

Université de Montréal

La flexibilité managériale : Synthèse conceptuelle et impact sur les employés

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Thèse présentée en vue de l'obtention du grade de Philosophiae Doctor (Ph.D.)
en psychologie,
option psychologie du travail et des organisations

Juillet 2022

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Cette thèse intitulée

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Résumé

Occuper le rôle de gestionnaire mène inévitablement à être confronté à de nombreuses contradictions et tensions. Cela est d'autant plus vrai lorsque la gestion du personnel occupe une grande place dans le quotidien du gestionnaire. Ce dernier se voit alors attendu de traiter ses employés de manière uniforme tout en considérant les besoins individuels de chacun et en faisant des exceptions. Également, le gestionnaire se doit de maintenir le contrôle en appliquant les règles et procédures organisationnelles tout en permettant un certain degré de flexibilité et d'autonomie à ses employés. Bref, il semblerait qu'un facteur crucial permettant à un gestionnaire d'exceller dans son rôle est sa capacité à répondre aux demandes contradictoires et paradoxales de son environnement, et ce, d'autant plus dans un contexte marqué par le changement. En d'autres mots, il lui faut faire preuve de flexibilité managériale ; un concept ayant gagné de plus en plus en popularité depuis les 30 dernières années dans la littérature scientifique.

Bien que les chercheurs et praticiens s'entendent pour dire que la flexibilité comportementale des gestionnaires est tout à fait nécessaire et pertinente dans le contexte organisationnel volatile et changeant d'aujourd'hui, il ne semble toutefois pas y avoir de consensus quant au terme et aux mesures à utiliser pour définir et capturer ce phénomène. Également, le mécanisme par lequel la flexibilité managériale peut influencer les employés n'a été que très peu étudié empiriquement jusqu'ici. Cette thèse vise à mieux comprendre ce qu'est la flexibilité managériale, comment la mesurer en plus de faire le point sur comment elle a été étudiée jusqu'ici. De plus, elle a pour objectif de valider l'impact de la flexibilité managériale sur

les employés en plus de mieux comprendre à travers quels mécanismes ce lien opère en contexte de crise.

Le premier article de la thèse consiste en une revue systématique de la littérature sur le sujet de la flexibilité managériale. Cette recension de la littérature s'appuie sur 30 ans de recherche et a permis de répertorier 68 articles sur le sujet. S'appuyant sur l'approche des valeurs concurrentes, l'article permet de mettre en évidence trois principales conceptualisations de la flexibilité managériale, soit la complexité comportementale, le leadership versatile et le leadership paradoxal. Aussi, une revue des mesures de la flexibilité managériale est présentée et des recommandations quant à l'utilisation de ces échelles sont offertes. Enfin, un modèle intégrant l'ensemble des recherches empiriques sur le sujet est également suggéré.

Le deuxième article de la thèse s'affaire à tester un modèle de médiation-modérée où la relation entre la flexibilité managériale perçue et la performance de rôle des employés est mise à l'épreuve. L'agilité des employés est proposée comme variable médiatrice tandis que le degré d'épanouissement au travail des employés est suggéré comme variable modératrice du lien entre la flexibilité managériale perçue et l'agilité des employés. Un échantillon de 366 employés a été recruté en ligne lors de la crise sanitaire de la COVID-19 afin de contextualiser les résultats dans un environnement marqué par le changement. Les résultats indiquent qu'en temps de crise, la flexibilité managériale perçue mène à une plus grande performance de rôle de la part des employés et l'agilité de ces derniers expliquerait en partie cette relation. Toutefois, bien que l'épanouissement au travail des employés modère la relation entre la flexibilité managériale perçue et l'agilité des employés, cette variable ne semble pas avoir un impact significatif sur l'ensemble du modèle suggéré.

Mots-clés : gestion, leadership, flexibilité, agilité, paradoxes, performance

Abstract

Occupying the role of manager inevitably leads to being confronted with many contradictions and tensions. This is particularly the case when people management takes a large place in the daily life of managers. They are then expected to treat their employees the same way while considering each of their individual needs and making exceptions accordingly. Also, managers must maintain control by applying organizational rules and procedures while allowing a certain degree of flexibility and autonomy to their employees. In short, a crucial factor enabling managers to excel in their role is the ability to respond to the contradictory and paradoxical demands of their environment, even more so in a context marked by change. In other words, managers must exhibit behavioral flexibility; a concept that has gained increasing popularity over the past 30 years in the scientific literature.

Although researchers and practitioners agree that managerial behavioral flexibility is necessary and relevant in today's volatile and changing organizational context, there does not seem to be a consensus on the specific concept and measurement to be used in order to define and capture this phenomenon. Also, the mechanism by which managerial flexibility can influence employees has been little studied empirically so far. This thesis aims to better understand what managerial flexibility is, how to measure it in addition to reviewing how it has been studied so far. In addition, it aims to validate the impact of managerial flexibility on employees while providing better understanding of which mechanisms this link operates through in a crisis context.

The first article of the thesis consists of a systematic review of the literature about managerial flexibility. This literature review is based on 30 years of research and has identified

68 articles on the subject. Based on the competing values and paradox approach, the article highlights three main conceptualizations of managerial flexibility, namely behavioral complexity, leadership versatility and paradoxical leadership. Also, a review of the measures of managerial flexibility is presented and recommendations on the use of these scales are offered. Finally, a model integrating all the empirical research on managerial flexibility is presented.

The second article of the thesis consists of testing a mediated-moderation model where the relationship between perceived managerial flexibility and employee role performance is tested. Employee agility is proposed as a mediating variable while the degree of employee's thriving at work is suggested as a moderating variable of the link between perceived managerial flexibility and employee agility. A sample of 366 employees was recruited online and the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to contextualize the results in an environment marked by change. The results indicate that in times of crisis, perceived managerial flexibility leads to greater role performance on the part of employees and that employee's agility would partly explain this relationship. However, although employee's thriving at work moderates the relationship between perceived managerial flexibility and employee's agility, this variable does not appear to have a significant impact on the overall suggested model.

Keywords: management, leadership, flexibility, agility, paradoxes, performance

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Liste des sigles et abréviations

CA : Maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy

CFA: Confirmatory factor analysis

CFI : Comparative fit index

CI : Confidence interval

COVID-19 : Coronavirus disease 2019

CVF : Competing values framework

DC : Maintaining both distance and closeness

EFA : Exploratory factor analysis

HIT : Human Intelligence Task

LVI : Leadership Versatility Index

MBF : Managerial behavioral flexibility

MTurk : Amazon's Mechanical Turk

PLB : Paradoxical leader behavior

R&D : Research and development

RF : Enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility

RMSEA : Root mean square error of approximation

SEM : Structural equation modeling

SO : Combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness

SRMR : Standardized root mean square residual

UI : Treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization

**« Il n'y a qu'une chose qui puisse rendre un rêve impossible :
c'est la peur d'échouer. »**

*“There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible
to achieve: the fear of failure.”*

- *Paulo Coelho, L'Alchimiste*

Remerciements

Je tiens à exprimer ma gratitude aux personnes en or que j'ai eu la chance de côtoyer et sans qui mon parcours doctoral n'aurait pu être l'aventure enrichissante, autant sur le plan personnel que professionnel, qu'il a été.

À mon directeur de thèse, Simon Grenier, merci pour ton soutien, ton écoute et pour tous tes précieux conseils. Nos discussions enrichissantes m'ont amené à pousser mes réflexions et ton encadrement m'a permis de mener à terme ce projet si ambitieux avec confiance.

À l'Université de Montréal, au FRQSC et au CRSH, merci pour les bourses de recherche qui m'ont permis de m'investir pleinement dans mon doctorat.

Aux professeurs du département, Jean-Sébastien Boudrias, Maxime Paquet, Robert Haccoun et Luc Brunet, merci pour votre enseignement et votre curiosité contagieuse. Grâce à vous, j'ai pu apprendre qu'il est possible d'étudier la psychologie organisationnelle de diverses façons tout en faisant preuve de rigueur.

À ma superviseuse d'internat, Geneviève Beaulieu, merci pour les nombreux encouragements et de m'avoir donné l'espace nécessaire pour travailler sur ma thèse tout en complétant mes internats.

À ma cohorte, ainsi qu'à mes collègues du doctorat, merci d'avoir fait de mon parcours doctoral une véritable partie de plaisir. Un merci particulier à Raphaëlle M., Lara et Adélaïde pour votre support et soutien lors de la rédaction, grâce à vous ce processus était loin d'être une expérience solitaire. Merci à Jean pour ton aide et tes astuces. Merci à Annabelle pour ton écoute

et ton support. Enfin, un merci spécial à des collègues, mais aussi des amies de longue date, Inès et Ibtissem, pour vos précieux conseils ainsi que tous les fous rires et les larmes essuyées.

À ma collègue, amie et mentore, Anne-Marie, merci pour toutes les opportunités offertes, ta présence et ta générosité. Je ne saurais te remercier suffisamment. Merci pour tous les merveilleux souvenirs. Très hâte d'en faire tous pleins d'autres!

À mes amies en dehors du doctorat, Sabrina, Nadin, Manel, Nassima et Dana, merci de me rappeler qu'il y a toujours bien plus à célébrer et d'être celles à qui je peux me confier. Merci de faire partie de ma vie.

À mon mari, Mohamed, merci pour ton amour inconditionnel et ta présence si rassurante. Merci de m'avoir encouragé à poursuivre ce qui me passionnait et de m'avoir épaulé toutes ces années. J'ai très hâte d'entamer un nouveau chapitre à tes côtés et de vivre tous les rêves qu'on s'est promis.

À ma belle-famille, Walid, Amel, Ranya et Zied, merci pour votre soutien et tous vos encouragements. Je me considère très chanceuse de pouvoir vous compter comme ma seconde famille.

À mes parents, Saïd et Fatima, merci de m'avoir appris à ne jamais baisser les bras et de m'avoir offert tout ce dont j'avais besoin. Merci pour tous vos sacrifices et pour votre amour. Je vous suis à jamais reconnaissante.

À mes frères, Youcef, Oualid et Marwane, merci de me rappeler qu'il y a toujours bien plus à savoir et qu'il ne vaut mieux pas trop se prendre au sérieux. Merci d'être les personnes les plus drôles que je connaisse.

Introduction

Les théories traditionnelles de gestion ont souvent présenté les phénomènes organisationnels en termes de catégories distinctes et opposées (p. ex., gestion formelle vs gestion informelle). Il en est de même pour les théories de leadership qui ont tendance à scinder les différents styles étudiés en catégories opposées (Denison et al., 1995). Par exemple, nous pouvons penser aux diverses catégories bipolaires de leadership telles que les styles autocratique ou démocratique, directif ou participatif, axé sur les tâches ou axé sur les relations, structurant ou considérant ainsi que les styles de leadership transactionnel ou transformationnel (Northouse, 2007). Au-delà de ces styles de leadership, les chercheurs ont également l'habitude de distinguer la gestion (ou le management) du leadership (Northouse, 2021). Tandis que le premier consiste à organiser et structurer les opérations, le second fait plutôt référence à la capacité à produire du changement organisationnel et favoriser l'adaptabilité des employés (Kotter, 2008). Ainsi, on a longtemps (et on continue à) fortement distinguer la gestion du leadership en les conférant à des entités distinctes (p. ex., Bennis et Nanus, 2007; Rost, 1991; Zaleznik, 1977). Somme toute, au cœur de ces théories, se trouve l'idée selon laquelle il est possible de classer les gestionnaires dans une catégorie ou une autre.

Plus récemment, l'émergence de nouvelles théories vient mettre davantage l'accent sur les paradoxes, les contradictions et la complexité qui caractérisent l'environnement économique mondial et ses incidences sur les entreprises. Selon Lavine (2014), il est possible que de nombreux phénomènes puissent correspondre simultanément à plusieurs catégories opposées. Cet auteur révèle en effet que cette perspective paradoxale vient teinter plusieurs sujets de recherche, tels que l'efficacité organisationnelle, les dynamiques de groupe, la créativité et l'apprentissage

ainsi que l'étude du leadership. Bien que les théories issues de la perspective paradoxale reconnaissent des catégories discrètes sous-jacentes, elles adoptent une lecture complexe de l'environnement; selon ces approches théoriques, les leaders efficaces sont ceux qui ont la capacité cognitive et comportementale de reconnaître et de réagir aux paradoxes, à la contradiction et à la complexité de leur environnement (Lavine, 2014). Il n'est donc plus question de savoir démontrer des comportements propres à un style de leadership, mais plutôt de démontrer une variété de comportements provenant de styles différents en plus de savoir reconnaître quand il est propice d'en faire usage (Zhang et al., 2015).

Il en va de même pour ce qui est de la distinction entre les concepts de gestion et de leadership; les théories de la flexibilité comportementale reconnaissent le fait que ces deux construits soient interreliés (Kaiser et al., 2007). Lorsque les gestionnaires contribuent à influencer un groupe afin qu'il atteigne ses objectifs, ils font alors preuve de leadership. Lorsque les leaders sont impliqués dans la planification, l'organisation et la dotation, ils font alors de la gestion. Ainsi, bien que le management et le leadership diffèrent sur plusieurs aspects, ce sont là deux processus intimement reliés et tout à fait essentiels à l'efficacité organisationnelle et qui ne sont pas nécessairement exclusifs à un niveau de gestion (Northouse, 2021). Si une organisation possède une gestion solide sans leadership, elle peut rapidement devenir très rigide et bureaucratique. À l'inverse, si une organisation démontre un très fort leadership sans gestion, elle est plus à risque d'entamer des transformations ou des changements dénués de sens puisqu'ils ne sont pas alignés sur un plan visant à organiser et contrôler les activités servant à produire des résultats pour l'organisation (voir Kotter, 2008, pour plus de détails). Ainsi, les théories de la flexibilité comportementale suggèrent que les comportements de gestion et de leadership peuvent très bien être démontrés par une même personne, et même qu'ils doivent être démontrés par une

même personne si elle veut être efficace (Kaiser et Overfield, 2010). Pour être performantes, les organisations doivent nourrir et encourager à la fois des compétences de gestion et de leadership. Pour ces raisons, les termes gestionnaires et leaders seront utilisés de façon interchangeable dans les prochaines pages; nous traiterons les rôles des gestionnaires et des leaders de la même manière et nous n'accorderons pas une importance particulière aux différences entre les deux. Cela permettra également d'alléger et de diversifier la lecture. En effet, la majorité des études portant sur la flexibilité managériale utilisent les termes gestionnaires et leadership sans distinguer ces deux rôles. Cela dit, le concept auquel nous nous référerons tout au long de la thèse est la flexibilité managériale avec un focus particulier au niveau comportemental.

