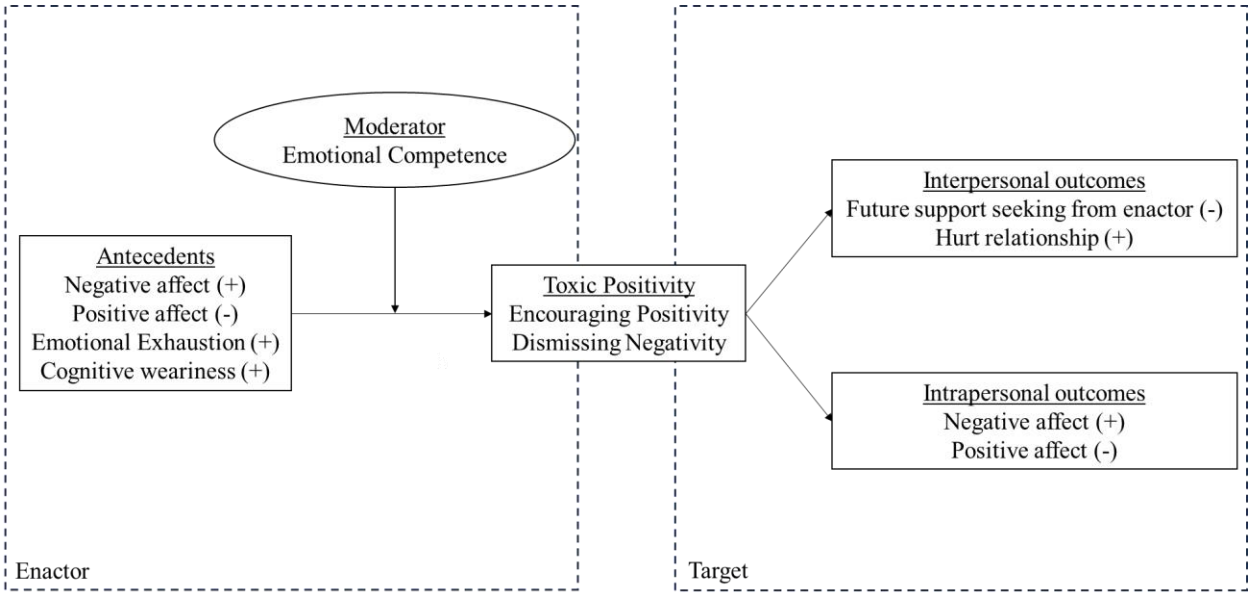
Emotional Exhaustion (+)
Cognitive weariness (+)
Toxic Positivity
Encouraging Positivity
Dismissing Negativity

Figure 4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Interpersonal outcomes
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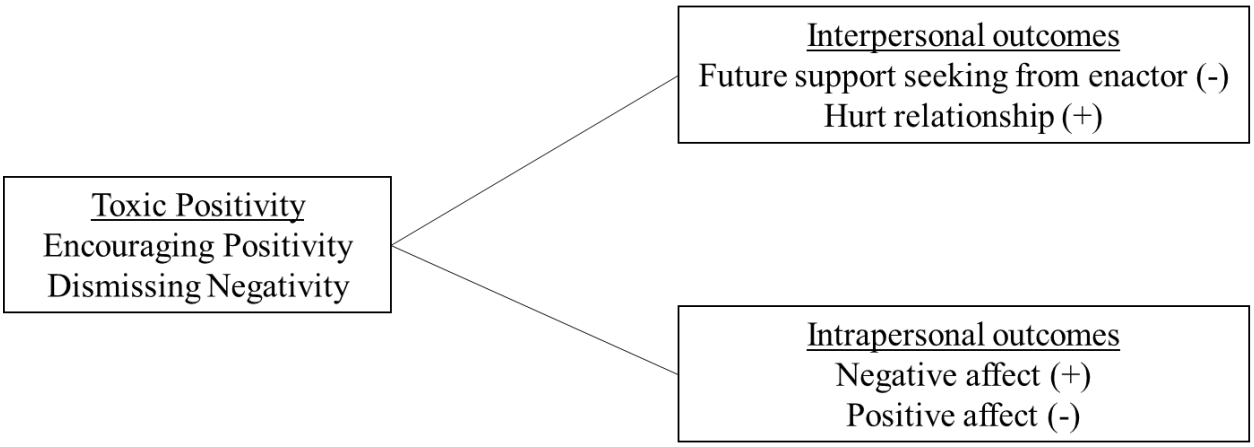
Hurt relationship (+)
Intrapersonal outcomes
Negative affect (+)
Positive affect (-)
Enactor
Target

Figure 5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Hurt relationship (+)
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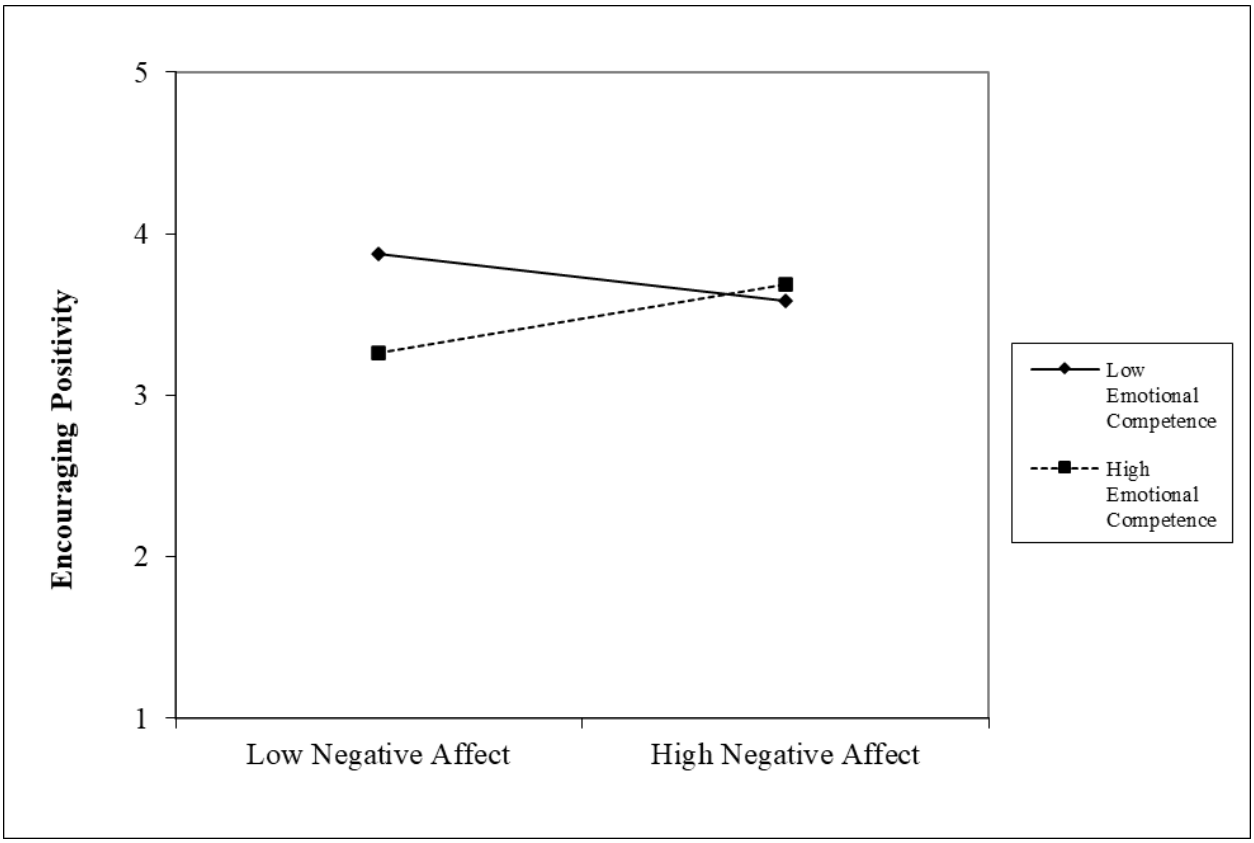
Figure 6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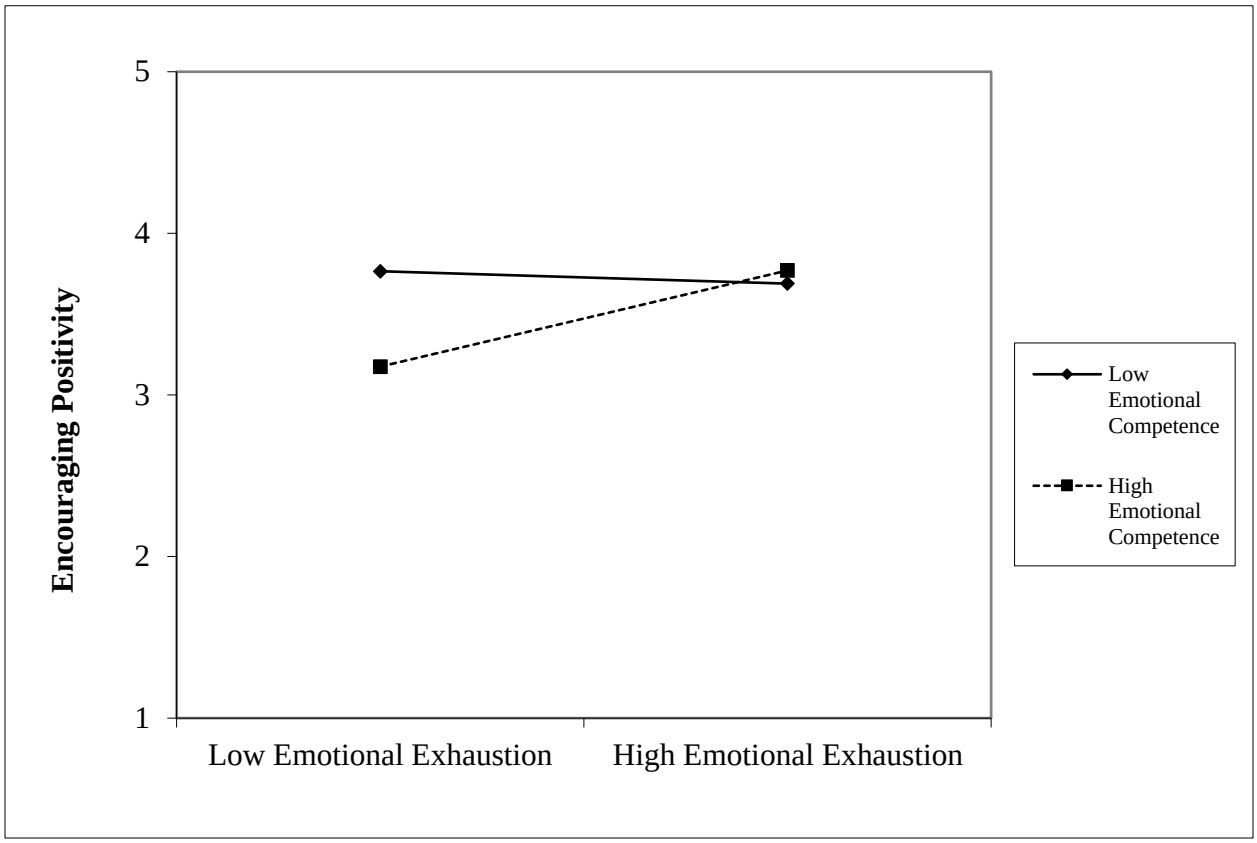
High Negative Affect
Low Emotional Competence
High Emotional Competence

