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The non-linear influence of the frequency of interactions between team managers and team members on positive team mood: a moderated model

Ana Hernández[1]*, Vicente González-Romá[1] and Rafael Oltra[2]
[1]IDOCAL, University of Valencia, Spain
[2]Medtronic Plc., Dublin, Ireland

Based on contradictory arguments about whether the frequency of the interactions between team managers and the teams they manage is positive or negative for teams, we hypothesize a curvilinear relationship. Focusing on positive team mood and based on the leadership literature and the conservation of resources theory, we hypothesize an inverted-U-shaped relationship. In addition, adding arguments from the substitutes for leadership theory, we propose that this curvilinear relationship is moderated by team potency and tenure. Hypotheses were tested using panel data collected in a sample of 55 work teams by means of hierarchical non-lineal regression. Results show that, as expected, the relationship between the frequency of the interactions and positive team mood was curvilinear and moderated by team potency and team tenure. As expected, the curve became increasingly convex downward as team tenure increased. However, for team potency, the results were contrary to what was expected. The results have important implications for planning the frequency of managers' interactions with their teams, and they indicate the importance of considering team tenure and potency as contextual moderators.

Practitioner points

- Our study shows that the frequency with which team managers interact with team members to discuss work, organizational, and team functioning issues is a relevant predictor of positive team mood.
- More frequent interactions do not always foster positive team mood. Average interaction levels, as perceived by team members, are more effective than low or high levels.
- Managers should adapt the frequency of the interactions to the characteristics of the teams managed, particularly their tenure and potency.

Currently, many contemporary organizations rely on work teams to resolve the problems and demands of changing environments and promote effectiveness (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp, & Gilson, 2008; Valls, González-Romá, & Tomás, 2016). Team leaders (i.e., team managers) play a crucial role in the functioning of work teams. Team managers are responsible for providing team members with the necessary support and resources and keeping them united in order to ensure appropriate team functioning

*Correspondence should be addressed to Ana Hernández, IDOCAL, University of Valencia, Av Blasco Ibáñez, 21 -46010 Valencia, Spain (e-mail: Ana.Hernandez@uv.es).

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and outcomes (Yukl, 2006). Managers have also been described as being responsible for the 'emotional wellbeing of employees' (Medler-Liraz & Kark, 2012; p. 91). Part of leaders' influence on team processes, states, and outcomes is enacted through their interactions with team members (Griffith, Gibson, Medeiros, MacDougall, Hardy, & Mumford, 2018) because 'interaction is the medium through which resources are deployed and influence is exerted' (Ogawa & Bossert, 1997, p. 18). Through these interactions, team leaders contribute to discussing and modelling teamwork-related issues, such as team goals, procedures, and relationships, and they help to effectively manage and promote teams' well-being (Barsade & Knight, 2015). Previous studies have shown the relevance of teams' well-being due to its association with key work team outcomes such as performance, effectiveness, and absenteeism (Barsade & Knight, 2015; Barsade & O'Neill, 2014; Knight & Eisenkraft, 2015; Mason & Griffin, 2003).

Research has shown the importance of the quality of the interactions between leaders and team members. In particular, high-quality relationships, characterized by a supportive, close, cordial, and friendly leader (Erdogan & Bauer, 2014), have been linked to individual and team well-being (e.g., Ashkanasy & Humphry, 2011; Dasborough, 2006; Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Madjar, Oldham, & Pratt, 2002). However, when focusing on interactions between team managers and team members, quality is not the only factor to consider. The frequency of interactions (FI), especially as perceived by team members (i.e., team members' perceptions of how frequently managers interact with the team to discuss work and organizational issues), may also have an influence on team well-being.

Perceived FI is one of the three dimensions of distance between leaders (i.e., managers) and team members proposed by Antonakis and Atwater (2002): physical distance (how far or how close followers are located in relation to their leader), social distance (perceived differences in status, rank, authority, social standing, and power), and perceived interaction frequency (the perceived degree to which leaders interact with their followers). FI is also included in the construct of structural distance proposed by Napier and Ferris (1993), which includes a dimension on supervision structure, referred to as leader–follower FI. We focus on this particular dimension because social interaction with team members is one of the main ways leaders can influence team members and deploy the necessary resources (Northouse, 2011; Ogawa, & Bossert, 1997). In addition, social interaction has been proposed a pre-requisite for social influence that can contribute to the emergence of collective-level properties such as team well-being (Chun, Yammarino, Dionne, Sosik, & Moon, 2009).

Although FI between team leaders and members is an important characteristic of managerial behaviour that can impact teams' well-being, there is surprisingly little empirical literature on this topic. The few studies that have considered the relationship between FI and employees' well-being (measured as work satisfaction) have obtained contradictory results. On the one hand, some studies on leaders' distance have indicated that more frequent interactions between leaders and followers should lead to greater positive outcomes (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; Napier & Ferris, 1993) because leaders have more opportunities to provide feedback and fluently exchange relevant information (see Daft & Lengel, 1984). On the other hand, other studies have suggested that overly frequent interactions between leaders and their subordinates may be viewed by the latter as unnecessarily close control (i.e., micromanagement) which impairs employees' well-being (Howell, Neufeld & Avolio, 2005). In this regard, some empirical evidence suggests that micromanagement has a negative impact on work satisfaction (House & Mitchell, 1974; Tepper, 2000; Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002).

Hence, the question of whether managers' FI fosters or hinders teams' well-being remains unanswered. The inconsistent results found to date are worrisome because they show that we still do not fully understand the relationship between FI and team well-being. It is important to answer this question for several reasons. First, from a theoretical perspective, we need to know what kind of relationship model underlies the influence of FI on team well-being (positive linear, negative linear, or non-linear). This information will allow us to better understand how the two variables are related and anticipate the consequences of FI. Second, there is a need for research that reconciles opposite views of the FI–well-being relationship and helps to create knowledge consensus (Hollenbeck, 2008). Shedding light on this issue will be useful for future research. Third, from a practical perspective, better understanding this relationship will allow researchers to suggest ways for team managers to safeguard and improve the well-being of the teams they manage by showing appropriate levels of FI with their team members.

In the present study, we aim to answer the aforementioned research question by using a panel design to investigate the influence of the FI between managers and their teams on a key indicator of team well-being: positive team mood (van Horn, Taris, Schaufeli, & Schreurs, 2004; Warr, 1990). Specifically, as we will argue later, based on the literature on management styles (e.g., Bass, 1990; Bass, 1997; Northouse, 2011) and the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002; Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018), we expect the relationship between the FI of managers and their teams and positive team mood to be curvilinear and follow an inverted-U-shape. The proposed curvilinear relationship reconciles the contradictory relationships suggested in the literature. In addition, based on the aforementioned trend in the literature and the substitutes for leadership theory (Kerr & Jermier, 1978), which posits that leadership and supervision may be less important (or even counterproductive) depending on certain subordinate characteristics (e.g., their capabilities or work experience), we expect the curvilinear relationship between managers' FI and positive team mood to be moderated by two team characteristics, specifically, team potency and team tenure. At the individual level, tenure and self-confidence are important resources according to COR theory (specifically, they are examples of condition and personal resources, respectively) (see Ford & Gordon, 1999; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). Their team-level counterparts, team tenure and team potency, are expected to be important resources for teams. The difference is that, whereas team potency is considered a motivational resource (e.g., Lee, Farh & Chen, 2011), team tenure is more related to the experience gained by members working on the team (Stoker, 2008). This experience allows the accumulation of relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities (Sturman, 2003).