Le concept de la flexibilité comportementale a été repris par plusieurs auteurs afin de représenter un mode de gestion efficace où le leader est à la fois capable de concevoir et d'assumer des rôles multiples et contradictoires (Yukl et Mahsud, 2010). Ce concept s'appuie sur les travaux de certains chercheurs ayant très tôt reconnu que, pour être efficaces, les gestionnaires doivent être en mesure de démontrer un large éventail de comportements en plus de considérer de manière simultanée autant les aspects opérationnels et interpersonnels liés à leur position, mais aussi la dimension de leadership qui y est très souvent attachée (p. ex., Bass, 1960; Blake et Mouton, 1964; Lawrence et Lorsch, 1967; Burns, 1978). Comme relevé par Sale (1980), la flexibilité comportementale est critique, tant pour notre adaptation que pour notre épanouissement :

La diversité est la fonction première de la vie humaine, pas la simplicité : l'humain a réussi précisément parce qu'il a su se diversifier, pas se spécialiser : grimper *et* nager, chasser *et* se nourrir, travailler seul *et* en groupe. Il en est de même des organisations: elles sont saines et elles survivent lorsqu'elles sont diverses et différenciées, capables de

multiples réponses ; elles deviennent fragiles et inadaptées et sont la proie de toutes les conditions changeantes lorsqu'elles sont uniformes et spécialisées. C'est lorsqu'un individu est capable d'exercer de nombreux métiers, d'acquérir de nombreuses compétences, d'occuper de nombreux rôles que la croissance et la plénitude de caractère habitent l'âme : c'est lorsqu'une société se complexifie et se mélange, lorsqu'elle développe la multiplicité des manières de prendre soin d'elle-même qu'elle s'enrichit. [Traduction libre] (p.403)

Dans l'objectif de répondre à ces nouveaux constats ainsi qu'à la nouvelle réalité contextuelle des leaders évoluant dans un environnement de plus en plus marqué par le changement, il a été proposé d'intégrer la notion de flexibilité comportementale à l'étude du leadership (Denison et al., 1995). Aujourd'hui, il est possible de retrouver plusieurs appellations et définitions dans la documentation; il est parfois question de complexité comportementale (Denison et al., 1995), de leadership adaptatif (DeRue, 2011), de leadership flexible (Kaiser et al., 2007; Yukl et Mahsud, 2010) ou encore de leadership paradoxal (Zhang et al., 2015). Essentiellement, ces différentes appellations font référence à la capacité des leaders d'ajuster continuellement leurs comportements en prenant soin d'utiliser la bonne approche en fonction de ce que requière la situation ou encore les employés sous leur supervision (Kaplan et Kaiser, 2003). Les gestionnaires ayant développé cette capacité naviguent efficacement à réconcilier des tensions entre des situations où il leur faut, par exemple, atteindre à la fois des objectifs de performance organisationnelle et maintenir des relations de travail harmonieuses ou encore à introduire ou s'adapter aux changements et à l'innovation tout en préservant une certaine stabilité au sein de l'organisation.

Cela dit, au-delà de noter que les leaders efficaces semblent faire « plus de tout », les chercheurs doivent encore s'entendre sur une conceptualisation commune de ce qu'est la

flexibilité managériale. De plus, très peu de recherches empiriques ont été conduites afin d'explorer quels sont les antécédents et conséquences potentiels d'une telle perspective paradoxale. En effet, bien qu'il soit généralement admis qu'un leader efficace possède une influence positive sur ses employés, très peu de chercheurs se sont penchés sur la question en ce qui concerne la flexibilité managériale. Compte tenu des arguments présentés ci-haut, cette thèse s'intéressera à mieux circonscrire le concept de flexibilité managériale en plus de s'attarder à en comprendre ses effets sur les employés.

État actuel des connaissances sur la flexibilité managériale

Les indicateurs de la flexibilité managériale

L'étude de la flexibilité comportementale des leaders se manifeste sous plusieurs angles au sein de la documentation scientifique. À titre d'exemple, Yukl et Mahsud (2010) ont effectué une première revue des différents indicateurs de la flexibilité managériale et en ont identifié quatre principaux. Premièrement, une des principales caractéristiques de la flexibilité concerne la capacité d'un gestionnaire à émettre une variété de comportements tout en étant habile à identifier les plus pertinents en fonction des différentes tâches à exécuter et du profil de ses subordonnés. D'un côté, un leader flexible est capable de jongler efficacement entre différents types de tâches qui requièrent des comportements distincts. Dans une même journée, un leader peut, par exemple, être amené à gérer des tâches très opérationnelles (p. ex. participer à la planification ou au processus budgétaire) en plus de prendre des décisions plutôt stratégiques (p. ex. définir et clarifier la stratégie). D'un autre côté, le leader doit tenir compte des différences individuelles des subordonnés supervisés. Par exemple, face à un employé peu expérimenté et peu autonome il est tout à fait recommandé que le gestionnaire fasse preuve d'encadrement et maintienne un plus haut niveau de contrôle. La flexibilité est également de mise pour s'ajuster à

l'évolution de l'employé. Si l'on reprend l'illustration précédente, il est fort probable qu'avec l'expérience dans son rôle, l'employé gagne plus en confiance et en autonomie; il sera alors attendu à ce que son gestionnaire démontre davantage des comportements de délégation.

Deuxièmement, considérant l'environnement teinté de changements dans lequel nous évoluons, Yukl et Mahsud (2010) décrivent que la capacité d'un leader à s'y adapter rapidement constitue un autre indicateur de sa flexibilité comportementale. Lorsqu'un événement soudain et inhabituel survient, cela vient bouleverser et menacer les opérations courantes ainsi que les membres de l'organisation concernée. Une réponse rapide, mais surtout appropriée, est alors requise de la part des leaders afin de minimiser les effets négatifs du changement sur l'organisation et les personnes qui y travaillent. La crise sanitaire liée à la COVID-19 est un excellent exemple de contexte qui a chamboulé le monde du travail et, par le fait même, les demandes faites aux leaders. Du jour au lendemain, nos façons de travailler ont été complètement transformées, et ce, jusqu'aux tâches les plus banales ou qui étaient jusque-là prises pour acquises. Les multiples règles sanitaires et restrictions ont eu pour impact de ralentir nos chaînes de production, nos processus d'approvisionnement et même les façons de communiquer avec les clients. Le télétravail qui fut imposé à plusieurs organisations a également transformé la manière dont les gestionnaires gèrent et communiquent avec leur équipe. Selon une récente étude de Kaiser (2020) menée durant ce contexte de pandémie, les gestionnaires devaient gérer autant les pressions provenant de l'environnement que répondre aux besoins de leurs subordonnés pour continuer à les soutenir et leur offrir un cadre de travail sécuritaire. Naturellement, un tel contexte semble tout à fait propice à l'étude de la flexibilité comportementale des gestionnaires et souligne davantage le besoin de mieux comprendre le concept en plus de ces impacts sur la gestion du personnel.

Troisièmement, un autre indicateur de flexibilité comportementale chez les gestionnaires a trait à leur capacité à s'adapter et évoluer en fonction des changements à leur position ou rôle dans l'organisation (Yukl et Mahsud, 2010). Les comportements attendus d'un gestionnaire varient souvent en fonction du type de position occupée ainsi que de la culture et mission de l'organisation. Les comportements requis pour être un gestionnaire de premier niveau vs occuper un poste d'exécutif ne sont pas les mêmes, ni même les comportements requis pour gérer une organisation publique vs une organisation privée. Ainsi, lorsqu'un gestionnaire est capable d'effectuer de telles transitions professionnelles de manière efficace; il répond alors à un autre indicateur de flexibilité comportementale.

Quatrièmement, Yukl et Mahsud (2010) suggèrent qu'un dernier indicateur de la flexibilité comportementale des leaders soit leur habileté à équilibrer des demandes paradoxales lorsque requis par la situation qu'ils doivent gérer. Selon ces auteurs, répondre à des demandes contradictoires de manière efficace constitue le principal défi des leaders. Par exemple, maintenir l'efficacité et les opérations courantes vs changer les façons de faire pour répondre aux opportunités ou aux changements provenant de l'environnement. Cette habileté à émettre des comportements opposés (p.ex., contrôler vs responsabiliser) est d'ailleurs le fondement de l'approche axée sur les paradoxes, aussi surnommée l'approche des valeurs concurrentes (Kaiser et Overfield, 2010). Compte tenu de ces observations, la flexibilité comportementale peut être définie de diverses manières et les indicateurs mentionnés ci-dessus témoignent de la variété de contextes dans lesquels il est possible de l'étudier.

L'approche des valeurs concurrentes

La recherche sur la façon dont les gestionnaires gèrent les paradoxes explore comment ces derniers trouvent des moyens d'équilibrer les demandes paradoxales et les comportements

opposés (Hooijberg, 1996; Quinn, 1988). Les leaders sont appelés à trouver un équilibre dans leur réponse lorsque les efforts requis pour atteindre un objectif important rendent plus difficile la réalisation d'autres objectifs tout aussi importants. Les théories de ce courant de recherche tendent à identifier les polarités des comportements que les gestionnaires doivent équilibrer. Un exemple typique serait le souci d'un leader envers l'atteinte des objectifs et la complétion des tâches, mais aussi une préoccupation envers les personnes avec qui il transige. Il s'agit là d'un exemple de dualité qui a longtemps suscité l'intérêt des chercheurs (p. ex., Blake et Mouton, 1982). Un autre type de dualité auquel peut faire face un leader est celui de balancer des objectifs à court terme avec des objectifs à long terme; afin d'améliorer la performance à long terme, il faut souvent effectuer des changements qui auront pour impact de réduire temporairement la performance à court terme (Smith et Lewis, 2011).

Contrairement aux théories situationnelles ou de contingences typiques qui mettent l'accent sur une approche de type « either-or » (c.-à-d., choisir entre « A » ou « B »), la perspective paradoxale préconise plutôt une approche de type « both-and » (c.-à-d., répondre à « A » et « B ») (Smith et Lewis, 2011). Par exemple, plutôt que d'avoir à choisir entre être directif ou participatif, un leader adoptant une approche paradoxale est capable de trouver des façons d'être à la fois directif et participatif. Ainsi, les demandes contradictoires représentent des opportunités pour les leaders d'harmoniser des demandes apparemment incompatibles plutôt que de les interpréter comme des menaces à leur efficacité. Dans cette optique, cette thèse s'appuie sur l'approche des valeurs concurrentes afin d'étudier la flexibilité comportementale des leaders.

Dans la recherche des différentes demandes paradoxales faites aux leaders, plusieurs chercheurs se sont affairés à identifier les dualités de réponses comportementales possibles. Par exemple, dans leur modèle des valeurs concurrentes (*Competing Values Framework* en anglais),

Quinn et Rohrbaugh (1981) suggèrent deux stratégies qui permettraient aux gestionnaires d'équilibrer efficacement des demandes contradictoires. La première, appelée *tough love*, consiste à balancer les aspects relationnels avec les aspects liés à la réalisation des tâches et objectifs. La seconde stratégie, *practical vision*, consiste plutôt à équilibrer les aspects liés au changement à ceux de stabilité. Un autre exemple serait la théorie du leadership versatile où Kaplan et Kaiser (2003) proposent deux paires de dualités : forcer vs permettre (*forceful vs enabling*) et stratégique vs opérationnel (*strategic vs operational*). Il est postulé que si un leader efficace est capable de trouver l'équilibre entre ces dualités il saurait alors faire preuve d'assertivité pour diriger ses employés tout en leur laissant un degré d'autonomie dans l'exécution de leurs tâches en plus de pouvoir répondre simultanément aux besoins opérationnels et stratégiques de l'organisation (Kaiser et Overfield, 2010).

L'approche des valeurs concurrentes vient redéfinir les attentes envers les leaders; l'emphase n'est plus mise sur le contrôle, les décisions et les solutions de ces derniers, mais plutôt sur leur capacité à s'engager dans un processus dynamique et continu où ils sont en mesure de faire face aux demandes contradictoires tout en continuant à performer malgré les paradoxes (Schad et al., 2016). Dans cette optique, la capacité d'un leader à faire preuve de flexibilité s'avère particulièrement utile, et ce, particulièrement dans deux types de situations. D'un côté, répondre à des demandes concurrentes devient encore plus difficile lorsqu'elles proviennent de différentes parties prenantes, telles que les clients, les employés et les superviseurs. Ces différentes parties prenantes possèdent très souvent des priorités et des objectifs incompatibles qui suscitent des conflits de rôle pour le gestionnaire (Hooijberg et Choi, 2000). D'un autre côté, la difficulté d'adresser des demandes contradictoires est aussi accrue par des conditions changeantes qui modifient les priorités et nécessitent des ajustements plus fréquents de la part du

gestionnaire au niveau de ses actions et décisions (Yukl et Lepsinger, 2004). Ainsi, le premier objectif de la présente thèse est le suivant :

Objectif 1 – Contribuer à une meilleure compréhension de la façon dont la flexibilité managériale est définie, mesurée et étudiée à la fois théoriquement qu’empiriquement.

L’impact sur les employés

Au cœur du concept de flexibilité managériale se trouve la supposition que les leaders flexibles sont capables de répondre simultanément aux demandes provenant de l’organisation et celles des employés (Yukl et Mahsud, 2010). En effet, la flexibilité comportementale est comprise comme la démonstration d’un large répertoire comportementale qui permet aux leaders de répondre efficacement autant à leur rôle sur le plan organisationnel (la gestion) qu’interpersonnel (le leadership). Certains théoriciens vont même jusqu’à déclarer que l’accent premier du leadership flexible n’est pas le leader lui-même, mais plutôt l’impact du leader sur ses subordonnés (Norton, 2010). Un leader adaptatif et flexible accorde une importance particulière à la manière dont il est capable d’aider ses subordonnés à accomplir leur travail en plus de les soutenir pour qu’ils puissent eux aussi s’adapter aux défis et changements auxquels ils sont confrontés. Heifetz et ses collègues (2009) définissent le leadership flexible comme étant une « pratique consistant à mobiliser les gens pour qu’ils puissent relever des défis et s’épanouir » [Traduction libre] (p.14). Cette conceptualisation considère que l’objectif principal d’un leader flexible est d’encourager les gens à changer en adoptant de nouveaux comportements pour qu’ils puissent relever efficacement les défis se présentant à eux. Ainsi, l’étude des comportements et des actions entreprises par les gestionnaires pour encourager les autres à s’adapter au changement semblerait être ce qui caractérise les principales théories de la flexibilité managériale.

En faisant preuve de flexibilité dans leurs pratiques de gestion, les leaders sont amenés à créer un contexte de travail qui encourage les employés à choisir comment répartir leur temps, à faire preuve de discipline en respectant des standards de performance et de comportements spécifiques, à viser des objectifs ambitieux tout en offrant du soutien à leurs collègues et en leur faisant confiance (Gibson et Birkinshaw, 2004). En d'autres mots, les leaders flexibles s'engagent dans des activités qui mobilisent, motivent, organisent, orientent et focalisent l'attention des autres (Heifetz et Heifetz, 1994). Il y a donc des raisons de penser que la flexibilité comportementale des gestionnaires serait un facteur important dans la promotion d'un fonctionnement optimal chez les subordonnés. Pourtant, l'impact de la flexibilité comportementale des gestionnaires sur les employés n'a été que très peu étudié dans la documentation scientifique et ce n'est que tout récemment que les chercheurs ont démontré un intérêt à étudier ce lien. En effet, à notre connaissance, seulement cinq études empiriques testant l'impact de la flexibilité managériale sur les employés ont pu être répertoriées (Franken et al., 2020; Ishaq et al., 2021; Shao et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2015). Ainsi, la présente thèse permettra notamment d'examiner le lien entre la flexibilité managériale perçue et la performance de rôle des employés en proposant de nouvelles variables jusque-là non testées (p. ex. l'agilité des employés) en plus de mieux comprendre à travers quels mécanismes ce dernier opère.

La flexibilité en contexte de crise

L'environnement dans lequel s'insère le leader exerce une influence importante sur ses comportements et cela est d'autant plus vrai dans un contexte de crise. Afin de répondre aux événements inattendus, un leader efficace doit être en mesure de lire et d'interpréter la situation rapidement en plus d'émettre les comportements appropriés pour y répondre (Yukl et Mahsud,

2010). D'autres comportements incluent la capacité à identifier précisément les causes d'un problème, à adresser immédiatement les problèmes plutôt que de les ignorer, à faire preuve de proactivité et de planification pour prévenir ou minimiser les problèmes ainsi que de gérer avec confiance ses subordonnés (Boin et al., 2013; Garcia, 2006; Klann, 2003; Mitroff, 2005).