Figure 7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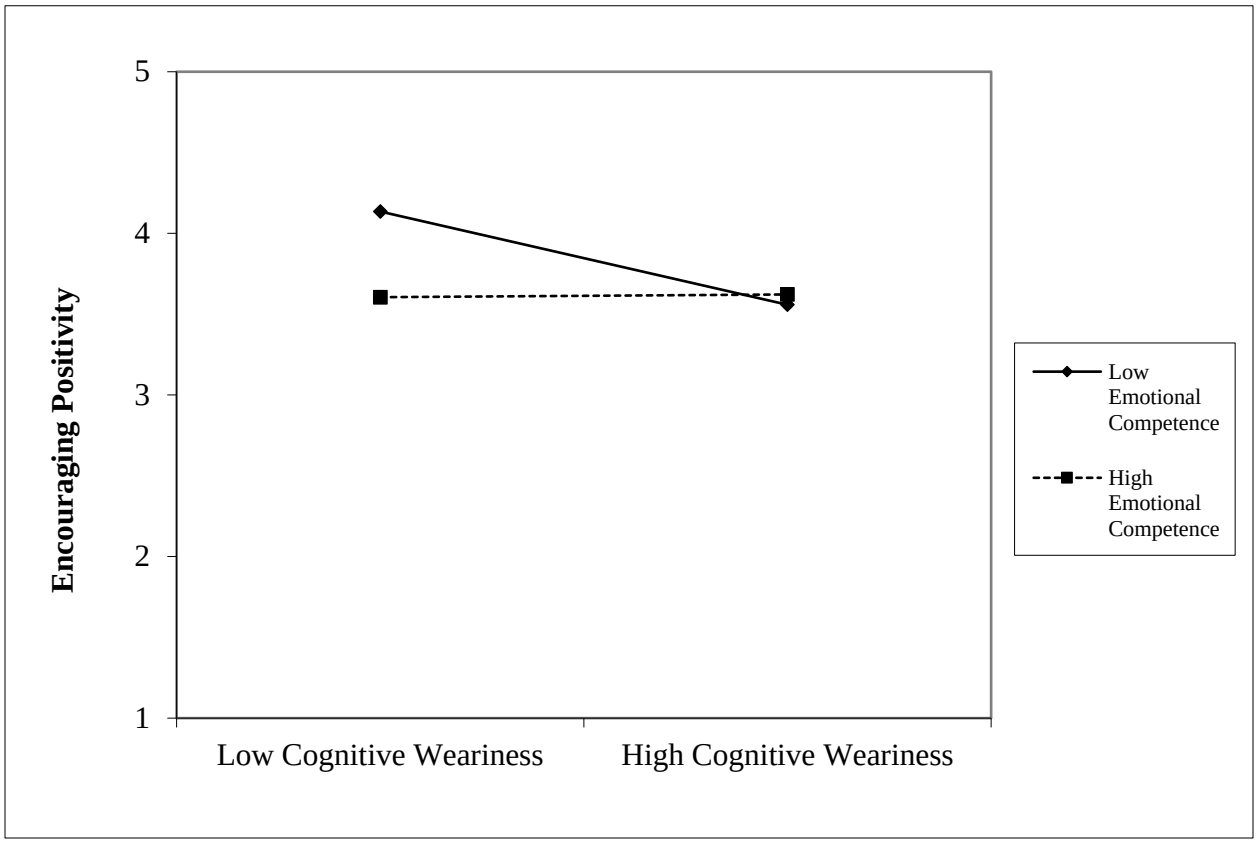
High Emotional Exhaustion
Low Emotional Competence
High Emotional Competence

Figure 8


Encouraging Positivity
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Low Cognitive Weariness
High Cognitive Weariness
Low Emotional Competence
High Emotional Competence

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Characteristic	Toxic Positivity	Interpersonal Emotion Regulation	Emotional Labour	Counterproductive Work Behaviour
Target of Behaviour	Others	Others	Self	Others (e.g., bullying) or organization (e.g., theft)
Regulation Focus	Only concerned with the display of positive emotions	Can be focused on the display of positive and/or negative emotions	Can be focused on the display of positive and/or negative emotions	N/A
Type of Response Strategy	Reactive response to social sharing of negative emotions	Deliberate and intentional	Deliberate and intentional	Can be deliberate/intentional or reactive
Motivation(s)	• Hedonic and instrumental motives • Resource loss • Workplace display rules	Hedonic and instrumental motives	Workplace display rules	• Resource loss • Intent to harm (or escalation of intent in the case of incivility)
Level of involvement with others' emotions	Low involvement response	High involvement response	N/A	N/A
Key Aim(s)	• Distance from others' emotions • Manage negative emotional states	Regulate others' emotions	Regulate one's own emotions	• Manage negative emotional states • Harm others and/or the organization

Appendix B

Letter of Information – Study 1

Affect, Attitudes and Interpersonal Behaviours at Work

Student Investigator:	**Faculty Supervisor:**
Ali Lefcoe	Dr. Catherine Connelly
DeGroote School of Business	DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University	McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada	Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
E-mail: lefcoea@mcmaster.ca	E-mail: connell@mcmaster.ca

Purpose of the Study:

You are invited to take part in this study on affect, attitudes and interpersonal behaviours at work. When sharing emotional experiences with others at work, I hope to learn more about how others respond and how this influences individuals' work-related attitudes and behaviours. I am doing this research for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Catherine Connelly.