By conducting this study, we intend to make the following contributions to the literature. First, based on theories on conservation of resources (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002), management styles (Bass, 1990, 1997; Northouse, 2011), and substitutes for leadership (Kerr & Jermier, 1978), we develop (and test) new theoretical explanations for why and when the FI between managers and their teams is related to team well-being. By doing so, our study contributes to improving our understanding of an elusive relationship that is crucial for teams' well-being. Second, we clarify the type of relationship model that underlies the influence of FI on team well-being. Previous research on this relationship has yielded inconsistent results. Our study helps to create knowledge consensus by showing that the FI–well-being relationship follows an inverted-U-shaped relationship. Therefore, we help to answer an open question and shed light on future research on this topic. Third, our study shows under what conditions the FI between managers and their teams is more or less functional for team well-being, identifying two relevant moderators (team potency

and team tenure) of the FI–well-being relationship. Thus, our study not only helps to answer an unresolved question, but it also provides a nuanced response that makes it possible to predict the effects of the FI between managers and their teams on team well-being under varying conditions (low/high team potency and low/high team tenure). Finally, from a practical point of view, the results of the present study can contribute to determining the optimum levels of perceived FI depending on specific team characteristics (i.e., team potency and team tenure). Knowing these optimum levels can help team managers to adjust their levels of FI with their teams in order to enhance the effectiveness of their leadership behaviours.

Team well-being and positive team mood

Well-being at work refers to employees' evaluations of their experiences at work (Ryan & Deci, 2001). It has been studied from two perspectives (Sonnentag, 2015). The hedonic perspective mainly conceptualizes well-being as positive affect (e. g., happiness; Diener, 2000), whereas the eudaimonic perspective views well-being as personal growth, self-realization, and the pursuit of meaning (Ryff, 1995). The hedonic perspective, with its focus on positive affect, has dominated organizational research conducted at the individual (Sonnentag, 2015) and team levels (García-Buades, Peiró, Montañez-Juan, Kozusznik & Ortiz-Bonnín, 2020).

Affect is the generic term that includes both moods and emotions (Forgas, 1995). Moods are diffuse affective states without a clear cause. Emotions, however, are organized mental responses to an event or entity (Izard, 1991; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988). Moods, compared to emotions, are weaker and more global and diffuse affective reactions. They capture people's day-to-day feelings at work better, and compared to emotions, they are more enduring and have subtler and more pervasive effects (Gamero, González-Romá, & Peiró, 2008).

Positive team mood is defined as positive mood (i.e., feelings of happiness, enthusiasm, optimism) shared by team members (Barsade & Gibson, 2012). It is expected to emerge at the team level through emotional contagion and emotional comparison processes (see Kelly & Barsade, 2001 for a review) and social influence (Fisher, 1986), which typically occur during team members' interactions (Kelly & Barsade, 2001). Influential members, such as team managers, are considered highly relevant sources of team mood (Collins, Lawrence, Troth, & Jordan, 2013).

In this study, we focus on positive team mood because, from the dominant hedonic perspective on the study of well-being, this variable can be considered the most important indicator of team well-being (Diener, 2000; García-Buades *et al.*, 2020; Sonnentag, 2015). Moreover, several studies have shown that positive team mood predicts important outcomes such as team effectiveness, performance, and absenteeism (e.g., Barsade, 2002; George, 1990, 1995; González-Romá & Gamero, 2012; Totterdell, 2000).

FI and positive team mood

People involved in relationships at work, such as team managers and team members, would be expected to feel better or worse as a result of their relationships and social interactions (Lawler & Thye, 1999). In fact, 'social interactions at work can strongly influence people's well-being' (Volmer, Binnewies, Sonnentag, & Niessen, 2012, p- 304). Focusing on team managers, there is empirical evidence that they are important influencers of team affective responses such as team mood (Ashkanasy, 2003; Ashkanasy

& Humprey, 2011; Barsade, 2002; Collins *et al.*, 2013; Erez, Misangyi, Johnson, LePine, & Halverson, 2008; Sy, Cote, & Saavedra, 2005). This influence is at least partly enacted through their interactions with team members (Northouse, 2011).

As mentioned above, we propose that the relationship between one important aspect of these interactions, FI between team managers and the team, and positive team mood is curvilinear. This expectation is based on the literature on management styles and COR theory.

Management or leadership styles are defined as the way leaders interact with their subordinates (Northouse, 2011). Through a combination of behaviours and skills used to interact with their subordinates, leaders have a specific way of implementing plans, providing direction, and motivating the people they lead (Norhthouse, 2011). There are many possible leadership management styles, ranging from laissez-faire to micromanagement.

Laissez-faire leaders tend to avoid their assigned managerial duties. Specifically, they fail to initiate any structure for their employees, communicate performance expectations, or hold employees accountable. In addition, this management style is characterized by making no effort to show consideration for the employees' well-being or maintain their motivation and morale (Sidle, 2007). In short, laissez-faire managers do not recognize or satisfy their teams' needs (Bass, 1990). Thus, teams led by these types of managers feel that they receive no help in their efforts to be successful (Sidle, 2007). This feeling is expected to create frustration within the team (Bashshur, Hernández, & González-Romá, 2011; Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland, & Hetland, 2007), and this frustration may undermine team positive mood (Bashshur *et al.*, 2011). Thus, consistent with arguments of laissez-faire management (e.g., Bass, 1990; Skogstad *et al.*, 2007), when team members perceive that their leader's FI is very low, they can feel abandoned by him/her. Consequently, team members' shared perceptions that their work problems and needs are not being considered by the team leader may decrease positive team mood (e.g., Korsgaard, Schweiger, & Sapienza, 1995; de Vries, Roe, & Taillieu, 1998).

On the other extreme, micromanagement refers to an overbearing and excessive management style (Wright, 2000) characterized by excessive control and attention to details (Sidhu, 2012). Micromanagement, thus, makes employees feel that every move they make is being watched. Leaders' excessive attention to controlling every single detail and tracking team members' activities indicates a lack of trust in the team and hinders personal and professional development (Cangemi, 2000), which is expected to cause frustration and distress in the employees (Cangemi, 2000). Consequently, based on arguments of micromanagement (Howell *et al.*, 2005; Wright, 2000), when team members perceive that the manager's interactions to discuss work-related issues are quite frequent, they may feel that the supervision they receive is too close and involves too much control and pressure. This perception, in turn, will be reflected in lower positive team mood. In fact, there is evidence that managers who are constantly on top of their team members and try to supervise every little thing in the work context contribute to reducing enthusiasm (i.e., positive mood) in team members (Aryee, Sun, Chen, & Debrah, 2008; Frost, 2004).

Considering all these arguments, it is reasonable to expect that an adequate balance between these two management styles (laissez-faire and micromanagement) would be the best style (Tribus, 1998). Accordingly, the relationship between FI and positive team mood is expected to follow an inverted-U-shape because positive team mood should be highest when the FI between managers and their teams is neither too low nor too high.