La flexibilité comportementale réside alors dans la capacité du leader à s'adapter aux changements tout en amenant son équipe à naviguer efficacement dans la turbulence générée par la crise. Face à la confusion, au chaos et à la menace, les gens ont tendance à rechercher un leader pour les aider à coordonner une réponse collective (Van Vugt et al., 2008). Par conséquent, en temps de crise, une forte pression est exercée sur la capacité des leaders à démontrer des comportements rapides et décisifs tout en traitant des informations incomplètes (Yukl et Mahsud, 2010).

Compte tenu des éléments ci-haut, il a été postulé dans la documentation scientifique que la flexibilité comportementale serait un excellent levier sur lequel les leaders peuvent s'appuyer dans la gestion de crise (Kaiser, 2020). En effet, une des principales dualités auxquels les leaders font face est de répondre aux problèmes inattendus avec des solutions innovantes tout en maintenant un certain sentiment de stabilité et de sécurité à leurs subordonnés (Pulakos, 2009). Cela dit, très peu de chercheurs se sont intéressés à valider une telle supposition (Kaiser, 2020). Considérant que la présente thèse fut réalisée dans un contexte de crise bien particulier, soit celui d'une pandémie mondiale de la COVID-19, nous avons choisi d'en profiter pour étoffer davantage notre compréhension de la flexibilité comportementale et son impact sur les employés dans un contexte de crise sans précédent. Ce faisant, le deuxième objectif de la présente thèse est le suivant :

Objectif 2 – Valider l’impact de la flexibilité managériale perçue par les employés et ses impacts sur leur performance en plus de mieux comprendre à travers quels mécanismes ce lien opère en contexte de crise.

Contributions de la présente thèse

C’est en réponse à l’appel des chercheurs de mieux circonscrire le concept de flexibilité managériale que s’inscrit la présente thèse. Face à cet intérêt croissant pour le sujet, la nécessité d’une définition claire de ce qu’est la flexibilité comportementale du leader ainsi que de ces composantes est plus que jamais importante (Norton, 2010). En effet, une meilleure compréhension de la façon dont elle est définie, mesurée et développée est essentielle autant pour son utilisation scientifique que pratique afin d’améliorer l’efficacité managériale.

Bien que l’étude la flexibilité comportementale soit relativement récente, elle n’en demeure pas moins éparpillée. Au fil des années, plusieurs typologies et modèles théoriques ont été proposés afin d’illustrer les demandes paradoxales faites aux gestionnaires ainsi que les dualités de comportements qu’ils doivent posséder en leur répertoire comportemental (p.ex., Denison et al., 1995; Kaplan et Kaiser, 2003; Zhang et al., 2015). Toutefois, peu d’études ont cherché à distinguer conceptuellement ces modèles et une confusion demeure quant à l’utilisation des outils utilisés pour mesurer ces derniers. Il apparaît donc nécessaire d’organiser et d’intégrer l’ensemble des connaissances théoriques et empiriques sur le sujet afin de faciliter les futurs travaux scientifiques dans le domaine.

C’est dans l’optique de répondre à cet objectif que le premier article de cette thèse, intitulé « Managerial Flexibility: A Systematic Review and Call for Future Research », s’inscrit. Cet article poursuit trois sous-objectifs soit de brosser un portrait de l’état des connaissances sur la

flexibilité managériale, identifier les principaux antécédents et conséquences répertoriés autant dans la théorie que dans les recherches empiriques en plus de passer en revue les échelles de mesure et de fournir des recommandations en ce sens. S'appuyant sur l'approche des valeurs concurrentes et paradoxales (Smith et Lewis, 2011), ce premier article permet d'identifier trois principales conceptualisations, soit la complexité comportementale, le leadership versatile et le leadership paradoxal. Cet article vient mettre en lumière les nombreux manques dans la littérature scientifique, propose un modèle des antécédents, médiateurs, modérateurs et conséquences de la flexibilité managériale et met la table sur les pistes de recherche futures pour approfondir la compréhension que nous avons de ce concept.

Ensuite, le second article de cette thèse intitulé « Managerial Flexibility and Employee Role Performance: Employee Thriving and Agility at Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic » a pour objectif de tester un modèle empirique de médiation modérée dans lequel la flexibilité comportementale des gestionnaires génère un plus haut niveau d'agilité chez les subordonnés, qui se traduit ensuite par une meilleure performance de rôle chez les employés. De plus, il est proposé que le degré d'épanouissement des employés agisse comme modérateur du lien entre la flexibilité managériale et l'agilité chez les subordonnés. Pour tester ces hypothèses, un échantillon de 366 travailleurs a été utilisé pour mettre le modèle empirique à l'épreuve.

En continuité avec ces deux études, la dernière section de la thèse reprend les principaux constats des deux études en plus d'aborder les contributions pratiques et théoriques, les limites et les pistes de recherche futures.

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Article 1 – Managerial Flexibility: A Systematic Review and Call for Future Research

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Acknowledgments

This work was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada under Grant 767-2019-1283, granted to the first author.

Accord des coauteurs

Identification de l'étudiante et du programme

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Description de l'article

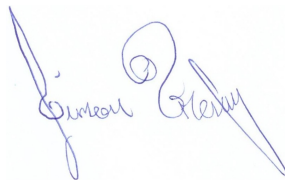
Benabdallah, L.¹, Grenier, S.¹ et Paiement, A.-M.¹ (2021).

Managerial Flexibility: A Systematic Review and Call for Future Research. Manuscrit non publié,

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Déclaration des coauteurs autres que l'étudiant

À titre de coauteur de l'article identifié ci-dessus, j'accepte que Leila Benabdallah inclue cet article dans sa thèse de doctorat qui a pour titre « La flexibilité managériale : Synthèse conceptuelle et impact sur les employés ».



19/01/2023

Texte

Simon Grenier

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Date

Abstract

As organizations face increased complexity, managers' ability to flex their behavioral response is essential for team and organizational success. Although the field of managerial flexibility has gained popularity over the last years, a lack of coherence and clarity around the construct has impeded its theory development and application in organizational settings. A better understanding of how managerial flexibility is defined, measured, and studied is essential for improving managerial effectiveness. In this paper, we provide a comprehensive review of 68 articles on managerial flexibility, synthesizing 30 years (1991-2021) of research on the topic. In doing so, we expand scientific knowledge in three ways. First, building on the competing values and paradox approach, we identify three main conceptualizations related to managers' flexibility: behavioral complexity, leadership versatility, and paradoxical leadership. Second, we review managerial flexibility measures and provide clear recommendations aiming to help researchers and practitioners select the proper measurement approach. Third, we map the nomological network of managerial flexibility concerning its antecedents, outcomes, moderators, and mediators. We conclude with a detailed future research agenda to move the field forward on both theoretical and practical fronts. Overall, this systematic review paints a renewed portrait of what has been accomplished in the field of managerial flexibility and provides insights of what should be pursued in future research.

Keywords: flexibility, managers, leaders, leadership, systematic literature review, literature review

Introduction

Recent crises such as the global COVID-19 pandemic and the near-collapse of the world economy have radically changed how we interact with people and do business (Zheng, 2020). The fundamental changes that occurred following this crisis translated as added additional stressors that led to a drop in employees' morale or a fragmented team cohesion – all of which can lead to decreased work performance.

Organizational environments are becoming increasingly dynamic, complex, and competitive. Corporate managers are inevitably confronted with contradictions, tensions, and seemingly paradoxical demands, such as collaboration-control, individual-collective, flexibility-efficiency, exploration-exploitation, and profit-social responsibility (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Zhang et al., 2015). Therefore, those who can adjust, adapt, and flex their response to new and unique circumstances are those who are more likely to succeed in their managerial role (Smith & Lewis, 2011). People who work with senior managers and senior managers themselves attest that an organization's capacity to thrive, or merely survive, amid the chaos and adversity depends on managers' ability to adapt their responses to challenging and often ambiguous demands (Kaiser, 2010). These managers are usually qualified as flexible leaders¹ (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Their unique combination of skills (and perspectives) enabling them to adapt to a wide variety of changing circumstances is primarily valued and recognized. Such managers are able to cope and deal with today's organizational uncertainties and complexities by having access to and being

¹ Although we recognize the subtleties between the concepts of leadership and management, we find that they are both essential and can be demonstrated by the same person (Kotter, 1990). To lighten and diversify the reading, we treat the roles of managers and leaders similarly and do not emphasize the differences between them.

competent with an extensive repertoire of behaviors, which allow them to select alternative leadership behaviors as the situation changes (Sumner-Armstrong et al., 2008).

While there seems to be a strong consensus among practitioners regarding the importance of managerial flexibility, there is a need for a comprehensive and integrated review of research on the subject for three main reasons. First, a lack of coherence and clarity in the field remains despite the growing interest in managerial flexibility. Indeed, many terms are used (e.g., flexible, adaptive, versatile, and paradoxical), and both researchers and practitioners struggle to agree on a single conceptualization. However, studies and articles on the subject of managerial flexibility keep emerging; attracting both scholars and consultants that tend to agree that traditional “command-and-control” management styles are now outdated, while newer, more agile, and collaborative approaches are the new norm (Jordan et al., 2022).

Second, more than ten years have passed since the last effort to review the literature on the subject was accomplished by Yukl and Mahsud (2010). A recent call by Kaiser (2020) insists on the importance of reviewing what has been done in the field of managerial flexibility. Since 2010, more than 42 articles specific to leader’s behavioral flexibility have been published. Additional to this growing interest on the subject, we notice that manager’s ability to deal with paradoxical demands has also attracted many oriental researchers on the subject and is now not only studied in the Western world. Therefore, we believe that now is a great time to examine what progress has been made in the managerial flexibility literature during the last few years.

Third, there are currently eight known measures of managerial flexibility, most of which are yet to be reviewed. There is no consensus on how to measure and assess managers’ behavioral flexibility. Therefore, we provide a review of these measures and recommendations on which scale to use according to different research contexts.

Considering the interest of practitioners and the success of the concept of managerial flexibility has gained in popular literature, it becomes imperative to provide practitioners with a shared understanding of the concept and timely recommendations based on the latest knowledge. To do so, we focused our literature review on the competing values and paradox approach. The decision to concentrate primarily on a single stream of research is motivated by the following rationale. On the one hand, there is a need to conduct an in-depth review rather than merely touch on the subject like other articles have previously done. On the other hand, there is a recent growing interest on the behavioral aspect of managerial flexibility and the way managers respond to competing values and paradoxical demands.

Given the rationale for the review, we approached this literature analysis with three overarching questions in mind:

- (1) How is managerial flexibility understood and defined within the competing values and paradox literature?
- (2) How is managerial flexibility measured and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these measures?
- (3) What do we know about managerial flexibility's antecedents and consequences from existing empirical research?

Methodology

To address these questions, we conducted a systematic literature review to identify literature relevant to managerial flexibility. Guidelines on undertaking systematic reviews by Denyer and Tranfield (2009) were followed in this study.

This review was carried out in two steps. The first step focused on reviewing managerial flexibility conceptual and empirical work. The second step of the review retrieved papers that addressed managerial flexibility measures. Overall, studies included were research articles dating from Zaccaro et al.'s first paper on the subject in 1991 to the more recent articles published in 2021.

We searched six databases (ABIInform, EBSCO, Science Direct, ProQuest, PsychInfo, and Web of Science) using different combinations of keywords that were to be included in the abstract or the title of the article (e.g., “flexible lead*”; “adaptive lead*”; “versatile* lead*” AND “measure”). We also completed our review using Google Scholar. Secondly, we examined the reference lists of all retrieved articles to identify additional research articles that were relevant to our review but had not been identified through our database search. This pre-screening retrieved 182 articles.

For an article to be included in our review, it must have focused on flexible leadership as a key variable or subject area. Although we use the term managerial flexibility throughout our review, most papers on the subject use the term *flexible leadership*. Second, it had to study managerial flexibility by the competing values and paradox approach (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Third, the article had to focus on the behavioral aspect of managerial flexibility. Therefore, articles that focused exclusively on cognitive flexibility were excluded from this review. Fourth, the article had to be reviewed by a peer-review committee. Finally, the overall quality of the article as well as the rigor of the methodology and scientific writing were our last inclusion criteria. This process resulted in a final pool of 68 articles published across 40 academic journals. Within this sample, 25 articles were conceptual and theoretical papers, 22 were quantitative papers, 17 were qualitative papers and 4 were papers using a mixed methodology (see Table 1).

Table 1*Managerial Flexibility and Research Design*

Label	Conceptual	Empirical			Total
		Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed	
Adaptive leadership	3	1	3	1	8
Behavioral complexity	3	3	1	0	7
Behavioral flexibility	0	1	1	0	2
Complexity leadership	0	1	0	0	1
Flexible leadership	3	5	2	0	10
Leadership in a complex adaptive system	0	0	1	0	1
Leader versatility	2	3	0	1	6
Management paradoxes	1	0	1	0	2
Managerial flexibility	0	1	0	0	1
Managing tensions	1	0	0	0	1
Paradoxical leadership	12	7	8	2	29
Total	25	22	17	4	68

Current state of research on managerial flexibility

Managerial flexibility's conceptualization within the competing values and paradox literature

Research within the competing values and paradox literature describes how managers deal with tradeoffs and competing demands (Hooijberg, 1996; Quinn, 1988; Quinn et al., 1992; Smith & Lewis, 2011). The competing values literature adds complexity to leadership because it challenges managers to find balance when pursuing objectives that involve tradeoffs, such as reliability and efficiency versus the need for innovative adaptation to emerging threats and opportunities (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Tradeoffs often involve opposite behaviors (e.g., controlling vs. empowering) and occur when efforts to achieve one crucial objective interfere with efforts to meet other essential targets. Competing values and paradox theories tend to identify polarities of behaviors that managers need to balance. To do so, leaders must balance competing demands by adopting a paradox perspective (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Although choosing between competing demands might benefit short-term performance, long-term sustainability requires continuous efforts to meet multiple and divergent demands (Smith & Lewis, 2011). This is precisely what a paradox perspective argues for: leaders must balance and integrate paradoxes simultaneously to sustain long-term effectiveness. Contrary to typical situational or contingency theories of leadership that emphasize an *either-or* approach (i.e., “A” or “B”), the paradoxical perspective advocates for a *both-and* approach (i.e., “A” and “B”). For example, rather than having to choose between being directive *or* participative, a leader adopting a paradoxical approach can find ways to be directive *and* participative. Thus, paradoxes represent opportunities for leaders to harmonize seemingly incompatible demands rather than interpreting them as threats to leadership effectiveness (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Using the competing values and paradox approach in studying and assessing flexible leadership has many benefits. For example, Kaiser et al. (2007) have demonstrated that assessing managerial flexibility using the mastery of opposites approach (another appellation used to describe the competing values and paradox stream) is more predictive of leadership effectiveness than when assessed with the competency or trait method (Kaiser et al., 2007). The opposites approach is also more compelling to practitioners and more helpful for leadership development (e.g., Baron et al., 2018). Practitioners tend to find these models intriguing and consistent with the tensions and trade-offs they experience. Because the approach of opposites builds on feedback about concrete behaviors, it is more helpful to guide leaders in their development when exchanging views and ideas with practitioners.