What will happen during the study?

I will be asking you questions about your feelings and experiences at work, and your interactions with others (e.g., coworkers, supervisor). For example, I will ask you whether you or others at work encourage "positive vibes only". This study will take about 15 minutes to complete.

Are there any risks to doing this study?

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. It is possible that some participants will worry about the confidentiality of their survey answers. I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

Are there any benefits to doing this study?

I hope to learn about how workers navigate emotions and emotional experiences in the workplace setting. Your insight may help me to further understand motives behind particular behaviours and attitudes at work, and how organizations can encourage the healthy expression of emotions at work.

Payment or Reimbursement

You will receive a $5 Starbucks gift card for your participation in this study. You must submit the survey to receive your payment. There is a question at the end of the survey where you can input your email address to be sent the electronic gift card. This will not be linked to your survey data, so your responses in the survey will remain anonymous.

Who will know what I said or did in the study?

The online survey tool is secure. After I have finished collecting data from eligible participants, all data will be downloaded. All data analysis will be done with anonymous data files which do not contain identifying information. The information you provide will be stored securely for a period of five years after the study is complete. In presentations and publications, I will present the survey results as group data, so that it will be impossible to tell how a single individual responded. The information you provide will be kept on a computer and protected by a password.

The online survey tool being used is called "SoSci" survey (https://www.soscisurvey.de/). SoSci Survey has its headquarters and servers that store the data in Munich (Germany). Germany offers a very high level of data protection, both with regard to the obligations of companies as well as with regard to governmental/agency access and interference. In addition, any personal data that is collected is subject to the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary and anonymous. If you begin the survey and would like to withdraw before submitting your responses, you can select “quit” at the bottom of any page in the online survey tool. This will allow you to leave the survey and delete any data entered (you will not be paid if you quit the survey partway through). However, you will not be able to withdraw your data once you finish the survey. Because your responses are anonymous, no one (including the research team) will be able to link your survey data back to you. This procedure ensures that personal information, such as names and email addresses, will not be stored with your data, and you will remain anonymous.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by approximately December of 2025. If you would like a brief summary of the results, there is a question at the end of the survey where you can input your email address. This will not be linked to your survey data, so your responses in the survey will remain anonymous.

Questions about the Study: If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact Ali Lefcoe at lefcoea@mcmaster.ca.

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance under project **#6430**. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Office

Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142

E-mail: mreb@mcmaster.ca

Appendix C

Study 1 Survey

1) Enactor of Toxic Positivity

Please think about a time when another individual at work (e.g., colleague, supervisor) shared a negative experience/emotion with you and you responded by telling them to be “positive”, “look on the bright side”, not to dwell on the situation, or something along those lines.

Can you think of a particular experience? (if not, participant is directed to question 2)

Please describe the situation in detail.

a) Describe the negative experience/emotion this person shared with you.

b) What specifically did you say/do in response and why?

c) What impact do you believe your response had on the individual?

d) Do you think your response, in retrospect, was the "right" one, why or why not?

e) What is your relationship with this person presently?

2) Target of Toxic Positivity

Please think about a time when **you** shared a negative experience/emotion with another individual at work (e.g., colleague, supervisor) and they responded by telling you to be “positive”, “look on the bright side”, not to dwell on the situation, or something along those lines.

Can you think of a particular experience? (if not, participant is directed to question 3)

Please describe the situation in detail.

a) Describe the negative experience/emotion you shared with this person.

b) What specifically did they say/do in response and why do you think they did this?

c) What impact did their response have on you?

d) What is your relationship with this person presently?

3) Observer of Toxic Positivity

Please think about a time when you observed the following:

An individual at work shared a negative experience/emotion with another individual at work (e.g., colleague, supervisor) and they responded by telling them to be "positive", "look on the bright side", not to dwell on the situation, or something along those lines.

Can you think of a particular experience? (if not, participant is directed to question 4)

Please describe the situation in detail.

a) Describe the negative experience/emotion this person shared.

b) What specifically did the other person say/do in response and why do you think they did this?

c) What impact did the other person's response have on the individual?

d) What is the relationship between these two individuals presently?

4) Hypothetical Toxic Positivity

Please consider the following hypothetical situation:

Imagine you have shared a negative experience/emotion with another individual at work (e.g., colleague, supervisor) and they respond by telling you to be "positive", "look on the bright side", not to dwell on the situation, or something along those lines.

a) Why do you think the other person might behave in this way?

b) What impact would this other person's response have on you?

c) How would this response impact your relationship with the other person?

Appendix D

Preliminary Scale Items

Item	Category
I told them to move on from the experience.	dismissing the experience
I suggested they forget the experience.	
I suggested that they focus on other things	
I did not acknowledge their negative experience.	
I tried to dismiss their negativity.	
I encouraged them not to dwell on the negative.	
I told them that the situation would pass soon.	future-tense positivity
I told them to be patient because things would be better soon.	
I told them to stay positive.	
I encouraged them to look forward to positive things in the future.	
I told them that everything would be okay in time.	
I told them that things would work out.	
I told them that it wasn't a big deal.	minimizing the experience
I told them that “it could be worse”.	
I told them that they were overthinking the situation.	
I told them that “at least something worse didn’t happen".	
I suggested to them that this kind of thing happens all the time.	
I told them that we all go through this kind of situation.	
I encouraged them to look on the bright side.	present-tense positivity
I suggested that the experience could be a positive thing for them.	
I told them about what else they were lucky to have in their life despite the difficult situation.	
I shared the silver lining in their situation.	
I encouraged them to make the best of the situation.	
I told them to be happy that they had other good things going on in their life.	

Appendix E

Letter of Information – Study 2

Affect, Attitudes and Interpersonal Behaviours at Work

Student Investigator:	**Faculty Supervisor:**
Ali Lefcoe	Dr. Catherine Connelly
DeGroote School of Business	DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University	McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada	Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
E-mail: lefcoea@mcmaster.ca	E-mail: connell@mcmaster.ca

Purpose of the Study:

You are invited to take part in this study on affect, attitudes and interpersonal behaviours at work. When sharing emotional experiences with others at work, I hope to learn more about how others respond and how this influences individuals' work-related attitudes and behaviours. I am doing this research for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Catherine Connelly.

What will happen during the study?

I will be asking you questions about your feelings and experiences at work, and your interactions with others (e.g., coworkers, supervisor). For example, I will ask you whether you encourage others to "look on the bright side" at work. This study will take about 15 minutes to complete.

Are there any risks to doing this study?

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. It is possible that some participants will worry about the confidentiality of their survey answers. I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

Are there any benefits to doing this study?

I hope to learn about how workers navigate emotions and emotional experiences in the workplace setting. Your insight may help me to further understand motives behind particular behaviours and attitudes at work, and how organizations can encourage the healthy expression of emotions at work.

Payment or Reimbursement

You will receive $3.85 for your participation in this study. You must submit the survey to receive your payment.

Who will know what I said or did in the study?

The online survey tool is secure. After I have finished collecting data from eligible participants, all data will be downloaded. All data analysis will be done with anonymous data files which do not contain identifying information. The information you provide will be stored securely for a period of five years after the study is complete. In presentations and publications, I will present the survey results as group data, so that it will be impossible to tell how a single individual responded. The information you provide will be kept on a computer and protected by a password.

The online survey tool being used is called "SoSci" survey (https://www.soscisurvey.de/). SoSci Survey has its headquarters and servers that store the data in Munich (Germany). Germany offers a very high level of data protection, both with regard to the obligations of companies as well as with regard to governmental/agency access and interference. In addition, any personal data that is collected is subject to the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary and anonymous. If you begin the survey and would like to withdraw before submitting your responses, you can select “quit” at the bottom of any page in the online survey tool. This will allow you to leave the survey and delete any data entered (you will not be paid if you quit the survey partway through). However, you will not be able to withdraw your data once you finish the survey. Because your responses are anonymous, no one (including the research team) will be able to link your survey data back to you. This procedure ensures that personal information, such as names and email addresses, will not be stored with your data, and you will remain anonymous.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by approximately December of 2025. If you would like a brief summary of the results, there is a question at the end of the survey where you can input your email address. This will not be linked to your survey data, so your responses in the survey will remain anonymous.

Questions about the Study: If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact Ali Lefcoe at lefcoea@mcmaster.ca.