Moreover, through social interactions, team leaders are able to provide team members with valuable resources to reach the team goals. Therefore, the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) comes into play. COR theory posits that 'individuals (and groups) strive to obtain, retain, foster, and protect those things they centrally value' (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018; p. 106). Stress occurs when valued resources are threatened or lost, or when there is a failure to gain key resources after making a significant resource investment. Furthermore, people use resources to prevent these losses or gain additional resources. Four types of resources are distinguished: object resources (e.g., car, computer), condition resources (e.g., tenure, status), personal resources (e.g., key skills and personal traits such as self-efficacy, self-confidence, and optimism), and energy resources (e.g., knowledge, time). According to Hobfoll (2002), these resources are 'fundamental to the understanding of individual and group well-being' (p. 320).

According to COR theory, it is reasonable to expect a crossover of resources from leaders to followers (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). On the one hand, through social interactions, leaders provide team members with relevant information about potential constraints and courses of action (Northouse, 2011). Information is 'knowledge communicated' (Propp, 1999), and knowledge is an important resource in COR theory (specifically an energy resource – see Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). On the other hand, through social interactions, team leaders contribute to keeping the team motivated (Northouse, 2011). Motivation is also an energy resource that can lead to the acquisition of other resources (see Kammeyer-Mueller, Simon & Judge, 2016), such as optimism (an important personal resource according to COR theory), or at the group level, positive team mood. Thus, when leaders do not interact enough with team members to provide them with relevant information and keep the team motivated, teams lack these important resources. This lack of resources may be a source of stress that contributes to undermining well-being in general and positive team mood in particular (Diener & Fujita, 1995).

On the other extreme, and similar to the effect of having too many meetings (Luong & Rogelberg, 2005), too many interactions would be experienced as interruptions that consume time and energy, which are considered important resources valued by individuals (Hobfoll, 1989). Thus, having too many interactions with the leader to discuss work-related issues would make team members feel like they are wasting important resources (time and effort). This waste can be a source of frustration (Rogelber, Scott, & Kello, 2007) that undermines positive mood (Diener & Fujita, 1995).

Thus, too few or too many interactions with managers, from the perspective of the teams managed, will endanger some valued resources (information and motivation or time and energy), which will threaten another important resource at the team level: positive team mood.

Considering the arguments from the management styles literature and COR theory presented above, we propose that moderate perceptions of FI would be optimal for fostering positive team mood. Under moderate levels of FI, team members would perceive an adequate degree of autonomy, and they would not feel overwhelmed by excessively frequent interactions that take time, attention, and energy from their resource pool (Druskat & Kayes, 1999). At the same time, they would still feel that their leaders care about them and their work and are willing to help them if they have work-related difficulties by providing them with information and other relevant resources.

Integrating the expected consequences of low, moderate, and high levels of FI, we posit that the relationship between FI and positive team mood will follow an inverted-U-shaped model. This pattern reconciles the opposing arguments supporting the functional (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; Daft & Lengel, 1984; Judge & Ferris, 1993; Napier & Ferris,

1993) and dysfunctional (House & Mitchell, 1974; Howell, *et al.*, 2005; Tepper, 2000; Zellars, *et al.*, 2002) influence of FI on team mood.

Taking into account the preceding arguments and findings, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. The relationship between FI and positive team mood will be curvilinear and show an inverted-U-shape.

The moderating role of team potency and team tenure

The adequacy of leaders' styles and behaviours depends on contextual factors, such as the characteristics of the team members (House, 1996). The substitutes for leadership theory (Kerr & Jermier, 1978) also propose that some situational factors (e.g., subordinates' characteristics) may enhance, neutralize, and/or completely substitute for leadership (see Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). Some of the characteristics considered by Kerr and Jermier (1978) are subordinates' abilities, knowledge, and experience, as well as their perceptions of competence and self-esteem (p. 396). Focusing on teams, team tenure and team potency are two important team characteristics that provide teams with the necessary expertise and confidence in their competence to perform their tasks and achieve their goals. Thus, these variables may influence team members' need to have more or less frequent interactions with team leaders and their expectations of what type of leadership behaviour, in this case FI, is the best (Kerr & Jermier, 1978).

Finally, according to COR theory, tenure and self-confidence (the individual counterparts of team tenure and team potency) are considered condition and personal resources, respectively (Brouer, Wallace, & Harvey, 2011; Chan, Kalliath, Brough, O'Driscoll, Siu, & Timms, 2017; Ford & Gordon, 1999; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018;). These resources can help individuals to keep resources or gain additional ones (such as optimism) or better withstand stressful conditions (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). Thus, the impact of the frequency with which leaders interact with team members to provide them with resources such as relevant information can depend on additional resources teams have. Specifically, following Hobfoll (1989), we focus on a condition and a personal resource that, taken collectively, are important for team goal attainment: team tenure and team potency, respectively. These are conditions that may explain why the resources provided by leaders through their interactions with team members do not always have positive effects. In fact, COR theory proposes that some resources are positive or negative for goal achievement depending on the context (i.e., the team characteristics), an area of research that is understudied (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018).

Team tenure

Several leadership theories (e.g., Hersey & Blanchard, 1969, 1977; House, 1996; Kerr & Jermier, 1978) have identified team members' experience as an important moderator of leadership effectiveness. In this study, we focus on team tenure as an indicator of team experience. According to Tesluk and Jacobs (1998), experience has a quantitative component (i.e., tenure) and a qualitative component that is more difficult to operationalize. For this reason, most research has focused on tenure as the quantitative component of experience. In fact, some meta-analyses have shown that time-based measures of experience, such as tenure, are related to important outcomes such as performance (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998).

Teams with low tenure may need more frequent contact with their managers to establish and clarify procedures, resolve doubts, and clarify team and organizational goals. Thus, they would expect to have more frequent interactions with their leaders. However, in teams with high tenure, members should know about the organizational procedures, goals, and available resources, and they would not need to interact with the leader as often to clarify these issues. In these teams, as suggested by the substitutes for leadership model (Kerr & Jermier, 1978), behaviour monitoring and frequent interactions would not be as necessary, and micromanaging, compared to a laissez-faire management style, would be more impairing.

Consistent with these arguments, when evaluating the value of different leadership styles in developing effective self-managing teams, Stoker (2008) showed that team members with short team tenure reported higher levels of individual performance and lower emotional exhaustion, an indicator of well-being, when their team leader demonstrated a more directive behaviour. By contrast, they reported lower performance and higher emotional exhaustion when a less directive style was used. For team members with long team tenure, the opposite effects were found.

Finally, according to COR theory, tenure is a condition resource (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). Considering the contextual effects of resources suggested by the theory (i.e., the way resources operate depends on the context – see Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018), it is reasonable to expect that, when teams do not have this resource, team members will give more importance to the informational and motivational resources provided by the leader through their frequent interactions. When these resources are provided, their positive mood would be preserved. On the other hand, for more tenured teams (who are expected to have the knowledge and experience to achieve the established goals), frequent interactions with the leader would be less necessary, or even counterproductive, because they make team members waste other valued resources, such as time and energy.

Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that for highly tenured teams, frequent interactions with the leader would be less necessary, or even counterproductive, because they would be perceived as interruptions that consume important resources such as time, attention, and energy. This loss of resources would lead to lower levels of well-being and, specifically, positive team mood (Diener & Fujita, 1995; Luong & Rogelberg, 2005). By contrast, when teams have less tenure, members may still need to acquire different knowledge and skills and learn to work together. This situation can be characterized as an ambiguous situation (Stoker, 2008) that requires more directive leadership and provision of resources. Consequently, for less tenured teams, more frequent interactions between the leader and the team members to talk about work, organizational issues, and team functioning may contribute to developing positive team mood. Specifically, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. The inverted-U-shaped relationship between FI and positive team mood will be moderated by team tenure. Specifically, the decreasing trend observed with more frequent interactions will be steeper for more tenured teams than for less tenured teams.