Therefore, corporate managers can directly impact determinants of organizational performance (e.g., efficiency, innovative adaptation, and human capital) by making and acting on relevant decisions and behaviors about strategy, structure and management programs and systems. As long as managers' decisions and actions are mutually compatible and consistent with the organization's competitive strategy and external environment, the organization is more likely to be effective and maintain a competitive advantage (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004).

Conceptualizations of managerial flexibility

As we have advocated above, an overwhelming number of terms and definitions of flexible leadership that provides only loose descriptions of what, why, and how flexible leaders behave, is found in the scientific literature. Table 2 presents an overview of the different terms and definitions regarding managerial flexibility. One definition that is often used by researchers comes from Zaccaro et al. (1991) which portrays leadership flexibility as “the ability and willingness to respond in significantly different ways to correspondingly different situational

requirement” (p.321). However, this seminal definition doesn’t appear to satisfy scholars. Indeed, they keep suggesting different terms and definitions to refer to this construct ever since. In fact, many conceptualizations and theories have been proposed over time. Therefore, it is from this pioneering work that we have grounded our literature review.

Through our review, we have identified three main concepts that subscribe to the competing values and paradox approach’s way of defining managerial flexibility, namely behavioral complexity (Hooijberg and Quinn, 1992; Denison et al., 1995; Lawrence et al., 2009), leadership versatility (Kaiser et al., 2007), and paradoxical leader behavior (Zhang et al., 2015). To be included in our review, these conceptualizations must define managerial flexibility in a way that identifies a broader range of dilemmatic tensions and allows for various possible responses (Lavine, 2014). Each of these concepts is defined and described in the following sections.

Behavioral complexity. Hooijberg and Quinn (1992) are the first authors, to our knowledge, to offer a leadership concept that considers the numerous opposite roles a leader must play to answer to an array of differentiated or even competing behavioral expectations. Corporate leaders who exhibit a large behavioral repertoire are considered as behaviorally complex (Hooijberg & Quinn, 1992). Within an organizational context, behavioral complexity portrays a leader who has the ability to “perform to multiple roles and behaviors that circumscribe the requisite variety implied by an organizational environmental context” (Denison et al., 1995, p. 526), such as stakeholders and competitive demands.

This behavioral diversity integrates a broad array of roles associated with both management (i.e., achieving efficiency through command and control) and leadership (i.e., inspiring people with a vision of change) (Bedeian & Hunt, 2006). Moreover, behavioral complexity has two

sides: (1) behavioral repertoire and (2) behavioral differentiation. On the one hand, the concept of behavioral repertoire captures the range of behaviors a person may perform in front of diverse situations. On the other hand, behavioral differentiation addresses someone's ability to apply the appropriate behavior according to the situation (Hooijberg, 1996; Hooijberg et al., 1997). Thus, not only is it essential to possess a large behavioral repertoire to choose from but it is equally essential to demonstrate the ability to choose wisely which behavior the situation dictates.

The behavioral complexity theory is rooted in the Competing Values Framework (or CVF, Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1981). This framework was the very first in the role literature to be specifically defined in terms of opposing roles. It argues that, to be effective, a leader must meet and integrate the competing roles expected from them (Zaccaro, 2001). This approach adopts a paradoxical perspective by seeing leadership behaviors in a *both-and* fashion rather than the traditional tendency to see it in an *either-or* manner (Dentsen & Gray, 2001). In fact, the CVF calls attention to the fact that competing demands should all be taken into account and are all critical for organizational effectiveness.

When conceptualizing the CVF of leadership roles, Quinn (1988) linked both organizational theory and role theory, which has several advantages for understanding leadership effectiveness. The CVF encourages greater cognitive and behavioral complexity, highlights the dynamic tensions within key managerial and leadership skills and makes paradox more manageable and understandable (Lavine, 2014).

Leadership versatility. Following the call for a better definition of leadership adaptability, flexibility, and versatility made by Pulakos and his colleagues (2000), Kaiser and Overfield (2010) proposed a new theory of managerial leadership called versatile leadership. This framework defines flexible leadership as the ability to “[adjust] one’s leadership style, method, or

approach in response to different or changing contextual demands in a way that facilitates group performance” (p.106). Although consistent with the definition proposed by Zaccaro and his colleagues (1991), Kaiser and Overfield (2010) specify that flexible leadership entails altering one’s leadership behavior in accordance to changing work demands to promote a better group performance.

This conception of flexible leadership is also consistent with the behavioral complexity model (Denison et al.,1995). It defines effective leaders as individuals who may demonstrate an appropriate mix of behaviors that appear to be opposites (e.g., forceful vs enabling, or control vs collaboration). Moreover, Kaiser and Overfield (2010) recognize the importance of having a wide behavioral repertoire corresponding to the many competing social and organizational roles leaders need to perform, as well as knowing when to do what and skillfully execute the appropriate behavior (i.e., behavioral differentiation). Therefore, managerial flexibility is viewed as a higher-order construct composed of discreet lower-level behaviors (Kaiser et al., 2007). According to Kaiser and Overfield (2010), leadership versatility finds its roots in the tensions, trade-offs, and paradoxes inherent to the managerial tasks leaders need to accomplish.

In addition to the definition proposed for leadership flexibility, adaptability, and versatility, another significant contribution of Kaiser and Overfield (2010) is the proposition of a model that depicts opposing leadership behaviors. In fact, the model combined two principal distinctions: the *Management* versus *Leadership* distinction with the *How* versus *What* distinction. First, based on Kotter’s (1990) distinction between leadership and management, the authors present the management dimension as “achieving efficiency and predictability through command and control”; in contrast, leadership is portrayed as “inspiring people with a vision of change”. The second broad distinction is between the interpersonal and organizational aspects of leadership,

namely the interpersonal-side *how* and the organizational-side *what* of leadership. The interpersonal aspect *how* refers to the direct social influence one has on other employees, and the organizational aspect *what* further pertains to the indirect structural influence that guides and constrains employees (e.g., through direction, goals, plans, and policies).

When combining these two distinctions, two opposing domains of leadership behaviors emerge: Forceful versus Enabling and Execution versus Strategy (Kaiser et al., 2007). When focusing on the Forceful versus Enabling pair, the primary focus is on *how* leaders exert influence: top-down, where self-assertion and control are used to initiate activity compared to a more inclusive process where relatedness and strategies supporting employee engagement are utilized.

On the other hand, leaders must also deal with execution and strategy. They should consider *what* organizational needs they should focus on: prioritizing actions to produce immediate results versus adopting a long-term perspective to ensure the organization's viability in the long run (Kaiser et al., 2007). A major aspect of this distinction relates to the challenge of managing the tactical details needed to get work done, on the one hand, and setting direction with a broad vision for the future on the other hand. Another aspect of this distinction is the tensions between a selective focus on key priorities with a concern for efficiency and conserving resources versus an expansive ambition to build capability and grow the business. A third aspect of this distinction opposes establishing consistency by using systems and process discipline to manage an orderly flow of work with creating a climate of experimentation and creativity by supporting innovation (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010).

Paradoxical leader behavior. Based on the paradoxical perspective, management scholars developed the construct of paradoxical leader behavior (PLB) in people management, which

refers to “leader behaviors that are seemingly competing, yet interrelated, to meet competing workplace demands simultaneously and over time” (Zhang et al., 2015, p.539). Hence, these leadership behaviors act in a complementary fashion to deal with organizational contradictions related with the management of employees at work.

This relatively recent construct has been proposed by Zhang and his colleagues (2015). It is based on Eastern literature and yin-yang philosophy, which provides insights into the nature of paradoxes and how leaders must accept and harmonize contradictions simultaneously to ensure long-term effectiveness (Peng & Nisbett, 1999).

Building on yin-yang philosophy, PLB theory argues that “the two sides of behaviors coexist, depending on and complementing one another to jointly support leader effectiveness in people management” (Zhang et al., 2015, p.541). Five behavioral dimensions have been identified and each are described using a *both-and* terminology: (1) combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness; (2) maintaining both distance and closeness; (3) treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization; (4) enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility; and (5) maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy.

First, combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness implies the ability to harmonize self-oriented behaviors (e.g., being highly self-centered and constantly seeking to be the center of attention) with other-centered behaviors (e.g., showing humility and recognition of others’ value simultaneously) (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Second, maintaining both distance and closeness pertains to leaders who maintain hierarchical distinctions in dealing with work issues, while simultaneously forming close interpersonal bonds with their subordinates (Zhang et al., 2015). Third, treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization refers to the ability to offer similar privileges, rights, and status without displaying favoritism, while also adjusting

these treatments by considering each individual's uniqueness (Zhang et al., 2015). Finally, Zhang and his colleagues (2015) identify two aspects of control and empowerment: control and flexibility in behavior, and control and autonomy in decision making. Therefore, two paradoxes emerge: (1) enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility (relevant to behavioral control), and (2) maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy (relevant to output control). In other words, leaders should exercise control over subordinate behavior and decision-making in work processes while allowing employees to act flexibly and autonomously.

The conceptualization of PLB contributes to the understanding of leadership effectiveness in managing people beyond what we have learned from more traditional models of effective leadership (Zhang et al., 2015). This recent conception is the first, to our knowledge, that highlights specific organizational paradoxes leaders deal with about people management. Moreover, with the authors' efforts, this conceptualization provides us with a new lens to assess manager's behaviors in dealing with paradoxical demands. Additionally, the mixed methodology employed to generate the specific behaviors for each category of PLB is based on relevant literature concerning various leadership measurements as well as on incidents described in interviews with both supervisors and subordinates. By combining both a deductive and inductive approach to identifying the specific paradoxes leaders deal with when managing people, Zhang et al.'s (2015) study brings clarity to the concept of PLB. Finally, the conceptualization proposed by Zhang and his colleagues (2015) enhances our understanding of the paradoxical leadership phenomenon by also providing us with possible antecedents and consequences to PLB.

Additional observations. Through our review, we have noted some similarities and differences between the definitions and conceptualizations of the three leadership flexibility

theories. Hence, the next section is aiming at highlighting the observations made as we walked through the review process.

On the one hand and as mentioned previously, all three theories acknowledge and adopt a paradoxical vision of leadership. Moreover, these theories define managerial flexibility as the general ability to perform multiple paradoxical roles and behaviors to meet changing contextual demands simultaneously. To do so, Hooijberg and his colleagues (1997) propose the concepts of behavioral repertoire and behavioral differentiation. In short, to effectively balance competing workplace demands, leaders must have both the behavioral repertoire necessary to pick from the appropriate response, but also the ability to distinguish between these behaviors and choose the most relevant behavior for the situation (Hooijberg, 1996; Hooijberg et al., 1997). Furthermore, these authors warn leaders that it is best to avoid extreme amounts of behaviors that would have negative consequences. In fact, lopsided leaders (i.e., leaders' tendency to rely too much of behaviors related to their strengths and do little of opposing but complementary behaviors) can ironically turn their strengths into weaknesses. This may happen if they overuse their behavioral strengths as well as neglect shortcomings that can degrade the performance of employees, teams, and organizations (Kaiser & Overfield, 2011).

On the other hand, the current review underscores how these three flexible leadership theories differ in some aspects. First, it is essential to note that PLB theory's main focus is people management. On the contrary, both behavioral complexity and the leadership versatility theories take into account organizational demands in addition to people management. For example, leadership versatility theory considers the organizational needs leaders must focus on, such as positioning the organization to be competitive in the long run, as contrasted with focusing on the organization to get things done in the near term (*Direction and Execution, Growth and Efficiency*,

and *Innovation and Order*) (Kaiser et al., 2010). Moreover, each theory offers a different model with a distinctive set of dimensions as well as specific behaviors providing each useful knowledge about leadership flexibility. Finally, it is worth noting that most authors agree on the fact that there may be other dualities than the one they stress in their respective models. However, they believe that those specified in their framework represent the majority of opposing dimensions discussed in the leadership literature (e.g., Kaiser & Overfield, 2010).

To conclude this section, we believe it is essential to mention that we have identified throughout our review an additional conceptualization to the ones presented above, namely ambidextrous leadership. However, we decided to exclude it from this review because this theory only deals with a single duality (Rosing et al., 2011). In particular to innovation contexts, ambidextrous leadership theory postulates that leaders must find ways to shift between opening and closing behaviors by taking into account the ever-changing task requirements. The main difference between ambidexterity and the other managerial flexibility theories using a paradoxical perspective is that ambidexterity is understood as a response to binary tensions and assumes that attending to both sides of a competing tension ought to be the goal. In contrast, a paradox perspective identifies a broader range of dilemmatic tensions and allows for various possible responses (Lavine, 2014). Therefore, ambidextrous leadership does not address the extensive scope of dilemmas leaders may encounter and doesn't exactly fit into the paradoxical perspective this review focuses on. For these reasons, we have only retained and reviewed the three other conceptualizations.

Table 2*Definitional Perspectives on the Managerial Flexibility Concept*

Author(s)	Key terms	Definitions
Zaccaro et al. (1991)	Leadership flexibility	“The ability and willingness to respond in significantly different ways to correspondingly different situational requirement.” (p.321)
Hooijberg & Quinn (1992)	Behavioral complexity	“The ability to act out a cognitively complex strategy by playing multiple, even competing roles, in a highly integrated and complementary way.” (p.164)
Denison et al. (1995)	Behavioral complexity	“[...] perform multiple roles and behaviors that circumscribe the requisite variety implied by an organizational or environmental context.” (p.526)
Kaplan & Kaiser (2006)	Versatile leadership	“Adjusting one’s leadership style, method, or approach in response to different or changing contextual demands in a way that facilitates group performance.” (p.106)
Yukl & Mahsud (2010)	Flexible, adaptive leadership	“Flexible and adaptive leadership involves changing behavior in appropriate ways as the situation changes.” (p.81)
Zhang et al. (2015)	Paradoxical leader behavior	“[...] describe leader behaviors that are seemingly competing, yet interrelated, to meet competing workplace demands simultaneously and over time. In essence, [paradoxical leader behaviors] are dynamic and synergistic approaches to contradictions in organizational management.” (p.539)

Strengths and weaknesses of measures assessing managerial flexibility

There are two main approaches for measuring and assessing managerial flexibility through coworker ratings: managerial flexibility can be assessed through the trait approach (Leslie & Fleenor, 1998) or the competing values and paradox approach (Kaiser et al., 2007). As construed in the trait approach, ratings of flexibility are often represented with items that describe summaries of variations in behavior – often without reference to specific behaviors. Typical items are straightforward and summarize the leader’s generic tendency to vary their approach to changing circumstances. For example, sample items include “adapts to change”, “demonstrates flexibility”, and “varies their approach with the situation” (Leslie & Fleenor, 1998). However, the trait method is not aligned with our conceptualization of managerial flexibility (i.e., a leader’s ability to find ways to balance competing demands and opposing behaviors) since it views flexibility only at an aggregated level. Therefore, we will mainly focus on examining the other measurement methods consistent with the mastery of opposites approach (i.e., the competing values and paradox approach).

The competing values and paradox approach builds on the idea that flexibility is a higher-order construct composed of discreet, lower-level, and narrowly defined behaviors (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010). To our knowledge, four methods exist to quantify flexibility as conceived in the mastery of opposites tradition (Kaiser et al., 2007). The first technique is to use a typical Likert-type scale with rating items that directly address opposing behaviors (e.g., “Uses a fair approach to treat all subordinates uniformly, but also treats them as individuals”; Zhang et al., 2015). Although double-barreled item construction has been challenged for being potentially ambiguous and engendering different rater interpretations (Kaiser & Craig, 2005), some authors suggest that such item construction may be appropriate to capture paradoxes (Brutur & Facticeau, 2003; Zhang

et al., 2015). This scale development technique is consistent with the conceptualization of paradoxes in that it recognizes that opposites coexist and may be embraced simultaneously.