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance under project **#6430**. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Office

Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142

E-mail: mreb@mcmaster.ca

Appendix F

Study 2 Survey

Please think about the last time when another individual at work (e.g., colleague, supervisor, subordinate) shared a negative experience or emotion with you. It is important for us to understand how you responded to this other person. Please fill out the below questions as accurately as possible.

In the below text box, please provide a brief description of the situation and your response.

Please indicate on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree") the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your response.

The last time someone from work shared a negative experience or emotion with me…

	Strongly disagree				Strongest agree
I told them to move on from the experience.	1	2	3	4	5
I suggested they forget the experience.	1	2	3	4	5
I suggested that they focus on other things	1	2	3	4	5
I did not acknowledge their negative experience.	1	2	3	4	5
I tried to dismiss their negativity.	1	2	3	4	5
I encouraged them not to dwell on the negative.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that the situation would pass soon.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them to be patient because things would be better soon.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them to stay positive.	1	2	3	4	5
I encouraged them to look forward to positive things in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that everything would be okay in time.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that things would work out.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that it wasn't a big deal.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that "it could be worse".	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that they were overthinking the situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that "at least something worse didn't happen".	1	2	3	4	5
I suggested to them that this kind of thing happens all the time.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that we all go through this kind of situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I encouraged them to look on the bright side.	1	2	3	4	5
I suggested that the experience could be a positive thing for them.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them about what else they were lucky to have in their life despite the difficult situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I shared the silver lining in their situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I encouraged them to make the best of the situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them to be happy that they had other good things going on in their life.	1	2	3	4	5

Demographic Questions

1. What is your gender? We are using the exact questions used in Statistics Canada's 2021 Census, so that we can compare our participants to the population of Canada. **We do NOT endorse the labels they use**.

   Refers to current gender which may be different from sex assigned at birth and may be different from what is indicated on legal documents.

   - Male
   - Female
   - Or please specify your gender:_____
   - I prefer not to answer this question

2. What is your age? _____
   - I prefer not to answer this question

3. What is your occupation? _____

Appendix G

Toxic Positivity Scale following EFA

Please indicate on a scale from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”), the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your response in the situation you described above.

The last time someone from work shared a negative experience or emotion with me…

Encouraging Positivity					
I told them to stay positive.	1	2	3	4	5
I encouraged them to look forward to positive things in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
I encouraged them to look on the bright side.	1	2	3	4	5
I shared the silver lining in their situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I encouraged them to make the best of the situation.	1	2	3	4	5
Dismissing Negativity					
I suggested they forget the experience.	1	2	3	4	5
I ignored the negative parts of what they told me	1	2	3	4	5
I tried to dismiss their negativity.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that it wasn't a big deal.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that they were overthinking the situation.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix H

Letter of Information – Study 3

Affect, Attitudes and Interpersonal Behaviours at Work

Student Investigator:	**Faculty Supervisor:**
Ali Lefcoe	Dr. Catherine Connelly
DeGroote School of Business	DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University	McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada	Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
E-mail: lefcoea@mcmaster.ca	E-mail: connell@mcmaster.ca

Purpose of the Study:

You are invited to take part in this study on affect, attitudes and interpersonal behaviours at work. When sharing emotional experiences with others at work, I hope to learn more about how others respond and how this influences individuals' work-related attitudes and behaviours. I am doing this research for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Catherine Connelly.

What will happen during the study?

I will be asking you questions about your feelings and experiences at work, and your interactions with others (e.g., coworkers, supervisor). For example, I will ask you whether you encourage others to "look on the bright side" at work, and the extent to which you feel particular emotions at work, such as interested, alert, or excited. This study will take about 30 minutes to complete.

Are there any risks to doing this study?

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. It is possible that some participants will worry about the confidentiality of their survey answers. I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

Are there any benefits to doing this study?

I hope to learn about how workers navigate emotions and emotional experiences in the workplace setting. Your insight may help me to further understand motives behind particular behaviours and attitudes at work, and how organizations can encourage the healthy expression of emotions at work.

Payment or Reimbursement

You will receive $7.75 CAD for your participation in this study. You must submit the survey to receive your payment.

Who will know what I said or did in the study?

The online survey tool is secure. After I have finished collecting data from eligible participants, all data will be downloaded. All data analysis will be done with anonymous data files which do not contain identifying information. The information you provide will be stored securely for a period of five years after the study is complete. In presentations and publications, I will present the survey results as group data, so that it will be impossible to tell how a single individual responded. The information you provide will be kept on a computer and protected by a password.

The online survey tool being used is called "SoSci" survey (https://www.soscisurvey.de/). SoSci Survey has its headquarters and servers that store the data in Munich (Germany). Germany offers a very high level of data protection, both with regard to the obligations of companies as well as with regard to governmental/agency access and interference. In addition, any personal data that is collected is subject to the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary and anonymous. If you begin the survey and would like to withdraw before submitting your responses, you can select “quit” at the bottom of any page in the online survey tool. This will allow you to leave the survey and delete any data entered (you will not be paid if you quit the survey partway through). However, you will not be able to withdraw your data once you finish the survey. Because your responses are anonymous, no one (including the research team) will be able to link your survey data back to you. This procedure ensures that personal information, such as names and email addresses, will not be stored with your data, and you will remain anonymous.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by approximately December of 2025. If you would like a brief summary of the results, there is a question at the end of the survey where you can input your email address. This will not be linked to your survey data, so your responses in the survey will remain anonymous.

Questions about the Study: If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact Ali Lefcoe at lefcoea@mcmaster.ca.

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance under project **#6430**. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Office

Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142

E-mail: mreb@mcmaster.ca

Appendix I

Study 3 Survey

Please think about the last time when another individual at work (e.g., colleague, supervisor, subordinate) shared a negative experience or emotion with you.

It is important for us to understand how you responded to this other person. Please fill out the below questions as accurately as possible.

In the below text box, please provide a brief description of the situation and your response.

Please indicate on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"), the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your response in the situation you described above.

The last time someone from work shared a negative experience or emotion with me…

I told them to stay positive.	1	2	3	4	5
I encouraged them to look forward to positive things in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
I encouraged them to look on the bright side.	1	2	3	4	5
I shared the silver lining in their situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I encouraged them to make the best of the situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I suggested they forget the experience.	1	2	3	4	5
I ignored the negative parts of what they told me	1	2	3	4	5
I tried to dismiss their negativity.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that it wasn't a big deal.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that they were overthinking the situation.	1	2	3	4	5

Interpersonal Emotion Regulation

(Modulating the Emotional Response dimension from *Little et al., 2012*)

Please indicate on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree") the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your behaviour towards others at work:

When others are experiencing undesirable emotions, I tell them not to express them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I encourage others to keep their emotions to themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When others with whom I am interacting are 'venting' about a problem, I get them to stop	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When others are experiencing undesirable emotions, I suggest strategies for them to suppress these emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I encourage others not to express their emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Emotional Labour

(Surface and Deep Acting dimensions from Brotheridge & Lee, 2003)

On an average day at work, on a scale from 1 ("rarely") to 5 ("always), how frequently do you:

Resist expressing my true feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
Pretend to have emotions that I don't really have.	1	2	3	4	5
Hide my true feelings about a situation.	1	2	3	4	5
Make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display to others.	1	2	3	4	5
Try to actually experience the emotions that I must show.	1	2	3	4	5
Really try to feel the emotions I have to show as part of my job.	1	2	3	4	5

Positive Affectivity

(Watson et al., 1988)

Below is a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Please indicate, on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("extremely") to what extent you generally feel each of the following:

Interested	1	2	3	4	5
Distressed	1	2	3	4	5
Excited	1	2	3	4	5
Upset	1	2	3	4	5
Strong	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
Scared	1	2	3	4	5
Hostile	1	2	3	4	5
Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
Proud	1	2	3	4	5
Irritable	1	2	3	4	5
Alert	1	2	3	4	5
Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
Inspired	1	2	3	4	5
Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
Determined	1	2	3	4	5
Attentive	1	2	3	4	5
Jittery	1	2	3	4	5
Active	1	2	3	4	5
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5

Counterproductive Work Behaviours

(from the CWB-C 10 item scale: Spector et al., 2010)

On a scale from 1 ("never") to 5 ("every day"), how often have you done each of the following at your present job?