Team potency

Team potency refers to team members' shared beliefs that their team can successfully reach its goals (Shea & Guzzo, 1987). Team potency involves the concept of confidence at the team level (Shamir, 1990), and it has consistently been related to team effectiveness

(e.g., Gibson, 1999; Gibson, Randel, & Earley, 2000; Gully, Beaubien, Incalcaterra, & Joshi, 2002; Sosik, Avolio, & Kahai, 1997).

We expect team potency to moderate the relationship between FI and team mood. According to House and Mitchell (1974), when subordinates perceive that they have high abilities and are competent in their jobs (i.e., they show high potency), their leader's directive behaviour and frequent interactions may be interpreted as controlling behaviour and be counterproductive. In fact, perceptions of too much control or micromanagement may decrease employees' perceptions of autonomy and sense of control over their work environment, which have been related to well-being (Li & Yeo, 2011) and positive affective states (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007).

Self-confidence in achieving goals is a personal resource at work (Brouer *et al.*, 2011; Chan *et al.*, 2017; Ford & Gordon, 1999). At the team level, this confidence (shared and referring to the team) is denoted as team potency (Shamir, 1990). On the one hand, considering the contextual effects of resources suggested by COR theory, it is reasonable to expect that if teams are low on this resource, they will value other resources provided by their managers more in achieving the team goals, allowing them to preserve other resources such as their positive mood. As such, frequent interactions with managers to discuss work-related issues (e.g., team goals, relationships, team functioning) will contribute to maintaining and enhancing team positive mood. On the other hand, high potency teams (that collectively believe that they can achieve the team goals) will not need these frequent interactions. The latter can even be counterproductive because team members may feel that numerous interactions are wasting other valued resources such as time and energy.

Thus, considering all these arguments, it is reasonable to expect that high potency teams whose members believe they have the capabilities to organize and self-manage the courses of action required to achieve the team goals will need fewer interactions with their managers to talk about work and organizational issues. In contrast, low potency teams with less confidence in their possibilities of achieving team and organizational goals will need more frequent interactions with team managers in order to solve possible problems, clarify goals, and acquire resources. Because high potency teams, compared to low potency teams, are expected to interpret frequent interactions with the leader as interruptions that waste important resources such as time and energy, their positive team mood will be more negatively influenced by these interactions (Diener & Fujita, 1995; Luong & Rogelberg, 2005). Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. The inverted-U-shaped relationship between FI and positive team mood will be moderated by team potency. Specifically, the decreasing trend observed with more frequent interactions will be steeper for teams with higher potency than for teams with lower potency.

Method

Participants and procedure

The sample consisted of employees who worked in different branches of a bank located in the Valencian region of Spain. Each branch was composed of a small number of administrative personnel who performed administrative and teller tasks, one or two internal controllers, and a branch manager (who was the formal leader). To assess whether bank branches could be considered teams, we paid attention to

the three characteristics required to collectively define real team membership: shared objectives, interdependence, and reflexivity (Lyubovnikova, West, Dawson, & Carter, 2015; West & Lyubovnikova, 2013). Managers reported that the objectives were set at the branch level, rather than at the individual level. In fact, branch members had to interact with each other to achieve those common goals, and so the condition of 'shared objectives' was satisfied. In order to assess whether the other two conditions (interdependence and reflexivity) were met, we estimated the levels of interdependence and reflexivity. Specifically, at Time 1 we measured the perceived level of functional interdependence among the branch members and the perceived levels of task reflexivity. For functional interdependence, we used three items (e.g., 'To what extent do the team members have to coordinate their work activities in order to do their job?'; Klein, Conn, Smith, & Sorra, 2001). The response scale ranged from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot). Cronbach's alpha for the aggregated scores equalled .76. For task reflexivity, we used five items from Carter and West's (1998) scale (e.g., team members regularly discuss whether the team is working effectively together). The response scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha for the aggregated scores equalled .95. The reported levels of functional interdependence were medium, with a mean value of 3.22 (SD = 0.44), which is slightly above the intermediate value of 3 on the response scale, the 'middle level'. The reported levels of task reflexivity were also medium, with a mean value of 4.09 (SD = 0.65) on a 6-point response scale. Therefore, the bank branches studied showed the characteristics of real teams reasonably well (Lyubovnikova *et al.*, 2015; West & Lyubovnikova, 2013).

Because team members' perceptions of leaders' behaviours were the main focus of the study, we did not include branch managers' responses in our analysis. In fact, although branch managers were physically located in the same branch as their team, they had a separate office space and played a specific role with greater responsibility and power than the rest of the team. The general responsibilities of branch managers were defined by the bank's top management team.

Branch managers were contacted by the researchers and asked for their collaboration. A group of trained questionnaire administrators collected data at two different times separated by six months. This time lag has been used in previous studies that have focused on the effects of leadership behaviour (Pierce & Sims, 2002; Skogstad *et al.*, 2014); however, it was mainly determined by the participating organization's availability. Generally, participants filled out the questionnaires in administration sessions held in their own bank branch during working hours. When a branch member could not participate in a session, the questionnaire was personally delivered to him/her and collected later by the corresponding questionnaire administrator. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were guaranteed for all respondents.

Initially, there were 61 teams. However, because FI was rated by team members at Time 1 (T1) and positive team mood was measured at both T1 and T2, in order to be included in the study, teams had to have at least three members whose managers (i.e., formal leaders) had not changed from T1 to T2 and a team member stability rate of at least 75%. Taking these conditions into account, the final number of teams was 55. Excluding team managers, the average team size was 4.47 (SD = 1.41), with an average team tenure of 32 months (SD = 35.5). The average response rates were 99% at T1 and 98% at T2. The managers whose interactions with the team were rated were all male, and most of them (89%) had been managing the participating teams for more than one year (43.6% between 1 and 5 years and 45.4% between 5 and 10 years).

Measures

Frequency of interactions between the leader and team members (FI)

FI refers to team members' perceptions of the frequency with which the leader (the team manager) talked to them about various work and organizational issues, such as work planning, team goals, norms and procedures, or team member relationships. It is an adaptation of the team members' interaction scale used by González-Roma, Peiró and Tordera (2002). It was measured at T1 using a 7-item scale (e.g., 'How often does the team manager talk to team members about team goals?') with 5 response options ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (quite frequently).

Because the study was performed at the team level and the data were collected at the individual level, we aggregated the data obtained with the study measures to obtain team scores. To determine whether aggregation was justified, we computed a number of indices. On the one hand, we computed the intra-class correlation coefficients, ICC (1) and ICC (2). ICC (1) indicates the proportion of variance in ratings accounted for by team membership. ICC (2) provides an estimate of the reliability of the team mean (Chen, Mathieu & Bliese, 2005). For ICC(1), typical values in applied behavioural research range between .05 and .27 (Bliese, 2000; Hedges & Hedberg, 2007), with a mean of around .12 (James, 1982) serving as a cut-off value. For ICC(2), values between .40 and .75 indicate fair to good reliability, whereas values above .75 can be considered excellent (Fleiss, 1986).