Second, there is the interpenetration method proposed by Quinn et al. (1992) where raters are asked to evaluate their managerial flexibility according to items from two separate Likert-type scales representing theoretically opposing dimensions. For example, Quinn et al. (1992) had raters evaluate their manager on a set of items that measure *Accomplishment* and another separate set of items capturing *Cohesion*. Then, using Bobko and Schwartz's (1984) formula for integrating bipolar constructs, the two scales' scores are combined into a single continuous variable: *Tough Love interpenetration*.

A third method consists of using a circumplex model to test the spatial relationship of behavioral complexity factors as proposed by Lawrence et al. (2009). Taking its roots in the CVF, the authors recognize that the quadrants of this framework can be represented in a spatial model that takes the form of a circle. Circumplex models are used in psychology to describe similarity and polarity among values (Anderson, 1960; Browne, 1992; Guttman, 1954; Lawrence et al., 2009). When applied to the CVF, the circumplex model considers three dimensions or factors; the subject's overall ability, as well as two bipolar dimensions that represent the subject's standing in the four quadrants, namely *External* versus *Internal focus* and *Flexible* versus *Stable*. When a psychometric instrument demonstrates a good fit with a circumplex model, this suggests that it offers a more practical approach to measuring behavioral flexibility because "it more precisely captures the relationships between the latent constructs and their associated behaviors" (Lawrence et al., 2009).

The last measurement method is what Kaplan and Kaiser (2006) consider as the duality-oriented view of versatility. Based on the understanding that managers tend to over-rely on one

side and under-use the other side in dualities (e.g., Forceful-Enabling and Strategic-Operational dualities), this technique uses a new type of response scale that ranges from too little, an optimal amount, or too much of a given managerial behavior. Like the interpenetration and the circumplex methods, the duality-oriented approach uses separate scales for opposing dimensions. Therefore, each item is rated on a too little/too much scale and then scored in pairs (e.g., each Forceful item has an equivalent Enabling item). Pythagorean geometry is used for each pair, and this value is then averaged across item pairs to compute a versatility score for that duality (e.g., Forceful-Enabling).

In the following section, we will offer a review of managerial flexibility measures that fit within the competing values and paradox approach. To our knowledge, such work has never been done in the past. It is of great importance since the overall concept of managerial flexibility keeps gaining popularity among scholars and practitioners. Moreover, it will allow us to answer Kaiser's (2020) call for a better understanding of what all these measures have in common and how they differ. It is then essential to provide a comprehensive review of the measures, recommendations of psychometrically sound scales, and recommendations of when it is more appropriate to use each of them.

Measuring managerial flexibility according to the competing values and paradox approach

The concept of behavioral complexity has inspired many researchers to invest greater efforts in studying managerial flexibility. Since Hooijberg and Quinn's (1992) study, there has been a growing and promising stream of research on managerial flexibility, but some authors suggested that underdeveloped metrics has hindered it (e.g., Hart & Quinn, 1993; Denison et al., 1995; Hooijberg, 1996). In fact, Zaccaro (2001) called for better instruments with convergent and discriminant validity to better capture and measure the behavioral repertoire associated with

leaders' behavioral complexity. Previous measures had several psychometric issues, such as a limited measure of complexity; only a small number of items was used per latent construct, making it challenging to differentiate random measurement error from unique variance specific to the measure (Bagozzi, 1994). Moreover, none of these first instruments (except the one used by Denison et al., 1995) have been examined spatially to determine if the dimensions of the CVF hold up to the imposed theoretical constraints. In regard to other concepts associated with managerial flexibility (other than behavioral complexity), namely leadership versatility, and paradoxical leader behavior, several instruments are proposed. Still, researchers have no consensus on which to use to best capture managerial flexibility.

To the best of our knowledge, we have identified eight measures of managerial flexibility that fit the scope of the competing values and paradox approach. To review these measures and evaluate each one of them on their strengths and weaknesses, we will use the scale development guidelines established by Hinkin (1995) and Hinkin et al. (1997). These guidelines are well known for their systematic and comprehensive inclusion of psychometric properties of a measure. They have been used similarly – to compare servant leadership measures – by other researchers (e.g., Eva et al., 2019).

Moreover, the theoretical structure of some recent behavioral flexibility models (e.g. CVF and the duality-oriented view of versatility) imposes more rigorous demands on an instrument than does any other leadership theory. Researchers have suggested supplementing traditional factor analysis with additional analytic techniques to test the spatial relationships (e.g., Denison et al., 1995; Kaiser & Overfield, 2010; Lawrence et al., 2009). By combining these specific criteria, we will be able to trace each measure's development and validation process and compare each measure's psychometric validity against rigorous scale development criteria (see Table 3).

Therefore, we believe that we will be able to provide both researchers and practitioners with clear comparisons and guidelines on the existing measures.

Drawing on the previous landmark work of Churchill (1979), Hinkin et al. (1997) identified seven steps of scale development and validation: item generation, content adequacy assessment, questionnaire administration, factor analysis, internal consistency assessment, construct validity, and replication. Hinkin (1995) argues that the first two steps (i.e., item generation and content adequacy assessment) are critical to ensure a measure's content validity. Following a meticulous approach to items generation (step 1), researchers should take into consideration the state of development of the underlying theory (i.e., favor an inductive approach when little theory is available or the phenomenon is still unclear, and/or favor a deductive approach when the theoretical conception is well-founded and accepted among scholars). Taking into consideration the remaining ambiguity of managerial flexibility theory and the lack of consensus on the concrete behaviors that represent this concept (Kaiser, 2020; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010), we consider that item generation for managerial flexibility measures should be based on both inductive and deductive approaches. As can be seen in Table 3, some of the managerial flexibility measures rely exclusively on the deductive approach to item generation based on the authors' understanding of the underlying theory (e.g., Denison et al., 1995; Hart & Quinn, 1993; Hooijberg, 1996; Zacher & Rosing, 2015), while other measures generated items using both inductive and deductive approaches (e.g., Lawrence et al., 2009; Kaiser et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2015). To further ensure construct validity, Hinkin (1995) suggests that items should be pretested for content adequacy (Step 2). To do so, researchers typically invite content experts to sort and assess items based on their representativeness, comprehensiveness, and clarity (Grant & Davis, 1997). As shown in Table 3, of the eight scales we reviewed only three reported having taken such measures.

The next steps (questionnaire administration, factor analysis, internal consistency assessment, construct validity) proposed by Hinkin et al. (1997) are today accepted as standard convention for scale development. Therefore, most measures reviewed included these steps in their development process. The main difference we noted between measures concerns the factor analyses (Step 4), where some researchers only performed exploratory analyses and no confirmatory analyses. The latter is needed to assess the quality of the factor structure by statistically testing the significance of the overall model, as well as the relationships among items and scales (Hurley et al., 1997). To do so, an independent sample is needed. Only three measure development processes reported that both EFA and CFA were conducted in the validation approach (see Table 3). Regarding replication (Step 7), scholars recognize the necessity to assess the internal consistency reliability and construct validation of new scales with another set of data (Hinkin, 1997). Therefore, we will not recommend measures that lack evidence with respect to content adequacy (e.g., Zacher & Rosing, 2015).

As for spatial relationships, it is essential to note that some conceptualizations of managerial flexibility, such as behavioral complexity and leadership versatility, propose specific theoretical models (e.g., CVF and the duality-oriented view of versatility) where leader's behaviors are depicted into different factors that are expected to demonstrate both convergent and discriminant validity (Zaccaro, 2001). These theoretical models expect leaders to have abilities in all four quadrants imposing then correlations between second-order factors while also being distinct. Therefore, the use of more advanced mathematical techniques, such as a circular, or circumplex layout (e.g. Lawrence et al., 2009) or Pythagorean geometry (e.g., Kaiser & Overfield, 2010) is needed to demonstrate the spatial relationships between factors. Only three of the eight measures we reviewed reported this step (see Table 3).

Based on our observations, we recommend three measures of managerial flexibility that have gone through a rigorous process of construction and validation, namely, Lawrence et al.'s (2009) Behavioral Complexity measure, Kaiser et al.'s (2010) LVI 3.0, and Zhang et al.'s (2015) Paradoxical leader behavior (PLB) measure. As shown in Table 4, each of these measures is distinct in its emphasis. Therefore, which measure is more fitting to employ depends on the specific purposes of the study or program. In the following lines, we provide a brief description of the relative strengths of each measure.

Behavioral complexity measure. The first measure we recommend assessing managerial flexibility is Lawrence et al.'s (2009) 36-item composite of the behavioral complexity in leadership. Based on the CVF, this instrument deepens our understanding of behavioral complexity by allowing us to examine more behaviors (using more indicators) in each model quadrant. By doing so, it contributes to expanding our theoretical conception of behavioral complexity, and more particularly what behavioral repertoire means. Researchers can use this expanded scale instead of the earlier, less psychometrically rigorous instruments in two ways; either as a measure of overall behavioral repertoire ability or by studying relationships between each quadrant and performance outcomes. This instrument offers a flexible and detailed means of exploring the relationship of roles to performance (e.g., overall performance and the ability to lead change).

Lawrence et al. (2009) are the first authors to use SEM and Bayesian circumplex model to test an instrument's factor structure and spatial relationships in assessing managerial leadership. These tests provided crucial additional support for the four-quadrant structure of the CVF as applied to managerial behavior; opposing quadrants were correlated significantly but to a lesser degree to neighboring quadrant correlations. Given its robust psychometric validity, we recommend this measure for researchers studying behavioral complexity. However, it is important

to note that this instrument focuses primarily on behavioral repertoire and does not measure behavioral differentiation, which is an important component of behavioral complexity (Hooijberg, 1996). Lawrence et al. (2009) suggest that future research add evaluative measures to capture the behavioral differentiation component of behavioral complexity.

From a more practical perspective, we recommend this instrument for leadership development purposes because the multiple indicators allow practitioners to create a more nuanced portrait of the manager's behavioral repertoire. This instrument can be used to compare a person's self-evaluations and colleagues' ratings to offer 360-degree feedback on one's behavioral flexibility. For example, thanks to its detailed list of behavior indicators, practitioners who desire to use this instrument for coaching purposes can use it to compare a person's self-evaluation and colleagues' ratings, as well as target specific behaviors that seem less mastered.

Leadership versatility measure. The second measure we recommend is Kaiser et al.'s (2010) LVI 3.0 scale which takes its roots from the duality-oriented view of versatility. Consistent with the leadership versatility model (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010), this 48-item measure distinguishes between *how* you lead and *what* you lead. This distinction is made out of respect for the difference between the social/interpersonal and functional/organizational aspects of leadership. The interpersonal side of leadership (the *how*) is represented with the *Forceful* and *Enabling* dimensions and the organizational side of leadership (the *what*) is represented with the *Strategic* and *Operational* dimensions. Each item on the LVI describes a discrete, observable behavior that can be both done too little or too much as well as performed optimally. Items were written in pairs, meaning each Forceful item has an Enabling item, and each Strategic item is paired with an Operational item. This is consistent with the duality-oriented conception of versatility. For instance, the item "Steps in" is paired with "Trusts people".

Each of the Forceful, Enabling, Strategic, and Operational aspects of leading are considered relevant for leadership effectiveness. Therefore, leaders must be able to perform “the right amount” on all four dimensions. To measure versatility, authors suggest a new scale that ranges from -4 to +4, where -4 to -1 represents degrees of “too little” and +1 to +4 represents degrees of “too much”. Ratings of 0 represent “just right”, the optimal score. Contrary to typical response scale (e.g., standard 5-point scales) and their implicit assumption that “more is better”, this new rating scale is consistent with the inherently curvilinear nature of performance. Such a scale's main contribution is better representing when managers go to counterproductive extremes.

The versatility score uses geometry to compute scores across the four measured dimensions to arrive at a single percentage that reflects how close the manager is doing “the right amount” on all four. Higher scores indicate the flexible and appropriate use of all four dimensions while lower scores indicate doing too little of some and too much of others. Researchers explain that Versatility scores are expressed in percentages and can be interpreted just like letter grades in the American school system, where higher percentages indicate greater mastery (e.g., 90%/A, 80%/B, 70%/C, etc.).

Similar to the behavioral complexity measure (Lawrence et al., 2009), we also recommend the LVI for leadership development purposes for managers and executives. As a matter of fact, this measure is mainly used for this purpose and is administered in a 360-degree feedback fashion. The opposites approach is conceptually more compelling – managers find these kinds of models intriguing and resonate better with the tensions and trade-offs they represent. Contrary to instruments using the competency or trait approach, the opposites approach used by the LVI builds on feedback about specific behaviors making it more suited for development purposes. Finally, our main concern with the LVI is that it may be less applicable to lower-level managers like first-line

supervisors since most of the research that led to the instrument is based on developmental work with executives.

Paradoxical leader behavior measure. The last measure we recommend is Zhang et al.'s (2015) paradoxical leader behavior measure. In line with Eastern yin-yang philosophy and some Western-based approaches to paradoxes (e.g., Lüscher & Lewis, 2008; Smith & Tushman, 2005), this scale recognizes that opposites coexist and may be embraced simultaneously. As described above, the authors took a double-barreled item design approach to capture leaders' paradoxical behaviors. By doing so, authors avoid the traditional conceptualization that choices involve a bipolar paradox, and instead recognize leaders' ability to engage in both bipolar actions. They argue that, although a double-barreled item design is often criticized for its ambiguity, this approach for scale development is appropriate when addressing paradoxical leader behavior.

The PLB measure was developed and validated using five dimensions and 22 items pertaining to people management at the supervisory level. Items use a *both-and* terminology to describe two sides of behavior and are grouped into the following dimensions: (1) combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness (UI); (2) maintaining both distance and closeness (SO); (3) treating subordinates uniformly, while allowing individualization (CA); (4) enforcing work requirements, while allowing flexibility (RF); and (5) maintaining decision control, while allowing autonomy (DC). Examples of items are: "Uses a fair approach to treat all subordinates uniformly, but also treats them as individuals." (UI), and "Maintaining distance from subordinates at work, but is also amiable toward them." (DC). To assess whether the items were understandable and acceptable, the authors conducted robust analysis; EFA and CFA, test-retest reliability, convergent, discriminant, and predictive validities. Overall, analyses demonstrated that the measure is valid and appropriate.

We recommend using this measure when studying or assessing flexible leader behavior about people management. Besides research purposes, this measure can be used for interventions since opting for a paradoxical perspective may help us better understand and integrate tensions encountered in the workplace (Zhang et al., 2015). The items proposed can help leaders better position and integrate seeming contradictions when managing employees, as well as transfer this knowledge to other workplace phenomena. The use of this tool can also bring more awareness to leaders and encourage them to reflect on their results. Finally, the only concern we have with the PLB scale is that it was only validated in the Chinese context (Zhang et al., 2015). However, Western thinking is often thought to be more analytical, while Chinese thinking is more synthetic and integrative (Chen, 2002). Such cultural differences may impact the way paradoxical leader behavior is manifested. Therefore, more research is needed to demonstrate this measure's validity in a Western context.