Insulted someone about their job performance.	1	2	3	4	5
Made fun of someone's personal life.	1	2	3	4	5
Ignored someone at work.	1	2	3	4	5
Started an argument with someone at work.	1	2	3	4	5
Insulted or made fun of someone at work.	1	2	3	4	5

Demographic Questions

1. What is your gender? We are using the exact questions used in Statistics Canada's 2021 Census, so that we can compare our participants to the population of Canada. **We do NOT endorse the labels they use**.

   Refers to current gender which may be different from sex assigned at birth and may be different from what is indicated on legal documents.

   - □ Male
   - □ Female
   - □ Or please specify your gender:_____
   - □ I prefer not to answer this question

2. What is your age? _____
   - □ I prefer not to answer this question

3. What is your occupation? _____

Appendix J

Letter of Information – Studies 4 and 5

Affect, Attitudes and Interpersonal Behaviours at Work

Student Investigator:	**Faculty Supervisor:**
Ali Lefcoe	Dr. Catherine Connelly
DeGroote School of Business	DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University	McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada	Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
E-mail: lefcoea@mcmaster.ca	E-mail: connell@mcmaster.ca

Purpose of the Study:

You are invited to take part in this study on affect, attitudes and interpersonal behaviours at work. When sharing emotional experiences with others at work, I hope to learn more about how others respond and how this influences individuals' work-related attitudes and behaviours. I am doing this research for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Catherine Connelly.

What will happen during the study?

I will be asking you questions about your feelings and experiences at work, and your interactions with others (e.g., coworkers). For example, I will ask you whether you encourage others to "look on the bright side" at work, and the extent to which you feel particular emotions at work, such as interested, alert, or excited. This study will take about 30 minutes to complete.

Are there any risks to doing this study?

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. It is possible that some participants will worry about the confidentiality of their survey answers. I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

Are there any benefits to doing this study?

I hope to learn about how workers navigate emotions and emotional experiences in the workplace setting. Your insight may help me to further understand motives behind particular behaviours and attitudes at work, and how organizations can encourage the healthy expression of emotions at work.

Payment or Reimbursement

You will receive $7.75 CAD for your participation in this study. You must submit the survey to receive your payment.

Who will know what I said or did in the study?

The online survey tool is secure. After I have finished collecting data from eligible participants, all data will be downloaded. All data analysis will be done with anonymous data files which do not contain identifying information. The information you provide will be stored securely for a period of five years after the study is complete. In presentations and publications, I will present the survey results as group data, so that it will be impossible to tell how a single individual responded. The information you provide will be kept on a computer and protected by a password.

We are often identifiable through the stories we tell. Please keep this in mind when answering survey questions that ask for specific experiences you might have had. However, your data is anonymous so no one (including the research team) will be able to link your responses back to you.

The online survey tool being used is called "SoSci" survey (https://www.soscisurvey.de/). SoSci Survey has its headquarters and servers that store the data in Munich (Germany). Germany offers a very high level of data protection, both with regard to the obligations of companies as well as with regard to governmental/agency access and interference. In addition, any personal data that is collected is subject to the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary and anonymous. If you begin the survey and would like to withdraw before submitting your responses, you can select “quit” at the bottom of any page in the online survey tool. This will allow you to leave the survey and delete any data entered (you will not be paid if you quit the survey partway through). However, you will not be able to withdraw your data once you finish the survey. Because your responses are anonymous, no one (including the research team) will be able to link your survey data back to you. This procedure ensures that personal information, such as names and email addresses, will not be stored with your data, and you will remain anonymous.

How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by approximately December of 2025. If you would like a brief summary of the results, there is a question at the end of the survey where you can input your email address. This will not be linked to your survey data, so your responses in the survey will remain anonymous.

Questions about the Study: If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact Ali Lefcoe at lefcoea@mcmaster.ca.

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance under project **#6430**. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Office

Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142

E-mail: mreb@mcmaster.ca

Appendix K

Study 4 Survey

Scenario 1 – Real-Life

People often share their feelings or experiences with others at work. For example, maybe your coworker has vented to you about dealing with a difficult customer/client. Or maybe they have told you about something negative that has happened to them (e.g., being passed over for a promotion).

We are interested in hearing more about a particular time when a coworker shared something negative that has happened to them, such as those experiences mentioned above.

Please note, we are not asking about a conflict between you and this coworker, but a time when this coworker came to you to share something negative that happened to them.

Can you think of a particular experience? You will not be screened out if you cannot recall one (we will just ask you different questions).

- ☐ Yes
- No (if no, participant is directed to scenario 2)

Please create a pseudonym for this individual and write it in the text box below. This will only be for the purpose of prompting you in the questions below.

_____

[the survey tool will populate the name written in the text box in the questions below to replace "*this person*"]

We would like to know more about [this person] and your relationship.

Liking Scale

(Wojciszke et al., 2009)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree, on a scale from 1 (definitely disagree) to 5 (definitely agree) with the following statements regarding your relationship with [this person]:

I have warm feelings about [this person].	1	2	3	4	5
I like [this person].	1	2	3	4	5
I feel close to [this person].	1	2	3	4	5

How often do you interact with this person?

Every day	Most days – 2 or 3 days a week	Sometimes – once a week	Occasionally – 2 or 3 times a month	Rarely – once a month or less	Never – this was a one-off situation

What is their gender? We are using the exact questions used in Statistics Canada's 2021 Census.
We do NOT endorse the labels they use.
This question is asking about current gender which may be different from sex assigned at birth and may be different from what is indicated on legal documents.

- Male
- Female
- Or please specify:_____
- I prefer not to answer this question

Please describe the situation in detail.

f) Describe the negative experience/emotion [this person] shared with you.

_____

Please answer the following questions based on how you were feeling immediately before the situation you described above.

Positive and Negative Affect

(Watson et al., 1988)

Below is a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Please indicate, on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("extremely") to what extent you felt this way immediately before the situation you described with [this person].

Interested	1	2	3	4	5
Distressed	1	2	3	4	5
Excited	1	2	3	4	5
Upset	1	2	3	4	5
Strong	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
Scared	1	2	3	4	5
Hostile	1	2	3	4	5
Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
Proud	1	2	3	4	5
Irritable	1	2	3	4	5
Alert	1	2	3	4	5
Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
Inspired	1	2	3	4	5
Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
Determined	1	2	3	4	5
Attentive	1	2	3	4	5
Jittery	1	2	3	4	5
Active	1	2	3	4	5
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5

Emotional Exhaustion and Cognitive Weariness

(Shirom, 1989 from Toker et al., 2012)

Please indicate the extent to which you felt the following immediately before the situation you described with [this person].

	Almost never						Almost always
My thinking process was slow.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I had difficulty concentrating.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I felt I was not thinking clearly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I felt I was not focused on my thinking.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I had difficulty thinking about complex things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I felt I was unable to be sensitive to the needs of other people at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I felt I was not capable of investing emotionally in other people at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I felt I was not capable of being sympathetic to other people at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Emotional Competence

(Adapted from Jordan & Lawrence, 2009 – Awareness of Others' Emotions Subscale)

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) about your feelings when working with others.

I can read others 'true' feelings at work, even if they try to hide them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am able to describe accurately the way others at work are feeling.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When I talk to others at work, I can gauge their true feelings from their body language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can tell when others at work don't mean what they say.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

What specifically did you say/do in response to [this person] and why?

_____

We would like to understand more about how you responded to [this person].

Toxic Positivity Scale

Please indicate on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"), the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your response in the situation you described above.

When [this person] shared a negative experience or emotion with me…

I told them to stay positive.	1	2	3	4	5
I encouraged them to look forward to positive things in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
I encouraged them to look on the bright side.	1	2	3	4	5
I shared the silver lining in their situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I encouraged them to make the best of the situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I suggested they forget the experience.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that it wasn't a big deal.	1	2	3	4	5
I told them that they were overthinking the situation.	1	2	3	4	5

Scenario 2 – Hypothetical

Please recall the last person you spoke with at work who works at your organization, such as a coworker or colleague, but not a client or customer.

Please create a pseudonym for this individual and write it in the text box below. This will only be for the purpose of prompting you in the questions below.

_____

[the survey tool will populate the name written in the text box in the questions below to replace "*this person*"]

We would like to know more about [this person] and your relationship.

Liking Scale

(Wojciszke et al., 2009)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree, on a scale from 1 (definitely disagree) to 5 (definitely agree) with the following statements regarding your relationship with [this person]:

I have warm feelings about [this person].	1	2	3	4	5
I like [this person].	1	2	3	4	5
I feel close to [this person].	1	2	3	4	5

How often do you interact with this person?