On the other hand, we estimated within-team agreement by means of the Average Deviation Index (ADI; Burke, Finkelstein, & Dusig, 1999). Burke and Dunlap (2002) derived and justified a practical upper-limit criterion of $c/6$ (where c is the number of response categories in the response scale) to interpret ADI values. Thus, for variables with five categories on the response scale (FI and positive team mood), the ADI has to be below .83. For variables with 6 categories (team potency), the ADI has to be below 1.

Aggregation of team members' responses on the FI scale was justified considering the results obtained for the following coefficients and indices: ICC (1) = .33, ICC (2) = .73, mean Average Deviation Index (ADI) = .53, SD = .61, $c/6$ = 0.83. Cronbach's alpha for the aggregated scores was .95.

Team tenure

It was assessed at T1 by asking team managers 'How long have your current team members been working together on this team?' Responses were coded to represent the number of months team members had been working on the team (e.g., an answer of 2 years and 4 months was coded as 28 months). This corresponds to the managers' general appraisal of how long, on average, team members, as a group, had been working together.

Team potency

It was measured at T1 with 4 items selected from Guzzo, Yost, Campbell and Shea's (1993) scale (e.g., 'This team believes it can become unusually good at producing high-quality work'). Items were responded to on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Individual team members' responses were aggregated. Aggregation was justified considering the results obtained: ICC (1) = .18, ICC (2) = .55, ADI = .51, SD = .50; $c/6$ = 1). Cronbach's alpha for the aggregated scores was .73.

Positive team mood

It was obtained by aggregating the individual scores on the Positive Mood subscale of the Affective Well-being Scale at the team level (Segura & González-Romá, 2003). Specifically, team members reported whether their jobs had made them feel cheerful, enthusiastic, optimistic, pessimistic, gloomy, or discouraged in the past few weeks; the last three items were reverse scored. The 6 items had 5 response options (1. 'Not at all' - 5. 'Very much'). Cronbach's alphas for the aggregated scores were .95 and .94 at T1 and T2, respectively. Aggregation of individual scores was justified based on the results obtained: for positive mood, ICC (1) = .15, ICC (2) = .49, and average ADI = .54 (*SD* = 0.50, *c*/6 = .83) at T1, and 0ICC (1) = .17, ICC (2) = .54, and average ADI = .48 (*SD* = 0.53, *c*/6 = .83) at T2.

Control variables

Because team size can influence team members' affective reactions (e.g., Gamero, Zornoza, Peiró, & Picazo, 2009; George, 1996), we controlled for it. Team size was measured by asking team managers 'How many people are members of the team you manage?' Because the quality of the relationship between the team leader and the team members may influence team members' affective responses (Ashkanasy & Humphry, 2011; Dasborough, 2006; Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Madjar *et al.*, 2002), we also controlled for this variable. It was collected at T1 by means of two items extracted from González-Romá, Fortes-Ferreira, and Peiró's (2009) scale of support from the organization. These two items were: 'The team manager supports the team's members' and 'The team manager contributes to creating a cordial and friendly team climate'. Because high-quality relationships are characterized by a leader who is supportive, close, cordial, and friendly (Erdogan & Bauer, 2014), this scale can be used as an indicator of the quality of the interactions. Items were responded to on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The product-moment correlation between the two items was .92. Aggregation of individual scores was justified (ICC (1) = .32, ICC (2) = .72, average ADI = .63 (*SD* = 1.01 *c*/6 = 1)). Cronbach's alpha for the aggregated scores was .94. Finally, because leaders' affective tone (specifically feeling more or less happy and optimistic at work) is expected to shade their social interactions at work, and considering that the leader's affective tone has been found to influence teams' affective responses (positive team mood) when interacting at work (van Kleef, 2009; Liu, Song, Li, & Zhao, 2017; Sy *et al.*, 2005), we controlled for leaders' positive mood collected at T1. Specifically, team managers responded to the 6-item Positive Mood subscale of the Affective Well-being Scale (Segura & González-Romá, 2003). Cronbach's alpha was .86.

Analyses

Our hypotheses were tested using hierarchical multiple regression. To test the hypothesized quadratic-by-linear interaction between FI (X) and the moderators (Z), we used the following equation: $Y = b_1X + b_2X^2 + b_3Z + b_4XZ + b_5X^2Z$ (Aiken & West, 1991; see also Dawson, 2014). Predictors were entered into the equation in six successive steps. In the first step, we introduced the study control variables, and we controlled for the corresponding stability effect by introducing positive team mood at Time 1.

In the second and third steps, we introduced the linear (X) and quadratic (X^2) terms of FI, respectively. These terms allowed us to test H1, estimating the non-linear effects of FI on positive team mood. In the fourth step, the moderators – team tenure (Z_1) and team potency (Z_2) – were entered into the equation. In the fifth step, the linear interaction

terms between FI and the two moderators (XZ_1 and XZ_2) were entered. Finally, in the sixth and final step, the quadratic interaction terms (X^2Z_1 and X^2Z_2) were entered into the equation to test the hypotheses that the curvilinear relationships between FI and positive team mood varied as a function of team tenure and team potency. To facilitate the interpretation of the quadratic and interaction effects, all the predictors were standardized.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for all the variables are presented in Table 1. Results of hierarchical multiple regressions are shown in Table 2

Hypothesis 1 predicted a curvilinear relationship between FI and positive team affect, specifically an inverted-U-shaped relationship. To support this hypothesis, the regression coefficient for the quadratic term should be negative (see Aiken & West, 1991). Results showed that, after controlling for team size, leaders' quality of interactions, leaders' positive mood, and positive team mood at T1, the linear relationship between FI and positive team mood was not statistically significant, whereas the quadratic relationship was negative and statistically significant ($B = -.09$, $p < 0.05$) (see Step 3 in Table 2).[1] Specifically, the quadratic term explained 4% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .04, p < .05$). These results support the inverted-U-shaped relationship proposed in Hypothesis 1 (see Figure 1). The highest level of positive team mood (maximum point of the function) was obtained when FI was .22 standard deviations above the mean.

The effect is not large, but it is still relevant according to standard cut-off points. Table 2 shows that the percentage of variance explained by the quadratic term is 4%, and the f^2 effect size indicator (the ratio between the variance explained by the quadratic term and the unexplained variance) is .14, close to a medium-sized effect according to Cohen's (1988) standards (low = .02; medium = .15; large = .33). Additionally, Figure 1 shows

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and product-moment correlations of aggregated scores

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Team size T1	5.36	1.38	(–)							
2. Interaction quality T1	4.86	1.01	–.26#	(.94)						
3. Managers' positive mood	3.94	0.54	.06	.13	(.86)					
4. Positive team mood T1	3.81	0.50	–.07	.62**	.02	(.95)				
5. Team potency T1	4.97	0.50	–.03	.49**	.11	.59**	(.73)			
6. Team tenure T1	32.04	35.54	.11	–.31*	.22	–.20	–.10	(–)		
7. Positive team mood T2	3.93	0.53	–.10	.71**	.15	.75**	.49**	–.20	(.94)	
8. FI T1	3.37	0.61	–.31*	.78**	–.06	.55**	.39**	–.27#	.55**	(.95)

Note. #$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$, for correlations significantly different from zero. Cronbach's alpha for aggregated scores on the diagonal.
FI: Frequency of the interactions between the manager and the team members.