Table 3*Managerial Flexibility Measures Against Hinkin et al.'s (1997) Criteria*

Authors	Name of measure (or measured concept)	No. of items	Item generation (deductive & inductive)	Content adequacy assessment	Questionnaire administration	Factor analysis EFA & CFA	Testing spatial relations	Internal consistency assessment	Construct validity	Replication
Quinn et al. (1992)	Tough Love and Practical Vision	14	Deductive only	n.a.	Yes	n.a.	No	Yes	Yes	No
Hart & Quinn (1993)	Executive leadership roles	16	Deductive only	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
Denison et al. (1995)	Behavioral complexity	16	Deductive only	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Hooijberg (1996)	Leadership functions	16	Deductive only	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
Kaiser et al. (2007)	Tough Love and Practical Vision	14	Deductive only	n.a.	Yes	n.a.	No	Yes	No	No
Lawrence et al. (2009)	Behavioral complexity	36	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kaiser et al. (2010)	Leadership Versatility Index (LVI 3.0)	48	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Zhang et al. (2015)	Paradoxical leader behavior (PLB)	22	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 4*Comparison of Three Recommended Measures of Managerial Flexibility*

	Behavioral Complexity	Leadership Versatility Index (LVI)	Paradoxical leader behavior (PLB)
Key scale development articles	Lawrence et al. (2009)	Kaiser et al. (2010)	Zhang et al. (2015)
Number of items	36	48	22
Number of dimensions	4	4	5
Dimensions	Collaborate, create, control and compete	Forceful-Enabling versatility and Strategic-Operational versatility	UI ¹ , SO ² , CA ³ , RF ⁴ and DC ⁵
Unique theorizing	Behavioral complexity approach based on the CVF	Leadership versatility approach	Paradoxical leader behavior in people management approach

¹ UI – *Treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization*

² SO – *Combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness*

³ CA – *Maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy*

⁴ RF – *Enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility*

⁵ DC – *Maintaining both distance and closeness*

Managerial flexibility's antecedents and consequences from existing empirical research

Drawing on the multiple theories and conceptualizations of managerial flexibility and in order to understand the complete nomological network of this construct, we have reviewed 26 empirical quantitative or mixed studies. From this review, we were able to identify the different variables studied in relation to managerial flexibility (see Figure 1). According to our observations, various labels have been used when studying the overall concept of managerial flexibility (see Table 5 and 6). The following section presents an overview of the antecedents, moderators, mediators, and outcomes studied with managerial flexibility.

Antecedents of managerial flexibility

Antecedents of managerial flexibility have been mainly studied in three ways: firstly, regarding leader's individual characteristics, secondly, concerning leader's skills and experience, and lastly, by inspecting contextual and environmental aspects. Although several antecedents have been studied, only eight empirical studies have tested these assumptions (see Table 5).

To analyze if managers' individual characteristics influence their managerial flexibility, researchers have asked managers to report on their own traits and surveyed their employees to rate their behavioral flexibility. Individual characteristics include cognitive abilities, personality traits and other attributes. Regarding cognitive abilities, research has shown that managers who demonstrate a holistic thinking (Zhang et al., 2015), integrative complexity (Zhang et al., 2015), intelligence (Hyllengren, 2017), and

aptitude for ambiguity (White & Shullman, 2010) were all linked to managerial flexibility. Additionally, when studying personality traits, researchers have found positive links between openness (Hyllengren, 2017), psychological hardiness (Bartone et al., 2013), extraversion (Ishaq et al., 2021), openness to experience (Ishaq et al., 2021), and managerial flexibility. Some other attributes linked to managerial flexibility include mindfulness (Baron et al., 2018), emotional stability (Hyllengren, 2017), inner moral compass (Hyllengren, 2017), and will/energy (Hyllengren, 2017). In terms of gender effect (measured as a dichotomy), only one study reported that, relative to their female counterparts, male managers who display flexible behaviors are more likely to be perceived as effective leaders (Hall et al., 1998). However, these results are partially supported, and we, therefore, call upon future studies to analyze these relationships and create a more holistic picture of gender and managerial flexibility.

Regarding managers' skills and experience, Hyllengren (2017) is the only researcher that has focused on these aspects. His quantitative results show that the manager's capacity to be competent, prepared and trained as well as being able to successfully read the situation (measured through followers' perceptions), are all linked to their flexibility.

Finally, only two studies have examined contextual aspects that could lead to managerial flexibility. It has been found that the organizational structure (Zhang et al., 2015), the financial flexibility, metaflexibility, and environmental turbulence (Verdú-Jover et al., 2008) all contribute to greater managerial flexibility. Given the small number of research that studied both skills and experience as well as contextual factors as

antecedents of managerial flexibility, future research should focus on confirming these relationships and identifying other variables likely to extend our knowledge of this field.

Outcomes of managerial flexibility

Scholars interested in studying the impacts of managerial flexibility have investigated its influence at four levels: organizational, team, individual, and subordinate. Overall, we found 20 empirical studies that have taken an interest in testing the relationship between managerial flexibility and the numerous outcomes proposed in the literature (see Table 6).

At the organizational level, managerial flexibility is positively related to organizational effectiveness (Hart & Quinn, 1993), financial performance (Hart & Quinn, 1993), organizational performance (Hart & Quinn, 1993; Verdú-Jover et al., 2008), and a sustainable competitive advantage (Heracleous & Wirtz, 2014). A more recent study has also linked managerial flexibility to increased research and development (R&D) investments, corporate reputation, and market share (Zhang & Han, 2019).

At the team level, managerial flexibility has been linked with team adaptability (Kaiser, 2020), team productivity (Kaiser, 2020; Kaiser et al., 2012), team processes such as the degree of morale, engagement, and cohesion among members of the team for which the manager is responsible (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010), team results (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010), and team vitality (Kaiser et al., 2012). Further, managerial flexibility is positively related to team innovation through collaborative team learning (DeLia, 2011).

At the leader level, research has found support for relationships between managerial flexibility and some interpersonal outcomes, such as perceptions of the ability

to lead change (Lawrence et al., 2009), overall job performance (Vergauwe et al., 2017) as well as overall effectiveness (Avery, 2001; Bullis, 1992; Denison et al., 1995; Hooijberg, 1996; Kaiser, 2020; Kaiser et al., 2007, 2012; Kaiser & Overfield, 2010; Lawrence et al., 2009). Regarding managers' overall effectiveness, only Hooijberg's (1996) study has found mixed support for this relationship. In fact, this is the only research we found that compares subordinates', peers' and superiors' perceptions of managerial flexibility and leadership effectiveness. Results show that perceptions of effectiveness are not all positive and not all significant; behavioral differentiation negatively affects subordinates' and peers' perceptions of effectiveness, and positively impacts superiors' perceptions of effectiveness. More research is needed to confirm this distinction between raters' perceptions.

More recently, there has been an increased interest in research studying the impact of managerial flexibility on subordinate outcomes. This sudden interest has led researchers to identify several positive outcomes on employees, such as work role performance (Zhang et al., 2015), in-role performance (Ishaq et al., 2021), innovative performance (Ishaq et al., 2021), and subordinates' engagement (Kaiser, 2020).

Other researchers have also tested the relationship between managerial flexibility and employee outcomes by suggesting additional variables that act as mediators. For instance, Yang et al. (2021) tested the impact of paradoxical leadership on employee creativity through employees' thriving at work. Similarly, Shao et al. (2019) tested this same relationship, but through employee's creative self-efficacy as a mediator. On their part, Franken et al.'s (2020) study shows that paradoxical leadership is linked to employee resilience and that organizational support mediates this relationship. Finally,

Xue et al. (2020) suggest that when leaders adopt paradoxical behavior, employees are more likely to engage in a promotive voice behavior (i.e., the expression of employees about issues and situations to enhance work practices). This relationship is mediated through psychological safety within their work environment. Overall, we note that most researchers studying the impact of managerial flexibility on employees have based their research on the paradoxical leadership literature since this framework focuses specifically on people management.

Figure 1

The Nomological Network of Managerial Flexibility Research

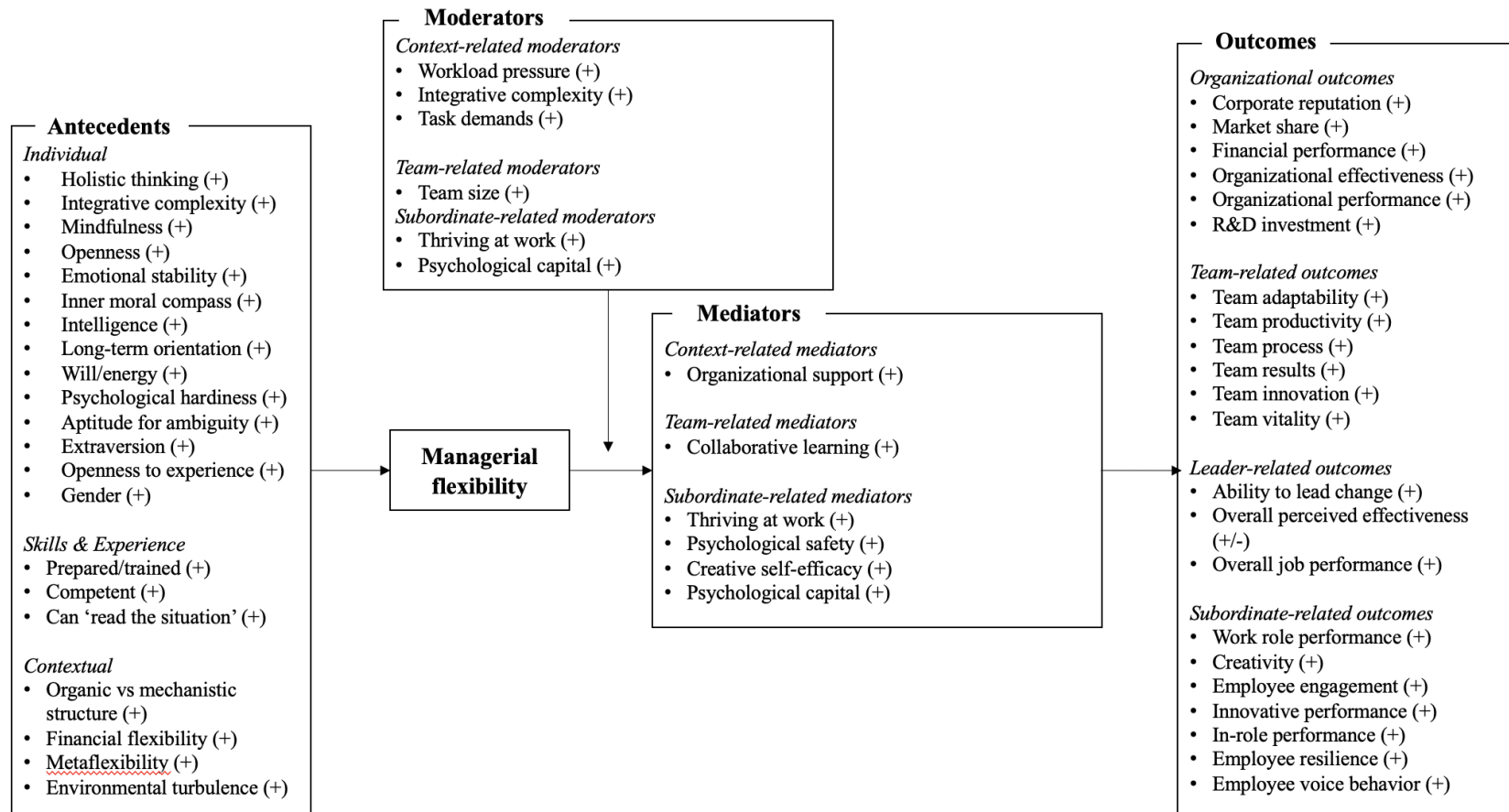


Table 5*Managerial Flexibility and Antecedents*

Label	Level	Antecedent	Authors
Adaptive leadership	Individual	Openness	Hyllengren (2017)
	Individual	Emotional stability	Hyllengren (2017)
	Individual	Inner moral compass	Hyllengren (2017)
	Individual	Intelligence	Hyllengren (2017)
	Individual	Will/energy	Hyllengren (2017)
	Skills & experience	Prepared/trained	Hyllengren (2017)
	Skills & experience	Competent	Hyllengren (2017)
	Skills & experience	Can “read the situation”	Hyllengren (2017)
Behavioral flexibility	Individual	Psychological hardiness	Bartone et al. (2013)
	Individual	Gender	Hall et al. (1998)
Flexible leadership	Individual	Aptitude for ambiguity	White & Shullman (2010)
	Contextual	Financial flexibility	Verdù-Jover et al. (2008)
Managerial flexibility	Contextual	Metaflexibility	Verdù-Jover et al. (2008)
	Contextual	Environmental turbulence	Verdù-Jover et al. (2008)
	Individual	Holistic thinking	Zhang et al. (2015)
Paradoxical leadership	Individual	Integrative complexity	Zhang et al. (2015)
	Contextual	Organic vs mechanistic structure	Zhang et al. (2015)
	Individual	Extraversion	Ishaq et al. (2021)
Versatile leadership	Individual	Openness to experience	Ishaq et al. (2021)
	Individual	Mindfulness	Baron et al. (2018)

Table 6*Managerial Flexibility and Outcomes*

Label	Level	Mediator	Outcome	Authors
Behavioral complexity	Organizational	-	Organizational Effectiveness	Hart & Quinn (1993)
	Organizational	-	Financial performance	Hart & Quinn (1993)
	Leader	-	Ability to lead change	Lawrence et al. (2009)
Behavioral complexity & Managerial flexibility	Organizational	-	Organizational performance	Hart & Quinn (1993); Verdù-Jover et al. (2008)
Behavioral complexity & Versatile leadership	Leader	-	Overall perceived effectiveness	Avery (2001); Bullis (1992); Denison et al. (1995); Hooijberg (1996); Kaiser et al. (2007); Kaiser & Overfield (2010); Kaiser et al. (2012); Kaiser (2020); Lawrence et al. (2009)
Complexity leadership	Team	Team collaborative learning	Team innovation	DeLia (2011)
Mastering paradox	Organizational	-	Sustainable competitive advantage	Heracleous & Wirtz (2014)
	Organizational	-	R&D investment	Zhang & Han (2019)
	Organizational	-	Corporate reputation	Zhang & Han (2019)
Paradoxical leadership	Organizational	-	Market share	Zhang & Han (2019)
	Subordinate	-	Work role performance	Zhang et al. (2015)
	Subordinate	Thriving at work	Creativity	Yang et al. (2021)
	Subordinate	Creative self-efficacy	Creativity	Shao et al. (2019)

Label	Level	Mediator	Outcome	Authors
Paradoxical leadership	Subordinate	-	In-role performance	Ishaq et al. (2021)
	Subordinate	-	Innovative performance	Ishaq et al. (2021)
	Subordinate	Organizational support	Employee resilience	Franken et al. (2020)
	Subordinate	Psychological safety	Employee voice behavior	Xue et al. (2020)
	Team	-	Team adaptability	Kaiser (2020)
Versatile leadership	Team	-	Team productivity	Kaiser (2020); Kaiser et al. (2012)
	Team	-	Team process	Kaiser & Overfield (2010)
	Team	-	Team results	Kaiser & Overfield (2010)
	Team	-	Team vitality	Kaiser et al. (2012)
	Leader	-	Overall job performance	Vergauwe et al. (2017)
	Subordinate	-	Employee engagement	Kaiser (2020)

Discussion

The present research significantly extends our understanding of the conceptualization and operationalization of managerial flexibility. In reviewing the literature on flexible leadership, we were able to portray an accurate picture of the research state using the competing values and paradox approach. Building on this conceptualization, we identified three main conceptualizations to include in this review: behavioral complexity, leadership versatility and paradoxical leadership. Moreover, we reviewed many managerial flexibility measures and were able to provide clear recommendations aiming to help both researchers and practitioners to select the proper measurement approach. While more research is needed to validate further and review the concept of managerial flexibility, the present study serves as a first effort to summarize and provide a clear overview of the research on this concept. Below, we present the implications and limitations of the present findings as well as offer a detailed agenda for future research.