Every day	Most days – 2 or 3 days a week	Sometimes – once a week	Occasionally – 2 or 3 times a month	Rarely – once a month or less	Never – this was a one-off situation

What is their gender? We are using the exact questions used in Statistics Canada's 2021 Census. **We do NOT endorse the labels they use**.
This question is asking about current gender which may be different from sex assigned at birth and may be different from what is indicated on legal documents.

- Male
- Female
- Or please specify:_____
- I prefer not to answer this question

For the next few questions, we would like to know more about your current state.

Positive and Negative Affect

(Watson et al., 1988)

Below is a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Please indicate, on a scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 5 (“extremely”) to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment.

Interested	1	2	3	4	5
Distressed	1	2	3	4	5
Excited	1	2	3	4	5
Upset	1	2	3	4	5
Strong	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
Scared	1	2	3	4	5
Hostile	1	2	3	4	5
Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
Proud	1	2	3	4	5
Irritable	1	2	3	4	5
Alert	1	2	3	4	5
Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
Inspired	1	2	3	4	5
Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
Determined	1	2	3	4	5
Attentive	1	2	3	4	5
Jittery	1	2	3	4	5
Active	1	2	3	4	5
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5

Emotional Exhaustion and Cognitive Weariness

(Shirom, 1989 from Toker et al., 2012)

Please indicate how often you have recently experienced each of the following at work:

	Almost never						Almost always
My thinking process is slow.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have difficulty concentrating.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel I am not thinking clearly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel I am not focused on my thinking.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have difficulty thinking about complex things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel I am unable to be sensitive to the needs of other people at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel I am not capable of investing emotionally in other people at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel I am not capable of being sympathetic to other people at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Emotional Competence

(Adapted from Jordan & Lawrence, 2009 – Awareness of Others' Emotions Subscale)

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) about your feelings when working with others.

I can read others 'true' feelings at work, even if they try to hide them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am able to describe accurately the way others at work are feeling.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When I talk to others at work, I can gauge their true feelings from their body language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can tell when others at work don't mean what they say.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please imagine the following scenario and answer the questions below

[This person] was passed up for a promotion they were excited about and thought they deserved. They are disappointed and frustrated and share this with you. [This person] says to you, *"I never thought this would happen. I worked really hard for this promotion and spent a lot of time preparing for the interview. I just can't believe it. I'm so frustrated. I really feel like I deserved it."*

How would you respond to [this person]? What would you say? Please be specific.

_____

Toxic Positivity Scale

Please indicate on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"), the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding how you would respond in the situation described above.

If [this person] shared this upsetting news with me…

I would tell them to stay positive.	1	2	3	4	5
I would encourage them to look forward to positive things in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
I would encourage them to look on the bright side.	1	2	3	4	5
I would share the silver lining in their situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I would encourage them to make the best of the situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I would suggest they forget the experience.	1	2	3	4	5
I would tell them that it isn't a big deal.	1	2	3	4	5
I would tell them that they are overthinking the situation.	1	2	3	4	5

Demographic Questions (all participants answer these)

What is your gender? We are using the exact questions used in Statistics Canada's 2021 Census, so that we can compare our participants to the population of Canada. **We do NOT endorse the labels they use**.
We are asking about current gender which may be different from sex assigned at birth and may be different from what is indicated on legal documents.

- Male
- Female
- Or please specify your gender:_____
- I prefer not to answer this question

What is your age? _____

- I prefer not to answer this question

What is your occupation? _____

Appendix L

Study 5 Survey

Scenario 1 – Real-life

People often share their feelings or experiences with others at work. For example, maybe you vented to your coworker about dealing with a difficult customer/client. Or maybe you told them about something negative that has happened to you (e.g., being passed over for a promotion).

We are interested in hearing more about a particular time when you shared something negative that has happened to you with a coworker, such as those experiences mentioned above.

Please note, we are not asking about a conflict between you and this coworker, but a time when you went to this coworker to share something negative that happened to you.

Can you think of a particular experience? You will not be screened out if you cannot recall one (we will just ask you different questions).

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (if no, participant is directed to scenario 2)

Please create a pseudonym for this individual and write it in the text box below. This will only be for the purpose of prompting you in the questions below.

_____

[the survey tool will populate the name written in the text box in the questions below to replace "*this person*"]

We would like to know more about [this person] and your relationship.

Liking Scale

(Wojciszke et al., 2009)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree, on a scale from 1 (definitely disagree) to 5 (definitely agree) with the following statements regarding your relationship with [this person]:

I have warm feelings about [this person].	1	2	3	4	5
I like [this person].	1	2	3	4	5
I feel close to [this person].	1	2	3	4	5

How often do you interact with this person?

Every day	Most days – 2 or 3 days a week	Sometimes – once a week	Occasionally – 2 or 3 times a month	Rarely – once a month or less	Never – this was a one-off situation

What is their gender? We are using the exact questions used in Statistics Canada's 2021 Census.
We do NOT endorse the labels they use.
This question is asking about current gender which may be different from sex assigned at birth and may be different from what is indicated on legal documents.

- Male
- Female
- Or please specify:_____

I prefer not to answer this question

Please describe the situation in detail.

g) Describe the negative experience/emotion you shared with [this person].

_____

h) What specifically did [this person] say/do in response?

_____

We would like to understand more about how [this person] responded to you.

Toxic Positivity Scale

Please indicate on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"), the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding [this person]'s response in the situation you described above.

When I shared a negative experience or emotion with [this person]…

[This person] told me to stay positive.	1	2	3	4	5
[This person] encouraged me to look forward to positive things in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
[This person] encouraged me to look on the bright side.	1	2	3	4	5
[This person] shared the silver lining in my situation.	1	2	3	4	5
[This person] encouraged me to make the best of the situation.	1	2	3	4	5
[This person] suggested I forget the experience.	1	2	3	4	5
[This person] told me that it wasn't a big deal.	1	2	3	4	5
[This person] told me that I was overthinking the situation.	1	2	3	4	5

For the next few questions, we would like to know how you felt immediately after the situation you described with [this person].

Positive and Negative Affect

(Watson et al., 1988)

Below is a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Please indicate, on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("extremely") to what extent you felt this way as a result of [this person]'s response to your negative experience/emotion.

Interested	1	2	3	4	5
Distressed	1	2	3	4	5
Excited	1	2	3	4	5
Upset	1	2	3	4	5
Strong	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
Scared	1	2	3	4	5
Hostile	1	2	3	4	5
Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
Proud	1	2	3	4	5
Irritable	1	2	3	4	5
Alert	1	2	3	4	5
Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
Inspired	1	2	3	4	5
Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
Determined	1	2	3	4	5
Attentive	1	2	3	4	5
Jittery	1	2	3	4	5
Active	1	2	3	4	5
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5

Hurt Relationships

(Adapted from Connelly & Zweig, 2015)

Please indicate, on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("completely"), the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your relationship with [this person] as a result of their response to your negative experience/emotion.

This situation permanently weakened my relationship with [this person].	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This situation made me trust [this person] less.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This situation temporarily weakened my relationship with [this person].	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This situation made me dislike [this person].	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Future Emotion-Sharing

How likely are you to share negative experiences/emotions with this person in future?

Very unlikely				Very likely
1	2	3	4	5

Scenario 2 – Hypothetical

Please recall the last person you spoke with at work who works at your organization, such as a coworker or colleague, but not a client or customer.

Please create a pseudonym for this individual and write it in the text box below. This will only be for the purpose of prompting you in the questions below.

_____

[the survey tool will populate the name written in the text box in the questions below to replace "*this person*"]

We would like to know more about [this person] and your relationship.

Liking Scale

(Wojciszke et al., 2009)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree, on a scale from 1 (definitely disagree) to 5 (definitely agree) with the following statements regarding your relationship with [this person]:

I have warm feelings about [this person].	1	2	3	4	5
I like [this person].	1	2	3	4	5
I feel close to [this person].	1	2	3	4	5

How often do you interact with this person?

Every day	Most days – 2 or 3 days a week	Sometimes – once a week	Occasionally – 2 or 3 times a month	Rarely – once a month or less	Never – this was a one-off situation

What is their gender? We are using the exact questions used in Statistics Canada's 2021 Census.
We do NOT endorse the labels they use.
This question is asking about current gender which may be different from sex assigned at birth and may be different from what is indicated on legal documents.