[1] *To rule out the possibility that teams with more positive moods also prompt more frequent interactions from their leaders, we ran the regression analysis using positive team mood as the predictor and the frequency of interactions between leaders and teams as the criterion variable. The results showed that positive team mood did not significantly predict the frequency of interactions between the leaders and their teams over time (there is neither a linear nor a quadratic relationship). The moderators did not play a significant role either. These results can be obtained from the corresponding author upon request.*

Table 2. Regression analyses: moderating effects of team potency and team tenure on the non-linear relationship between FI at Time 1 and positive team mood at Time 2

Predictors	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
Team size T1	.01	.01	.00	.00	−.01	.00
Leader's support T1	.20**	.20*	.09	.09	.05	.07
Leaders' positive mood T1	.06	.05	.04	.05	.04	.06
Positive team mood T1	.28**	.28**	.30**	.31**	.32**	.33**
FI T1		−.01	.04	.04	.08	−.08
FI^2 T1			−.09*	−.09*	−.05	−.12**
Team tenure T1				−.00	.03	.05
Team potency T1				−.02	−.09	−.13*
FI × team tenure					.02	−.21*
FI × team potency					−.11**	.07
FI^2 × team tenure						−.14*
FI^2 × team potency						.10**
R^2	.68**	.68**	.72**	.72**	.76**	.82**
F	23.10**	18.54**	17.53**	12.55**	11.74**	13.15**
ΔR^2	.68**	.00	.04*	.00	.04	.06**
ΔF	23.10**	.00	5.42*	.05	3.10	5.59**

Note. *$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$ (one-tailed). The regression coefficients shown are unstandardized.

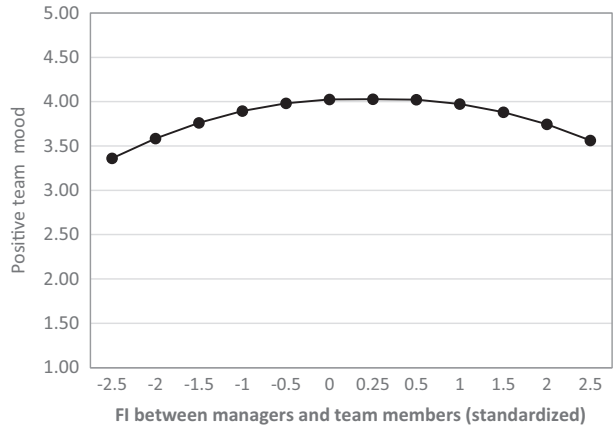

Figure 1. Non-linear relationship between FI and positive team mood

that the maximum difference in positive team mood is 0.67, or 16.75% of the variation in a scale ranging from 1 to 5.

Hypothesis 2 predicted a significant moderating effect of team tenure on the curvilinear relationship between FI and positive team mood. Specifically, we expected that very frequent interactions between managers and team members would be especially harmful, decreasing positive team mood in more tenured teams. Results supported Hypothesis 2. The quadratic interaction term was statistically significant ($B = -.14$, $p < 0.05$) (see Step 6 in Table 2). Figure 3 depicts the moderating effect of team tenure on the curvilinear relationship between FI and positive team mood, which is the pattern proposed in Hypothesis 2. Increasing the frequency of interactions to levels higher than

average (closer to the mid-point of the response scale '3. Mid-levels') predicts lower positive team mood as team tenure increases. Average interaction levels predict higher levels of positive team mood, except in low-tenured teams, which continue to benefit from more frequent interactions with their manager. In addition, it is interesting to note that the differences in positive team mood depending on team tenure are larger when managers interact quite frequently than when they hardly interact with their teams.

Hypothesis 3 predicted a significant moderating effect of team potency on the curvilinear relationship between FI and positive team mood. Specifically, we expected that managers who interacted very frequently with team members would be especially harmful, decreasing positive team mood in teams with high potency levels. Results show that the corresponding quadratic interaction term was statistically significant (B = .10, $p < 0.01$) (see Step 6 in Table 2). However, Hypothesis 3 was not supported because the pattern observed is contrary to the one expected (see Figure 3). Average interaction levels predict higher levels of positive team mood for all levels of team potency. However, contrary to our expectations, high FI is especially harmful for teams reporting lower potency levels because the curve becomes increasingly convex downward as team potency decreases. As in the previous finding, it is interesting to note that the differences in positive team mood depending on team tenure are larger when managers interact quite frequently than when they hardly interact with their teams.

When we introduced the interaction between the quadratic term and the moderators, the percentage of variance explained increased an additional 6%. The f^2 effect size indicator (the ratio between the variance explained by the highest order interaction terms and the unexplained variance) was 0.33, which is a large effect according to Cohen's (1988) standards. Additionally, the differences observed graphically (see Figures 2 and 3) are substantial, especially when the moderator was team tenure. Specifically, taking into account that FI was distributed normally (skewness = −0.37; kurtosis = 0.25; Shapiro–Wilk = 0.97 (df = 50); $p > .05$) in teams whose leader's interactions were 1.5 *SD* above the mean (this corresponds to approximately

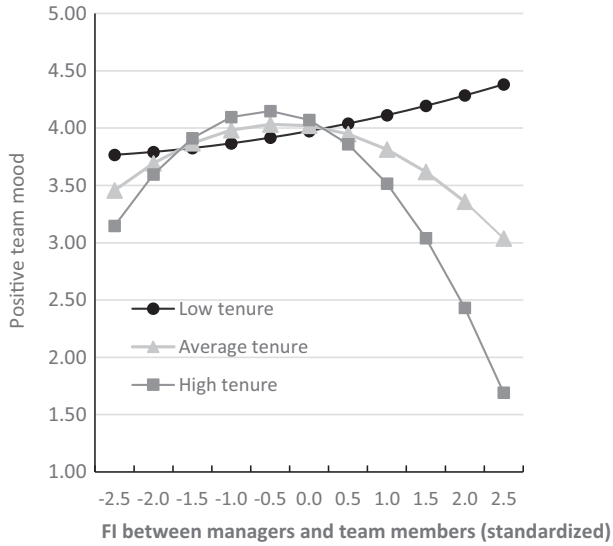

Figure 2. Moderating effects of team tenure on the relationship between FI and positive team mood

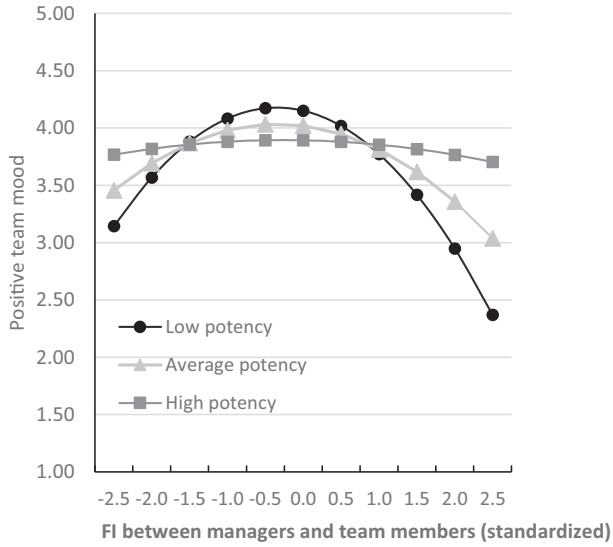

Figure 3. Moderating effects of team potency on the relationship between FI and positive team mood

6.7% of the teams), the difference in positive team mood between low and high tenured teams was 1.16 units (which constitutes 29% of the variance in the scale), and the difference between low and high potency teams was 0.40 units (10% of the variance in the scale). When the leaders' FI is 2*SD* above the mean (this corresponds to approximately 2.3% of the teams), this difference increases to 1.85 units (46.25% of the variance in the scale) between low and high tenured teams, and to 0.82 units (20.5% of the variance in the scale) between low and high potency teams.