Research implications

The study implications are twofold. First, this literature review contributes to theoretical advancements on the subject of managerial flexibility. Second, a number of implications arise from measures of managerial flexibility reviewed.

Theoretical advancements

In line with our first research question, “How is managerial flexibility understood and defined within the leadership literature?”, the present findings reveal three main implications for theoretical advancements. First, in opting for the competing values and stakeholder conflicts approach, we were able to refine and focus our entire review efforts on a single stream of research. By having done so, this paper is a first step to answering Yukl and Mahsud’s (2010)

and Kaiser's (2020) call to provide a comprehensive and detailed review of one of the seven streams of research in the literature on management and leadership.

More specifically, we were able to find three central leadership conceptualizations to the competing values and stakeholder conflicts approach, namely behavioral complexity (Denison et al., 1995; Lawrence et al., 2009), leadership versatility (Kaiser et al., 2007), and paradoxical leader behavior (Zhang et al., 2015). Competing value theories all describe how effective corporate leaders find ways to balance competing values and opposite behaviors. What differentiate these theories are the tradeoffs identified (e.g., balancing values for human relations with values for task-goal achievement or balancing strategic and operational objectives) and the specific behaviors and strategies managers use to balance the competing values and paradoxes.

Second, through our review, we have identified a key element that underlies the competing values stream: researchers all seem to adopt a paradoxical vision of leadership. In line with the competing values stream of research, the paradox perspective argues that to sustain long-term effectiveness, corporate leaders must find ways to attend to both competing demands (i.e., *both-and* approach) (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Zhang et al., 2015). Although the paradox perspective is prevalent within the Eastern literature, it has slowly attracted the Western scholars' attention studying managerial flexibility (e.g., Denison et al., 1995; Lawrence et al., 2009; Kaiser et al., 2007; Kaiser & Overfield, 2010; Lavine, 2014). As a matter of fact, this interest in meeting paradoxical demands in a *both-and* fashion is specifically what differentiate the competing values theories from the situational or contingency theories of leadership that emphasize an *either-or* approach (Smith & Lewis, 2011). These paradoxical demands are often illustrated through the authors' tradeoffs proposition in their respective theories. For example, when addressing behavioral complexity, scholars present two pairs of paradoxes: (1) Collaborate vs Control, and (2) Create vs Compete (Lawrence et al., 2009). When speaking about leadership versatility,

authors also present two pairs of paradoxes: (1) Forceful vs Enabling, and (2) Strategy vs Execution (Kaiser & Overfield, 2010). Finally, when presenting PLB authors identified five pairs of behavioral dimensions: (1) combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness; (2) maintaining both distance and closeness; (3) treating subordinates uniformly, while allowing individualization; (4) enforcing work requirements, while allowing flexibility; and (5) maintaining decision control, while allowing autonomy (Zhang et al., 2015). Therefore, although the identified behavioral dimensions vary between conceptualizations, all authors agree on using a *both-and* terminology. This general tendency to adopt a paradoxical vision when studying managerial flexibility is often implicit in research and constitutes one of the main contributions of our review. Many scholars refer to the paradoxical approach using different terms such as the mastery of opposites (Kaiser et al., 2007) or the yin-yang philosophy (Zhang et al., 2015). However, the central idea remains the same: to face organizational contradictions, corporate leaders must accept and harmonize competing and paradoxical demands.

Third, through our review, we were able to paint a complete picture of the nomological network of managerial flexibility in order to respond to our third research question: “What do we know about managerial flexibility’s antecedents and consequences from existing empirical research?”. By reviewing a total of 26 empirical quantitative and mixed studies, this article is the first to present an overview of the antecedents, moderators, mediators, and outcomes studied in relation to managerial flexibility. These findings advance our theoretical understanding of managers’ flexibility in two ways. First, the proposed nomological network brings greater clarity to what variables have been studied, which informs researchers on the extent of managerial flexibility’s impacts. Second, this review provides insights into which relationships need to be further explored and serves as a reference to what has already been studied.

Measures advancements

Regarding advancements related to how managerial flexibility is measured and in line with our second research question “How is managerial flexibility measured and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these measures?”, the present review reveals three main implications. First, to our knowledge, this article represents the very first effort to review managerial flexibility measures according to the competing values and paradox approach. Such work is of great importance since it provides scholars with clear recommendations of psychometrically sound scales as well as recommendations of when to use each measure. Second, a total of eight measures of managerial flexibility have been identified and reviewed against a list of thorough scale development criteria (Hinkin, 1995; Hinkin et al., 1997; Denison et al., 1995; Kaiser & Overfield, 2010; Lawrence et al., 2009). This resulted in identifying of three specific measures of managerial flexibility that correspond to state-of-the-art construction and validation criteria. The specificities and particularities of each recommended measures are discussed in this paper making it easier for researchers (and practitioners) to choose which scale to use. Third, the measures identified give us more insights into specific managerial flexible behaviors; each scale and conceptualization items describe more concretely how managers deal with paradoxical and competing demands. Therefore, looking into the items used can complement the theoretical models proposed as it provides more details into how corporate leaders exert flexibility.

Practical implications

The present research has several practical implications for organizations and managers. More specifically, there are four ways in which consultants, talent managers and corporate leaders themselves can apply the current knowledge on managerial flexibility to their practice. In fact, the recommended managerial flexibility theories and measures in this paper are sufficiently

detailed to be used during developmental interventions and coaching sessions. First, while considering the primary focus of each measure (e.g., PLB is specific to people management only), organizations can use these scales as concrete and psychometrically valid tools to assess the flexibility of their managers in line with the proper target of the expected flexibility. For example, the behavioral complexity measure (Lawrence et al., 2009) and the LVI (Kaiser et al., 2010) are two measures that can be used by practitioners interested in assessing managers' flexible behaviors. These two scales can be used to evaluate leaders' flexibility and can be added to the performance evaluation.

Second, by using the recommended instruments or simply applying the logic of the opposites model to other existing feedback instruments, organizations can provide their managers with 360-degree feedback. This can be done by merely asking the manager, their superiors, peers, and direct reports to complete the same questionnaire measuring managers' behavioral flexibility. Once completed, the results may help managers understand their behavioral repertoire and how they can become more flexible leaders. For example, it may help to juxtapose and explore discrepancies across rater groups because they represent conflicting perceptions and often conflicting expectations. In these cases, it can encourage the manager to start follow-up conversations with the different groups to understand better how to act on their feedback (Kaiser et al., 2010).

Third, consultants and talent managers can offer coaching sessions building on the leadership flexibility models. Through these sessions, managers can be encouraged, for example, to contemplate how specific actions intended to achieve one goal can affect other objectives. Such an approach might result in the coachee finding an appropriate balance for behaviors that are opposites and understanding how the overuse of one's strengths can lead to adverse consequences (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010).

Fourth, at an individual level, corporate leaders can use the flexible leadership models and measures to explore the wide variety of flexible behaviors documented across the different approaches. The different dualities presented by each model can all speak to personal challenges managers may face as well as give them several examples of behaviors they could endorse in order to take action on the competing demands taking place in their workplace. Such models can certainly help managers understand how the priorities of their stakeholders may compete with each other and push them to look for ways to reconcile them.

Given the high pressure and workload experienced by managers and corporate leaders, we acknowledge how embracing such a leadership style might be a challenge. We would suggest that practitioners and managers endorse realistic expectations while they are working to instill a vision of behavioral flexibility in their work environment.

Limitations

While this study contributes to the understanding of managerial flexibility, it has some limitations. First, by choosing to focus on the competing values and paradox approach, which is one of the seven streams of research on leadership flexibility identified by Yukl & Mahsud (2010), we might have limited our understanding of the broader concept of flexibility in regards to management. Consequently, this review might have excluded relevant managerial flexibility literature published in line with the other six streams, but that is just as relevant. For example, it is well documented that flexible leadership not only rely on behaviors but is also heavily dependent on cognitive and emotional/motivational factors (Lord & Hall, 2005; Komives et al., 2005; Zaccaro & Foti, 1991). However, the competing values stream of research focuses solely on the assessment of flexible behavior, which may limit our understanding from the cognitive and emotional or motivational factors that ultimately influence the choice of behavior. Moreover,

the inclusion of these cognitive variables could be particularly relevant to the behavioral differentiation aspect of behavioral complexity theory, which states that to emit behaviorally complex responses, individuals need both a large behavioral repertoire and the ability to differentiate the appropriate response (Lawrence et al., 2009).

Second, considering the overwhelming number of terms used to address flexible leadership, and despite the efforts to cover as broad as possible in our literature review, the keywords we used to conduct the review exercise might not have taken into consideration all the different appellations. In addition, to make sure we didn't miss out on any significant paper, we also examined the reference lists of all retrieved articles.

Another possible limitation to be noted concerns the process of choosing which of the theories to retain and cover in our review. Following our main objective to review how is the concept of managerial flexibility understood and defined within the leadership literature, we decided to stick to theories that present an overall view of flexibility covering several paradoxes in the same conceptualization. Therefore, we decided to exclude from our review theories that were specific to a single duality, such as leadership ambidexterity (Rosing et al., 2011). Specific to innovation contexts, this theory proposes that leaders must find ways to switch from opening to closing behaviors only without addressing the broader range of dilemmatic tensions leaders may encounter (Lavine, 2014).

Agenda for future research

The field of research on managerial flexibility remains relatively recent, and many aspects of this concept have not yet been investigated extensively. More research is needed to better integrate knowledge from the seven streams of research. Researchers need to come to a common understanding of what is managerial flexibility, what are the attributes that are related to

managerial flexibility (e.g., cognition, emotion, behaviors), when it truly applies (crisis vs. regular operations) and which appellation to use when referring to the overall concept of managerial leadership. As previously demonstrated through the multiple existing appellations and definitions (see Table 2), it has become imperative for researchers to review all the existing definitions and come up with a one that encompasses the whole concept of leadership flexibility.

Moreover, future research should clarify on how to apply the paradoxical perspective to managerial flexibility theory. Although most scholars agree on using a paradoxical vision of leadership when addressing flexible leadership, some aspects remain unclear. Starting with *when* it is appropriate to issue a paradoxical response, theories don't specify if individuals must *always* find ways to attend to both competing demands or if it is more a matter of their *general tendency* to emit opposite behaviors in changing conditions. For example, when faced with a competing demand such as encouraging participative decision making and ensuring that company policies are well known and respected, do leaders need to find ways to meet these two demands at the very same time or what matters most is their ability to balance behaviors from these two sides?

Additionally, the paradoxical approach seems to impose major constraints on the leadership flexibility measures, which seem to opt more for a situational approach, except the PLB (Zhang et al., 2015). The behaviors described in the models of behavioral complexity or leadership versatility do not allow a concrete description of how it is possible to emit paradoxical responses (*A and B*). Only the behaviors set out in the PLB (Zhang et al., 2015) provide such a level of precision since the items are written in a *both-and* fashion (e.g., uses a fair approach to treat all subordinates uniformly, but also treats them as individuals.). Therefore, scholars should focus on finding ways to better illustrate and measure paradoxical behaviors through the items proposed in the measures they use. More specifically, additional research is needed on the specific skills and traits that determine how well a leader identifies changes in the situation, understands what

appropriate responses are, and is able and willing to provide the type of leadership needed (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). One idea could be to look on the role of empathy and managerial compassion to see whether and how they influence managers' flexibility.

Continuing with the managerial flexibility research stream, most survey studies only examine how often a leader uses a behavior, but neglect other important factors contributing to the behavior's effects such as the timing of the behavior and how skillfully it was executed. To do so, the use of diaries could help us document how exactly does a manager exert flexible behaviors in a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, as Yukl and Mahsud (2010) reported, most of the research on flexible leadership behavior mainly relies on methods such as cross-sectional survey studies with convenience samples. Few research methods attempted to determine whether the results in survey or comparative studies are affected by unmeasured situational variables or respondent biases and attributions. In addition, future research should assess whether flexible leadership is better suited for top executives who have the power to make major changes in strategies when needed or if it is also possible for middle or lower-level managers to demonstrate such behavior. A potential avenue of research would be to study whether PLB is better suited for middle to lower-level management due to their proximity with subordinates.

On another front, more robust research methods are needed for future research on managerial flexibility. Opting for longitudinal studies while favoring a variety of data collection methods such as observation, diaries, and interviews as well as questionnaires and ability tests can allow researchers to trace how flexible leadership develops over time, rather than just taking a one-off *snapshot* of one moment. Therefore, by making comparisons over time, they can identify development factors. For example, a longitudinal design could be used to assess the effects of developing skills relevant for managerial flexibility by comparing trained managers to a control group of untrained managers. Researchers can also conduct experimental studies that

allow them to manipulate situational variables and assess how managers adapt to the changes. These simulations can be assessed using vignette scenarios and evaluated by subject matter experts. Finally, research to date has mainly focused on studying the impact of managers' flexible behaviors on organizational performance or that of teams. Although behavioral flexibility is reported as a management method allowing organizations to simultaneously respond to both organizational demands and employees' demands (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010), researchers have only recently started to investigate this relationship. Therefore, future research should explore how leaders' flexibility can influence employee's performance, satisfaction, and fulfillment at work.

Conclusion

Following the increased interest in flexible leadership and the proliferation in studies on this topic, our objectives for this paper were three-fold. First, we reviewed how managerial flexibility was understood and defined within the competing values and stakeholder conflicts approach. Second, we presented an overview and a critical examination of the measures used to assess managerial flexibility. This led us to conclude that Lawrence et al. (2009), Kaiser et al. (2010), and Zhang et al. (2015) measures were three measures that had gone through a rigorous process of construction and validation. Third, we proposed a detailed overview of all the empirical research that studied antecedents, mediators, moderators, and consequences linked to managerial flexibility.

This review has demonstrated that substantial progress has been made in the last 30 years with different conceptualizations and theories being proposed. However, the field of managerial flexibility remains relatively unclear with many lingering questions as well as conceptual and empirical uncertainties. We believe that by heeding the advice offered in this review, future research will be able to offer a clear definition of managerial flexibility while resolving the other

issues raised in this paper. By doing so, the managerial flexibility research can certainly help move forward the management and leadership field.

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Article 2 – Managerial Flexibility and Employee Role Performance: The Role of Employee Thriving and Agility at Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Acknowledgments

This work was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada under Grant 767-2019-1283, granted to the first author.

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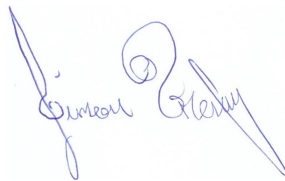
Description de l'article

Benabdallah, L.¹ et Grenier, S.¹ (2022).

Managerial Flexibility and Employee Role Performance: The Role of Employee Thriving and Agility at Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Manuscrit non publié, ¹Université de Montréal.

Déclaration des coauteurs autres que l'étudiant

À titre de coauteur de l'article identifié ci-dessus, j'accepte que Leila Benabdallah inclue cet article dans sa thèse de doctorat qui a pour titre « La flexibilité managériale : Synthèse conceptuelle et impact sur les employés ».