- Male
- Female
- Or please specify:_____
- I prefer not to answer this question

Please imagine the following scenario and answer the questions below

You've just found out that you were passed over for a promotion at work that you were excited about and thought you deserved. You are disappointed and frustrated and share this with [this person]. [This person] responds by saying "*You're overthinking the situation. It's not that big of a deal. Try to forget about it and stay positive. You should be grateful for the opportunity. Look on the bright side, at least you still have your job."*

For the next few questions, we would like to know how the above scenario and [this person]'s response **would** make you feel.

Positive and Negative Affect

(Watson et al., 1988)

Below is a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Please indicate, on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("extremely") to what extent you would feel each of these emotions as a result of [this person]'s response to you being passed over for a promotion.

Interested	1	2	3	4	5
Distressed	1	2	3	4	5
Excited	1	2	3	4	5
Upset	1	2	3	4	5
Strong	1	2	3	4	5
Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
Scared	1	2	3	4	5
Hostile	1	2	3	4	5
Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
Proud	1	2	3	4	5
Irritable	1	2	3	4	5
Alert	1	2	3	4	5
Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
Inspired	1	2	3	4	5
Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
Determined	1	2	3	4	5
Attentive	1	2	3	4	5
Jittery	1	2	3	4	5
Active	1	2	3	4	5
Afraid	1	2	3	4	5

Hurt Relationships

(Adapted from Connelly & Zweig, 2015)

Please indicate, on a scale from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("completely"), the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding how the situation described above would influence your relationship with [this person].

This situation would permanently weaken my relationship with [this person].	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This situation would make me trust [this person] less.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This situation would temporarily weaken my relationship with [this person].	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This situation would make me dislike [this person].	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Future Emotion-Sharing

How likely would you be to share negative experiences/emotions with this person in future?

Very unlikely				Very likely
1	2	3	4	5

Demographic Questions (all participants answer these)

What is your gender? We are using the exact questions used in Statistics Canada's 2021 Census, so that we can compare our participants to the population of Canada. **We do NOT endorse the labels they use**.
We are asking about current gender which may be different from sex assigned at birth and may be different from what is indicated on legal documents.

- Male
- Female
- Or please specify your gender:_____
- I prefer not to answer this question

What is your age? _____

- I prefer not to answer this question

What is your occupation? _____

TABLES

Table 1

Type of Publication	Number of Hits
Newspapers	1088
Web-based Publications	342
WebLinks	93
Newswires & Press Releases	74
Blogs	62
News Transcripts	59
Industry Trade Press	55
Magazines & Journals	42
Video	34
Audio	17
Legal News	5
News	1
Newsletters	1
TOTAL	**1873**

Table 2

Type of Response	**Frequency**	**Examples**
Empathy/Support/Asking Questions	32 (55%)	• *"They listened, were sympathetic, and were empathetic."* (Target) • *"I listened carefully to her concerns and let her express her feelings without interrupting."* (Enactor) • *I asked a couple of contextual questions…[to] have the person feel like they were being listened to and heard."* (Enactor)
Advice	11 (19%)	• *"speak to your supervisor about your training needs."* (Enactor) • *"you didn't have to stay behind to do work…one of the junior member[s] could help with the work."* (Target)
Insufficient/Invalid Response	11 (19%)	• *"I don't know."* (Hypothetical) • *"[A coworker] proceeded to tell me that I shouldn't be in this field of work…I said nothing in return."* (Enactor)
Alternative Explanation	4 (7%)	• *"maybe this person has other apps to test and hence why they didn't test thoroughly."* (Target) • *"she is new and wants to learn. Her purpose for asking a lot of questions is so she could help."* (Enactor)

Table 3

Exploratory Factor Analyses Results for the Toxic Positivity Scale

	Factor	
	1	2
I told them to stay positive.	**0.71**	0.07
I encouraged them to look forward to positive things in the future.	**0.81**	-0.01
I encouraged them to look on the bright side.	**0.86**	0.00
I shared the silver lining in their situation.	**0.68**	0.00
I encouraged them to make the best of the situation.	**0.71**	-0.01
I suggested they forget the experience.	0.05	**0.76**
I did not acknowledge their negative experience.	-0.12	**0.57**
I tried to dismiss their negativity.	0.02	**0.72**
I told them that it wasn't a big deal.	0.07	**0.71**
I told them that they were overthinking the situation.	0.17	**0.63**

Note. N = 201. Factor loadings above 0.50 are in bold. Factor 1 corresponds to encouraging positivity, factor 2 corresponds to dismissing negativity.

Table 4

Model Comparisons for Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model	χ^2	*df*	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Two-factor reduced oblique model	78.44	*19*	0.92	0.92	0.13
Two-factor oblique model	126.48	34	0.89	0.89	0.12
Two-factor orthogonal model	166.06	35	0.87	0.85	0.14
One-factor model	326.31	35	0.70	0.67	0.20

Note. N = 202; *df* = degrees of freedom; GFI = goodness of fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation. Two items removed from reduced model (*"I ignored the negative parts of what they told me* " and *"I tried to dismiss their negativity* ").

Table 5

Model Comparisons for Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Model	χ^2	*df*	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Model 4a (all constructs modeled separately, includes paths from all factors to toxic positivity items)	849.41	486	0.81	0.88	0.06
Model 4b (all constructs modeled separately, only toxic positivity constructs correlated)	956.65	526	0.78	0.85	0.06
One-factor model (all constructs modeled together)	2448.33	527	0.47	0.34	0.14

Note. N = 202; df = degrees of freedom; GFI = goodness of fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Encouraging Positivity	2.98	1.09	(0.87)						
2. Dismissing Negativity	1.76	0.94	0.42**	(0.81)					
3. Interpersonal Emotion Regulation	1.93	1.09	0.20**	0.46**	(0.87)				
4. Surface Acting	2.79	0.99	-0.12	0.16*	0.31**	(0.84)			
5. Deep Acting	2.94	0.86	0.19**	0.09	0.17*	0.05	(0.79)		
6. Counterproductive Work Behaviour	1.38	0.43	0.02	0.22**	0.24**	0.23**	-0.03	(0.63)	
7. Positive Affectivity	33.60	7.27	0.35**	0.06	0.06	-0.40**	0.10	0.02	(0.89)

Note. $N = 202$, $p < 0.05 = *$; $p < 0.01 = **$. Dismissing Negativity scale is the reduced 3-item scale. Scale reliabilities (Cronbach's α) are in parantheses.

Table 7

Model Comparisons for Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model	χ^2	*df*	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Two-factor oblique model	50.81	*19*	0.94	0.96	0.09
Two-factor orthogonal model	74.36	20	0.92	0.93	0.12
One-factor model	219.82	20	0.79	0.76	0.22

Note. N = 200; *df* = degrees of freedom; GFI = goodness of fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Interpersonal Liking	3.96	0.88	(0.86)									
2. Frequency of Interactions	2.86	0.93	-0.21**	--								
3. Coworker's Gender[a]	1.61	0.49	0.03	-0.04	--							
4. Positive Affect	3.20	0.72	0.24**	-0.09	0.00	(0.89)						
5. Negative Affect	1.66	0.68	0.05	0.22**	-0.11	-0.07	(0.89)					
6. Emotional Exhaustion	2.37	1.44	-0.27**	0.17*	-0.21**	-0.21**	0.43**	(0.93)				
7. Cognitive Weariness	2.56	1.40	-0.04	0.22**	-0.21**	-0.11	0.56**	0.60**	(0.94)			
8. Emotional Competence	5.04	1.06	0.27**	-0.12	0.05	0.25**	-0.11	-0.08	-0.10	(0.87)		
9. Encouraging Positivity	3.29	1.08	0.14*	-0.02	-0.31**	0.33**	0.04	0.02	0.00	-0.01	(0.90)	
10. Dismissing Negativity	1.93	1.08	-0.02	-0.02	-0.27**	-0.02	0.25**	0.26**	0.15*	-0.12	0.37**	(0.80)

Note. N = 200, p <0.05 = *; p <0.01 = **. Scale reliabilities (Cronbach's α) are in parantheses where appropriate. Frequency of interactions was measured on a scale from 1 to 6.

[a]Coworker's Gender was coded as 1 = male; 2 = female; 5 = other, please specify.