Discussion

The main goal of this study was to test whether the relationship between the frequency of leaders' interactions with team members to discuss work, organizational, and team functioning issues (FI) and an important indicator of teams' well-being at work, positive team mood, was non-linear. In addition, we examined whether the expected non-linear relationship between FI and positive team mood was moderated by team tenure and team potency.

First, the results obtained showed that the relationship between FI and positive team mood was non-linear, showing an inverted-U-shape, thus supporting Hypothesis 1. An FI close to average (in this case, 3.38, which refers to 'medium FI levels') corresponds to the highest positive team mood. As the frequency of interactions decreases below this point or increases above this point, positive team mood decreases. This suggests that, as expected, when managers do not interact frequently enough with their teams, these teams may feel abandoned by them and lack relevant information to do the job and control the work environment. On the other hand, when managers interact too frequently, teams may feel too much control. In both cases, positive team mood would be negatively affected.

Second, the results obtained also showed that two team characteristics, team tenure and team potency, moderated the relationship between FI and positive team mood.

However, whereas for team tenure the results supported our expectations, for team potency the results contradicted what we expected.

Focusing on team tenure, our results indicate that, as expected, more tenured teams showed lower positive team mood when the frequency of interactions increased above mid-levels. In this case, when managers interact too frequently, team members may feel too much control and that they are wasting time and energy on frequent interactions they do not need because they have considerable experience working as a team. However, for less tenured teams, the levels of positive team mood increase slightly when interactions with managers are more frequent. This result suggests that, as Stoker (2008) pointed out, newer teams may need more continued and frequent communication with team managers in order to clarify what to do and how to do it, compared to more tenured teams. Regarding team potency, contrary to our expectations, frequent interactions above mid-levels between managers and team members were more detrimental when teams reported less potency.

Implications for theory and research

Our results provide support for new theoretical explanations for why and when the FI between managers and their teams is related to team well-being, and what kind of relationship model underlies this relationship. By doing so, our study contributes to improving our understanding of an elusive relationship that is crucial for teams' well-being.

First, focusing on the underlying relationship model, we show that the relationship between the frequency with which managers interact with their teams to discuss work and organizational issues and teams' well-being is non-linear. This result contributes to creating knowledge consensus by showing that the aforementioned relationship follows an inverted-U-shape, and it helps to reconcile the contradictory arguments about whether FI between team managers and the teams they manage is positive or negative for teams (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; Howell *et al.*, 2005; Napier & Ferris, 1993).

Our results highlight the need to expand leadership theories and research by considering non-linear relationships between specific leadership styles and behaviours, on the one hand, and relevant team processes, states, and outcomes, on the other. This may contribute to reconciling the different results obtained in the literature when examining linear relationships between some leader behaviours and team processes and outcomes (Erskine, 2007; Howell *et al.*, 2005). Although a few studies have recently supported the existence of non-linear relationships between some leadership characteristics and behaviours (such as narcissism, assertiveness, the frequency of feedback provided) and leadership effectiveness and followers' outcomes (Ames & Flynn, 2007; Grijalva, Harms, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley, 2015; Lam, DeRue, Karam, & Hollenbeck, 2011), the number of studies is still quite low. We agree with Simonton's (1995) statement that 'because the bulk of leadership research has relied heavily on linear measures of statistical association, the empirical literature may seriously underestimate the predictive value of many measures of personal attributes' (p. 750) (c.f. Ames & Flynn, 2007). To the leader's personal attributes, we add a leadership behaviour indicator: the frequency of interactions between the team leader and the team members. According to Pierce and Aguinis (2013), the linear assumption that 'more is better' has implicitly driven researchers' efforts to maximize desired outcomes through theory development and application. Support for these hypotheses has reinforced the 'more is better' assumption, which has led researchers to conclude that linear relationships best characterize

important organizational phenomena, when in reality they may not. Without neglecting the practical utility and efficiency of linear models, leadership and management theories may be enriched by taking into consideration the 'too-much-of-a-good-thing' (TMGT) effect, proposed by Pierce and Aguinis (2013), and expanding their propositions and hypotheses to incorporate possible curvilinear relationships.

Second, focusing on the 'why', we combine arguments from COR theory, (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002; Hobfoll *et al*, 2018) and the literature on management styles (Bass, 1990, 1997; Northouse, 2011) to explain why the relationship between FI and positive team mood is curvilinear. Interactions that are not frequent enough would have the negative effects typically observed in laissez-faire management and keep team members from gaining important resources provided by the leader's social interactions, such as work-related information and motivation. At the other extreme, too many interactions would have the negative effects typically observed in micromanagement and make team members experience a loss of autonomy and important resources such as time and energy. These types of management styles and the lack or loss of resources would cause frustration and stress within the team (Bashshur *et al.*, 2011; Skogstad *et al.*, 2007), which would undermine positive team mood (Bashshur *et al.*, 2011).

Third, focusing on the 'when', our study shows under what conditions the FI between managers and their teams is more or less functional for team well-being. COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2000; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018), the management styles literature (Bass, 1990, 1997; Northouse, 2011), and the substitutes for leadership theory (Kerr & Jermier, 1978) all propose that the effects of leadership and the gain/loss of resources depend on particular conditions. In our study, we have identified two relevant moderators (team potency and team tenure) that influence the investigated relationship. Integrating the three theoretical perspectives, the results suggest that through their interactions, leaders can provide team members with important resources. However, when leaders' interactions fit the laissez-faire or micromanagement styles, some valued team resources (e.g., information or time, respectively) will be threatened. The impact of the stress caused by this threat will depend on the extent to which teams count on additional resources, such as team potency and tenure. Accordingly, the degree of non-linearity, as proposed by Pierce and Aguinis' (2013) TMGT effect, is context-specific (e.g., depends on the team's characteristics).

Our results show that the relationship between managers' FI with their teams and the teams' well-being depends on two team characteristics: team tenure and team potency. These findings may explain the disappointing results when testing Kerr and Jermier's (1978) substitutes for leadership theory. Most of the studies that tested whether subordinate, task, and organizational characteristics moderate the effect of the leader's behaviour on several outcomes (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & James, 2002; Howell & Dorfman, 1981, 1986; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Ahearn, & Bommer, 1995; Tosi & Banning, 1998) did not find support for their moderating hypotheses. However, in these studies, only linear moderating effects were tested. Future studies should consider that the lack of evidence of a linear interaction does not rule out the possibility of more complex interactions that capture non-linear moderating effects.

The fact that we observed different patterns of moderation for team potency and team tenure is surprising, considering our arguments based on the literature on leadership styles, COR theory, and the substitutes of leadership theory. We think the difference may be explained by the fact that the two moderators analysed represent different types of team resources. Whereas team tenure can be seen as a team resource in the form of

experience and job skills (Stoker, 2008; Sturman, 2003), team potency is a motivational resource (Lee *et al.*, 2011).