Table 9

Hierachical multiple regression results: Positive affect and emotional competence interaction

	Encouraging Positivity			Dismissing Negativity		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Demographics						
Interpersonal Liking	0.19*	0.16	0.17	-.02	0.05	0.05
Frequency of Interactions	0.00	0.02	0.03	-0.03	-0.10	-0.10
Coworker's Gender	-0.70**	-0.68**	-0.69**	-0.60**	-0.50**	-.50**
Positive Affect		0.52**	0.52**		0.06	0.06
Negative Affect		0.05	0.05		0.33*	0.33*
Emotional Exhaustion		0.09	0.09		0.18*	0.18*
Cognitive Weariness		-0.10	-0.10		-0.11	-0.11
Emotional Competence		-0.12	-0.13		-0.12	-0.12
Interaction						
Positive Affect X Emotional Competence			-0.04			0.01
Total R^2	0.12	0.23	0.24	0.07	0.17	0.17
ΔR^2	0.12**	0.12**	0.00	0.07**	0.09**	0.00
F	8.86**	7.30**	6.50**	5.21**	4.82**	4.27**
Adjusted R^2	0.11	0.20	0.20	0.06	0.13	0.13

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

Table 10

Hierachical multiple regression results: Negative affect and emotional competence interaction

	Encouraging Positivity			Dismissing Negativity		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Demographics						
Interpersonal Liking	0.19*	0.16	0.17	-.02	0.05	0.06
Frequency of Interactions	0.00	0.02	0.05	-0.03	-0.10	-0.08
Coworker's Gender	-0.70**	-0.68**	-0.68**	-0.60**	-0.50**	-.50**
Positive Affect		0.52**	0.52**		0.06	0.06
Negative Affect		0.05	0.05		0.33*	0.33*
Emotional Exhaustion		0.09	0.07		0.18*	0.17*
Cognitive Weariness		-0.10	-0.09		-0.11	-0.11
Emotional Competence		-0.12	-0.12		-0.12	-0.12
Interaction						
Negative Affect X Emotional Competence			0.25*			0.10
Total R^2	0.12	0.23	0.26	0.07	0.17	0.17
ΔR^2	0.12**	0.12**	0.03*	0.07**	0.09**	0.00
F	8.86**	7.30**	7.47**	5.21**	4.82**	4.40**
Adjusted R^2	0.11	0.20	0.23	0.06	0.13	0.13

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

Table 11

Hierachical multiple regression results: Emotional exhaustion and emotional competence interaction

	Encouraging Positivity			Dismissing Negativity		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Demographics						
Interpersonal Liking	0.19*	0.16	0.17	-.02	0.05	0.06
Frequency of Interactions	0.00	0.02	0.01	-0.03	-0.10	-0.10
Coworker's Gender	-0.70**	-0.68**	-0.66**	-0.60**	-0.50**	-.49**
Positive Affect		0.52**	0.52**		0.06	0.06
Negative Affect		0.05	0.04		0.33*	0.33*
Emotional Exhaustion		0.09	0.09		0.18*	0.17*
Cognitive Weariness		-0.10	-0.12		-0.11	-0.12
Emotional Competence		-0.12	-0.12		-0.12	-0.12
Interaction						
Emotional Exhaustion X Emotional Competence			0.11*			0.06
Total R^2	0.12	0.23	0.25	0.07	0.17	0.17
ΔR^2	0.12**	0.12**	0.02*	0.07**	0.09**	0.01
F	8.86**	7.30**	7.16**	5.21**	4.82**	4.44**
Adjusted R^2	0.11	0.20	0.22	0.06	0.13	0.13

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

Table 12

Hierachical multiple regression results: Cognnitive weariness and emotional competence interaction

	Encouraging Positivity			Dismissing Negativity		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Demographics						
Interpersonal Liking	0.19*	0.16	0.17	-.02	0.05	0.06
Frequency of Interactions	0.00	0.02	0.02	-0.03	-0.10	-0.10
Coworker's Gender	-0.70**	-0.68**	-0.69**	-0.60**	-0.50**	-.50**
Positive Affect		0.52**	0.53**		0.06	0.06
Negative Affect		0.05	0.07		0.33*	0.34*
Emotional Exhaustion		0.09	0.07		0.18*	0.17*
Cognitive Weariness		-0.10	-0.10		-0.11	-0.11
Emotional Competence		-0.12	-0.11		-0.12	-0.12
Interaction						
Cognnitive Weariness X Emotional Competence			0.10*			0.03
Total R^2	0.12	0.23	0.25	0.07	0.17	0.17
ΔR^2	0.12**	0.12**	0.02*	0.07**	0.09**	0.00
F	8.86**	7.30**	7.13**	5.21**	4.82**	4.32**
Adjusted R^2	0.11	0.20	0.22	0.06	0.13	0.13

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

Table 13

t test results comparing critical incident and hypothetical responses

	Critical Incidents		Hypothetical Scenario			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t(*398*)*	Cohen's *d*
Positive Affect	3.20	0.72	3.07	0.85	1.67	0.17
Negative Affect	1.66	0.68	1.77	0.75	-1.53	-0.15
Emotional Exhaustion	2.37	1.44	2.92	1.61	-3.62**	-0.36
Cognitive Weariness	2.56	1.4	3.41	1.62	-5.59**	-0.56
Emotional Competence	5.04	1.06	4.7	1.18	2.99**	0.30
Encouraging Positivity	3.29	1.08	3.65	1.04	-3.44**	-0.34
Dismissing Negativity	1.93	1.08	1.85	0.82	0.80	0.08

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

Table 14

t test results comparing male and female respondents

	Male		Female			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t(192)*	Cohen's *d*
Encouraging Positivity	3.45	0.98	3.16	1.12	1.95	0.28
Dismissing Negativity	2.14	1.13	1.73	0.98	2.68*	0.39

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Interpersonal Liking	3.99	0.88	(0.87)								
2. Frequency of Interactions	2.98	0.95	-0.22**	--							
3. Coworker's Gender[a]	1.63	0.48	0.19**	-0.10	--						
4. Encouraging Positivity	3.29	0.98	0.09	-0.03	-0.14*	(0.87)					
5. Dismissing Negativity	1.99	0.98	-0.18**	-0.06	-0.15*	0.26**	(0.74)				
6. Positive Affect	2.82	0.82	0.15*	0.00	-0.09	0.51**	0.04	(0.87)			
7. Negative Affect	1.73	0.60	-0.22**	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.26**	0.05	(0.85)		
8. Hurt Relationships	1.36	0.96	-0.37**	0.03	-0.05	-0.01	0.33**	-0.11	0.33**	(0.96)	
9. Future Sharing	4.36	0.83	0.52**	-0.14	0.12	0.11	-0.22**	0.28**	-0.24**	-0.50**	--

Note. N = 200, p <0.05 = *; p <0.01 = **. Scale reliabilities (Cronbach's α) are in parantheses where appropriate. Frequency of interactions and future sharing were measured on a scale from 1 to 6 and 1 to 5, respectively.

[a]Coworker's Gender was coded as 1 = male; 2 = female; 5 = other, please specify.

Table 16

Hierachical multiple regression results

	Positive Affect		Negative Affect		Hurt Relationships		Future Sharing	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Demographics								
Interpersonal Liking	0.16*	0.08	-0.14*	-0.12*	-0.35**	-0.30**	0.46**	0.42**
Frequency of Interactions	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.02	-0.04	-0.02	-0.03	-0.04
Coworker's Gender	-0.20	-0.06	0.09	0.12	0.01	0.05	0.03	0.04
Encouraging Positivity		0.44**		0.00		-0.08		0.11
Dismissing Negativity		-0.05		0.14**		0.24**		-0.12*
Total R^2	0.03	0.29	0.04	0.09	0.11	0.17	0.25	0.28
ΔR^2	0.03	0.25**	0.04*	0.05*	0.11**	0.06**	0.25**	0.03*
F	2.23	15.54**	2.87*	3.75**	7.93**	7.75**	21.48**	14.62**
Adjusted R^2	0.02	0.27	0.03	0.07	0.10	0.15	0.24	0.26

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

Table 17

t test results comparing critical incident and hypothetical responses

	Critical Incidents		Hypothetical Scenario			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t(*411*)*	Cohen's *d*
Positive Affect	2.82	0.82	2.28	0.80	6.65**	0.66
Negative Affect	1.73	0.60	2.37	0.70	-9.90**	-0.97
Hurt Relationship	1.36	0.96	3.42	1.61	-15.92**	-1.54
Future Sharing	4.36	0.83	2.71	1.11	17.07**	1.67

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.