Focusing on the unexpected results for team potency, Figure 3 shows that in teams with high potency levels, positive team mood remains stable, regardless of the frequency of managers' interactions. One explanation for this result is that the high levels of self-confidence shown by these teams may diminish the negative influence of other variables (Gil, Rico, Alcover, & Barrasa, 2005), such as too frequent interactions between managers and their teams. Along these lines, Schaubroeck, Peng and Hannah (2015) pointed out that high potency groups, compared to low potency groups, are more motivated to behave in a way that protects their positive self-image. This motivation, in turn, would protect high potency teams from being emotionally harmed by micromanagement behaviours and excessively frequent interactions with the leader. Future studies should analyse the mechanisms (e.g., coping) that might help high potency teams to maintain their positive mood. On the other hand, when teams report low potency, the fact that managers interact frequently with team members could reinforce their sense of low self-efficacy, which in turn could reduce positive team mood (e.g., Luszczynska, Gutiérrez-Doña, & Schwarzer, 2005). According to White (2010), managers who oversee their workers very closely and spend an excessive amount of time supervising their work and telling them what to do and how to do it (i.e., micromanagers) can frustrate and demoralize workers. Thus, excessive interactions with team members may reduce the team's sense of effectiveness, especially in low potency teams. Team members may think they are not capable enough, and their supervisor's behaviour, by trying to control every little thing, would confirm this belief. Taking into consideration that, at the individual level, perceptions of self-efficacy have been significantly correlated with positive mood (Luszczynska *et al.*, 2005; Treasure, Monson, & Lox, 1996), it seems reasonable that when teams do not perceive themselves as capable, positive affective responses would be hampered.

Thus, low tenure teams may perceive frequent interactions with their leader as normal and necessary in order to have enough information about the job and the environment. However, for low potency teams, even if they need more frequent interactions to adequately perform the job and reach team goals, these frequent interactions would be interpreted as an indicator that they are not capable of doing the job adequately, reinforcing their perceptions of their poor capabilities as a team and reducing the team's positive mood. Future research should test the mechanisms that link FI to team mood in order to assess whether this is an adequate explanation.

Practical implications

Our results have important practical implications for management and supervision behaviours. The results obtained suggest that the frequency of interactions has a strong impact on positive mood depending on teams' characteristics, specifically team potency and tenure. Even though the predicted differences in positive mood are large for a small percentage of teams, these effects are still important because organizations should aim to foster well-being in all their work units and teams. As Fritz and Arthur (2017) suggest, even when effects occur for a small percentage of a sample, there is an important ethical duty to identify and consider these effects.

Thus, managers should not assume that more frequent interactions with the teams they manage to discuss work-related issues (team goals, team procedures, work planning, or team members' relationships) foster the desired affective states. Although some degree of leader–team member interaction is functional in order to prevent a feeling of

abandonment and provide the team with the necessary resources to do the job (e.g., support and information), excessively frequent interactions can be counterproductive. Previous studies support this view: Managers who hold too many meetings with teams may induce feelings of pressure, distract team members' attention from their work, and waste important resources in terms of time and energy (Druskat & Kayes, 1999; Frost, 2004). Although, in general, average FI levels are optimal in fostering positive team mood, the effect of departing from average levels may depend on some boundary conditions, such as team experience (i.e., team tenure) and team potency. Thus, managers should learn to be flexible and adapt their interaction frequency to the characteristics of the teams they manage. For example, very frequent interactions would only be beneficial when teams are new. Otherwise, the contact should be spaced out, especially in teams that have been working together for many years. Moreover, for teams with low potency, even though frequent interactions may be necessary in some instances to ensure effectiveness, whenever possible managers should give team members some autonomy and interact less frequently with them to discuss work issues, in order to show them that they have confidence in their capabilities and success.

Strengths, limitations, and future research

Our study shows several strengths. First, data were gathered in a real work context with natural teams, which makes our findings valuable. Second, the variables included in our research model were measured at different time points, and the dependent variable at Time 1 (team mood) was controlled for. This means that the results obtained can be interpreted as estimating the influence of FI on changes in team mood between Time 1 and Time 2 (see Finkel, 1995).

However, our study also presents a number of limitations that must be kept in mind. First, most of the data (except for team tenure and leaders' positive mood) were collected from the same source (team members), which might have inflated the relationships among the key study variables. However, in order to minimize this issue, leadership behaviour and the affective variables were gathered at two distinct time points. Second, we only investigated one type of work team (bank branches), which limits the generalizability of our findings. Future research should consider other types of teams with higher levels of interdependency and reflexivity, and even different types of interdependency (e.g., sequential or reciprocal). Third, we only focused on one specific leadership behaviour (the frequency with which managers interact with team members). This is just one of the three dimensions of distance between leaders and team members proposed by Antonakis and Atwater (2002). Considering that all the branch managers' offices were located in the same physical space as the other team members, we did not expect high variability in physical distance. However, although general responsibilities of branch managers were defined by the bank's top management team, there may still be differences in perceived status, rank, authority, social standing, and power (i.e., social distance), depending on personal attributes and characteristics of managers, such as personality or charisma (e.g., Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Yamokoski & Dubrow, 2008). Future research with more heterogeneous work teams should take into consideration the three dimensions of distance and how they combine (sequentially, additively, or multiplicatively) to affect teams' moods. As an anonymous reviewer pointed out, physical distance may have an impact on the perceived frequency of interactions, and social distance may have an impact on the reactions to interactions. Likewise, the study only pays attention to two specific team characteristics (team tenure and team potency) as

moderators. Future studies should pay attention to other potential moderators, including task and organizational characteristics. Furthermore, by continuing the consideration of the TMGT effect and modelling curvilinear moderated relationships, future research should also pay attention to whether the frequency of interactions between managers and the teams they manage shows non-linear relationships with other key team variables, such as team performance, and whether these effects are mediated by team well-being. In this regard, previous research carried out at the individual level has shown that feedback frequency shows an inverted-U-shaped relationship with performance and that individuals' positive affect moderates the indirect effect of FI on performance via task effort (Lam *et al.*, 2011). Research at the team level is necessary to replicate the relationship observed by Lam et al. and clarify the role (mediator or moderator) of positive team affect in the relationship. Finally, because the research focus was the team, this study has not considered the possible differences in the frequency of the interaction between the manager and each individual team member. This variability within the team, as well as differences in individual self-confidence and individual tenure on the team, may be of interest in studying both within-team differences in mood and collective team mood (for the importance of dispersion constructs in different areas, see Cole, Bedeian, & Bruch, 2011; Cole, Bedeian, Hirschfeld, & Vogel, 2011; Holt, Madison & Kellermanns, 2017; Le Blanc & González-Romá, 2012). Thus, future research using multilevel modelling will help researchers to better understand the role of these within-team dispersion constructs and test for homologies to assess whether the impact of the frequency of interactions on affective outcomes is similar across levels (see Guenole, 2016, and Huhtala, Tolvanen, Mauno & Feldt, 2015).

Despite these limitations, the study contributes to the leadership literature by increasing our understanding of the role played by an important leadership behaviour, the frequency with which managers interact with team members, in promoting well-being in teams, showing that the relationship is curvilinear and depends on two important team characteristics: team tenure and potency.

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Conflict of interests

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contribution

Ana Hernandez, Ph.D. (Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Methodology; Supervision; Writing – review & editing) Vicente González-Romá (Data curation; Methodology; Writing – review & editing) Rafael Oltra (Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing – original draft).

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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