19/01/2023

Simon Grenier

Signature

Date

Abstract

In times of crisis, the role of managers becomes crucial; both to ensure workers' well-being and work execution. Although managerial flexibility is often related to both team and organizational adaptability, research has only recently started to investigate its impact on employees' functioning. This research aims to study the influence of perceived managerial flexibility on employees' role performance to better understand the mechanism through which this said flexibility contributes to employees' performance during a time of crisis. Data collected through an online survey during the COVID-19 crisis, on a sample of 366 employees allowed us to develop and test a first-stage moderated mediation model. Our results led us to identify the employee's agility as a key mechanism accounting for the observed positive effect of the manager's perceived flexible behaviors on the employee's role performance. In addition, thriving at work is identified as a personal resource that moderates the relationship between perceived managerial flexibility and employee's agility. However, employee's thriving at work did not seem have a significant impact on our moderated mediation model. Overall, our results indicate that in times of crisis, to increase employee's agility, and in turn, employee's role performance, managerial flexibility is an important variable to take into consideration. These findings contribute to the literature by providing support to the relationship between flexible management and employees' performance in times of crisis.

Keywords: management, leadership, flexibility, crisis management, thriving at work, performance

Introduction

Recent research on management and leadership² has emphasized on the growing complexity and accelerating pace of change happening in organizations. With the COVID-19 pandemic, these rapid changes have been considerably heightened. The repercussions of this global pandemic are unprecedented and have changed the way we do business (and life). Experts believe that the social and economic aftereffects of this crisis are expected to last for years to come (Charumilind et al., 2022). Understanding how this situation impacts organizations and their employees becomes imperative to get well prepared for the next one.

According to Yukl and Mahsud (2010), in times of crisis, the role of managers becomes crucial; both for bringing optimism and hope to people, but also for supplying them with a plan to follow. Research on leadership in complex, fast-changing environments fraught with conflicting demands suggests that leaders with a broader repertoire of opposing and complementary behaviors are generally more effective (Denison et al., 1995; Kaiser & Overfield, 2010; Lawrence et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2015). Recent research by Kaiser (2020) compares the effects of flexible leadership in both precrisis and crisis conditions using a quasi-experimental design during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results indicate significantly stronger relationships of flexible leadership with team adaptability, team productivity, and overall leadership performance as measured by a 360-survey. These findings support the idea that managerial flexibility is often related to multiple indicators of leadership effectiveness, notably to team adaptability and productivity in times of crisis and disruption. Other studies aiming at exploring the impact of managerial flexibility report that behavioral flexibility is linked to leader's

² Although we recognize the subtleties between the concepts of leadership and management, we find that they are both essential and can be demonstrated by the same person (Kotter, 1990). To lighten and diversify the reading, we treat the roles of managers and leaders similarly and do not emphasize the differences between them.

effectiveness (Denison et al., 1995; Kaiser & Overfield, 2010; Lawrence et al., 2009), to organizational productivity (Silverthorne & Wang, 2001) in addition to having positive repercussions on innovation and collaborative learning behaviors within work teams (Liu et al., 2020).

Research to date has mainly focused on studying the impact of managerial flexibility on teams and organizational performance; although behavioral flexibility is reported as a management tool that allows to address both organizational demands and employees' needs (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). To our knowledge, most studies on managerial flexibility have focused on studying its impacts on organizational and team levels, while it is only recently that Eastern literature has regarded the effects of such a management approach at an individual level (e.g., Yang et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2015). In other words, even though both scholars and practitioners acknowledge the importance of managerial flexibility, only few studies have focused on its impact on the employees' optimal functioning (e.g., performance and thriving at work). Therefore, this paper aims to (1) verify the impact of managerial flexibility on employees' role performance, and (2) understand *how* (or through which mechanisms) flexible leaders can impact employees' performance during a time of crisis. Combining different theoretical perspectives, we develop and test a first-stage moderated mediation model where: (a) employee's agility – monitoring the current environment to anticipate change and responding in a timely and effective way when changing circumstances require it (Braun et al., 2017) – is defined as a mediating process underlying a positive relationship between manager's perceived flexible behaviors and employee's role performance, and (b) employee's thriving at work – psychological state in which individuals experience a sense of vitality and learning (Spreitzer et al., 2005) – as a personal resource that moderates (i.e., buffers) this mediated relationship.

This study is expected to contribute to the managerial flexibility stream of research by addressing managers' flexible behaviors in times of crisis, namely by contextualizing our research during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, it provides better theoretical understanding and empirical support to the relationship between managerial flexibility and employees' performance. Lastly, our study provides a new theoretical lens to understand the processes associated with the impact of managerial flexibility on employees' performance, particularly by combining social learning perspectives and the concept of learning through modeling with flexible leadership theories.

This article is organized as follows: First, we present a review of theory and research on leadership in complex and fast-changing environments. Next, we develop hypotheses that suggest managerial flexibility impacts positively employees' performance at work, while drawing on social learning perspectives and concepts such as agility and thriving. Then, we describe how we got to testing these hypotheses by documenting our research methodology and results. Finally, we discuss our results as well as present the implications for leaders, organizations, and consulting experts.

Literature review and hypotheses development

Leadership in a complex and fast-changing environment

Nowadays, the pressure put on organizations is incomparable to any other industrial era (Kaiser, 2020); on top of dealing with the constant increasing complexity and speed of change in a turbulent business environment, people are asked to rapidly adjust the way they do business following the ever-changing COVID-19 guidelines. To describe this kind of challenging environment, many terms are being used in the literature such as *VUCA* (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity; R. Johansen, 2007), *black swans* (Taleb, 2007), *paradox* (Jules &

Good, 2014), and *disruption* (Christensen, 1997). With the pandemic crisis, organizational challenges have been amplified and we are now living in a perfect example of VUCA business environment. A crisis can be defined as “a specific, unexpected, and non-routine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threaten an organization’s high priority goals” (Ulmer et al., 2017, p.7). Crises are particularly recognized for the shock and stress they cause to both people and business operations (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1990).

The disruptive changes caused by such events have highlighted, more than ever before, the need for an agile workforce to execute the changes in a timely manner (Braun et al., 2017). However, successful change management, even under the best circumstances, has always been a challenge for large organizations. And although many change management models have evolved during the last decades to help organizations adjust and thrive during these challenging times, many researchers acknowledge that counting solely on these programs is not enough (Braun et al., 2017; Wolf, 2011). As Wolf (2011) points out, “models of planned change may no longer be sufficient to address the needs of today’s organizations. The world no longer moves in incremental steps, but rather in significant leaps that call for new modes of effecting change” (pp. 20-21). Change strategies that may once have proved to be very effective are now failing organizations (Kotter, 2012). Therefore, it becomes clear that organizational transformations need to rely on new approaches that are based on workers’ behaviors and psychological attributes in order to adapt to change.

Following this line of thought, countless researchers have suggested that organizations need to pose a primary focus on selecting agile mindset as well as training their workforce to being agile, meaning being flexible and adapting quickly and easily to new opportunities and market circumstances (Muduli, 2013). As Charbonnier-Voirin and Roussel (2012) describe them, the attributes of these people include *proactivity* (the initiation of activities that have a positive effect

on a changed environment) and *adaptivity* (changing or modifying oneself or their behaviors to better fit in the new environment, which includes flexibility to pursue different tactics and to quickly change from one strategy to another). Moreover, they must be competent in engaging in behaviors that support collaboration, cooperation, knowledge sharing, and employee empowerment. To support such behaviors and help employees manage change, complexity and paradox leadership theories seem to be a promising approach (Kaiser, 2020).

When faced with confusion, chaos and threat, humans tend to seek leadership to help them coordinate their collective response (Van Vugt et al., 2008). Therefore, in times of crisis, a lot of expectations are put on managers to influence and have an impact on employees' agility, and therefore on organizational agility and performance. Following the growing interest in the subject of leading in a crisis, a large body of literature is emerging and arising the interest of both scholars and practitioners (Blythe, 2014; DuBrin, 2013; Howitt & Leonard, 2009; Ulmer et al., 2017).

Leadership behaviors and organizational tensions

Many paradoxical demands made to leaders managing crises have been identified in the literature. In a recent paper, Kaiser (2020) identified the following tensions: taking personal responsibility when dealing with threats while concomitantly trusting and empowering others to tackle these problems, keeping an optimistic approach when leading others while also basing decisions on facts. It includes, taking cost-control measures to ensure financial resilience while maintaining key resources to help the team and the organization recover and thrive. More specifically to the health crisis that the world recently faces with the COVID-19 pandemic, another example of tension that leaders need to deal with is the need to “show empathy by attending to peoples' safety, security, and emotional needs as well as to be practical in meeting

their task-related needs in getting work done – for instance adjusting to virtual collaboration and the infrastructure and coordination it requires” (Kaiser, 2020, p.138).

To meet the various challenges and conflicting demands posed by organizational complexity and crisis management, researchers suggest focusing on complexity and paradox theories of leadership (Kaiser, 2020; Smith & Lewis, 2011; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). To complement and contribute to research on crisis management, we chose to focus on paradoxical leadership in people management and opt for the paradoxical leadership model proposed by Zhang et al. (2015). Based on ying-yang philosophy, paradoxical leadership argues that it is possible for two sides of behaviors to coexist in a way to complement one another to support leader effectiveness when managing people (Zhang et al., 2015). This model is exclusively focused on tensions and dilemmas involving interpersonal relations and influencing others, which resulted in the identification of five leadership behavioral dimensions: (1) combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness; (2) maintaining both distance and closeness; (3) treating subordinates uniformly, while allowing individualization; (4) enforcing work requirements, while allowing flexibility; and (5) maintaining decision control, while allowing autonomy. This recent conception of managerial flexibility is the first, to our knowledge, that highlights specific organizational paradoxes leaders deal with pertaining to people management.

Our decision to focus particularly on paradoxical leadership in people management can be summarized into three main reasons. First, researchers tend to argue that organizational agility passes through workforce agility, which is mainly influenced by leader’s own agility (Braun et al., 2017). Therefore, understanding how leadership can impact employees’ effectiveness will shed some more light on this process. Second, studies show that while going through a crisis, employees are more than likely to look for a leader to coordinate and give a direction to their team’s efforts (Van Vugt et al., 2008); this puts a premium on better understanding how leaders

can exert this kind of influence. Lastly, the current health crisis urges leaders to show empathy by attending to their employees' personal and emotional needs as well as maintaining a certain control over the work process and ensuring some sort of equality between employees (Kaiser, 2020). Understanding how leaders deal with these kinds of people management paradoxes in times of crises is particularly relevant.

Building on Griffin et al.'s (2007) theory, we suggest that managers' ability to deal with paradoxical tensions is related to how subordinates perform in their work roles throughout the constant change in their environment. As demonstrated through Zhang et al.'s (2015) study, paradoxical leadership is indeed related to employee's ability to be more open, learning oriented, and flexible when faced with external challenges. Therefore, being exposed to paradoxical leadership (i.e., someone that demonstrates acceptance of contradictions and a willingness to explore coexisting possibilities) lead followers to work more proficiently, adaptively, and proactively – all components of work role performance (Griffin et al., 2007). We therefore hypothesize the following.

Hypothesis 1 *Manager's perceived behavioral flexibility is positively linked to employee's role performance at work in a crisis context.*

Mediating role of employee's agility

Employees' agility can be defined as “an organized and dynamic talent that can quickly deliver the right skills and knowledge at the right time, as dictated by business needs” (Muduli, 2013, p.57). An agile workforce has, therefore, learned to respond quickly and adapt easily to new demands and business opportunities. Researchers argue that it can substantially enhance an organization's ability to survive and thrive in a VUCA environment (Katayama & Bennett, 1999). Although not all job descriptions specifically require agility as a prerequisite, the impact

on the organization's performance is undeniable (Braun et al., 2017). Like organizational citizenship behavior (Podsakoff et al., 2009), agility can benefit an individual's performance evaluation.

Building on social learning perspectives and the concept of learning through modeling, it is said that individuals can learn to perform new skills and behaviors by simply observing another individual's experience (Bandura, 1969, 1977). Although various appellations have been employed, such as "imitation", "observational learning", "copying", "matching" or even "vicarious learning", the main idea remains the same: the new learned behaviors are not acquired through actual experience but rather through observation. This type of learning can occur during day-to-day natural interaction making it an appealing (easy to use) development tool. The influence of models in the acquisition of new behaviors comes from the fact that individuals are often rewarded when imitating others, and even more so when the role model is seen as an authority figure (Sims & Manz, 1982; Weiss, 1978).

Models stem from a variety of sources, but in an organizational context, formal organizational leaders (i.e., managers, directors, executives) have a unique and privileged opportunity to influence employees through modeling (Manz & Sims, 1981). As reported in Weiss' (1977, 1978) research of 141 pairs of supervisors and their direct managers, employees do imitate their superiors' behaviors. The data suggests that employees tend to learn leadership behaviors from higher level managers who are perceived by others as being successful. Thus, leaders present a higher potential to serve as *role models* for less experienced employees who rely on them to learn how to behave, act and respond in various and unknown situations. Under these conditions, it is expected that the observation of leaders' paradoxical behavior will impact employees' agility through role modeling. Consequently, perceived paradoxical leader behavior

and employee's agility are expected to contribute to employee's role performance at work. This leads to the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2 *Employee's agility partially mediates the relationship between manager's perceived behavioral flexibility and employee's role performance at work in a crisis context.*

Moderating role of employee's thriving at work

According to Porath and her colleagues (2012), thriving at work constitutes an adaptive function since it provides an internal cue to assess forward progress. Moreover, they argue that thriving at work is an essential function for employee's evolving in today's ever-changing work environment. By acting as a facilitator to employee's performance and general career development, thriving also serves as a catalyzer for organizational performance (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009; Hall, 1998; Porath et al., 2012).

Thriving is a self-adapted psychological state in which individual experience both a sense of vitality and learning at work (Spreitzer et al., 2005). The experience of thriving is mainly characterized by a growth trajectory; individuals are not simply getting by and surviving but rather expanding. In an organizational context, vitality refers to a state of high energy and experience of zest for work while learning consists of the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills to build proficiency and confidence (Porath et al., 2012). Accordingly, we might expect that people with a higher sense of thriving would experience more energy despite the impact of crisis and that they would be able to continuously adjust their behavior to ensure performance in their role.

Spreitzer et al. (2005) claim that employees' thriving is a self-regulated predisposition that makes some individuals more prone to proactively engage in new behaviors. These individuals

possess certain traits, such as a paradox mindset, that make them more likely to feel competent and autonomous when facing paradoxical tensions. In fact, some authors have argued that employees' thriving at work is often accompanied with (or predicted by) a paradox mindset (Liu et al., 2020) – defined as the cognitive ability to engage in paradoxes (Smith & Tushman, 2005). When employees possess a paradox mindset, “they are accepting of and energized by tensions” (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018, p.26).

In other words, employees who experience thriving at work are intrinsically motivated to adjust to their work environment as well as engage in personal development and growth (Wallace et al., 2016). When employees are thriving, they engage in innovative behaviors for their own achievement and recognition (Anderson et al., 2014). Therefore, since thriving is generally considered as a self-adaptive process in which employees regulate themselves based on how they feel and how their environment is evolving, it is arguable that they don't need to rely on someone else to tell them what to do nor a role model to show them how to act.

We propose that employee's state of thriving at work acts as a proximal disposition affecting employee's psychological state, such as his or her agility. Therefore, we explore the moderating role of employee's thriving on the relationship between manager's perceived paradoxical leader behavior and employee's agility (see Figure 1). This leads to the following hypotheses:

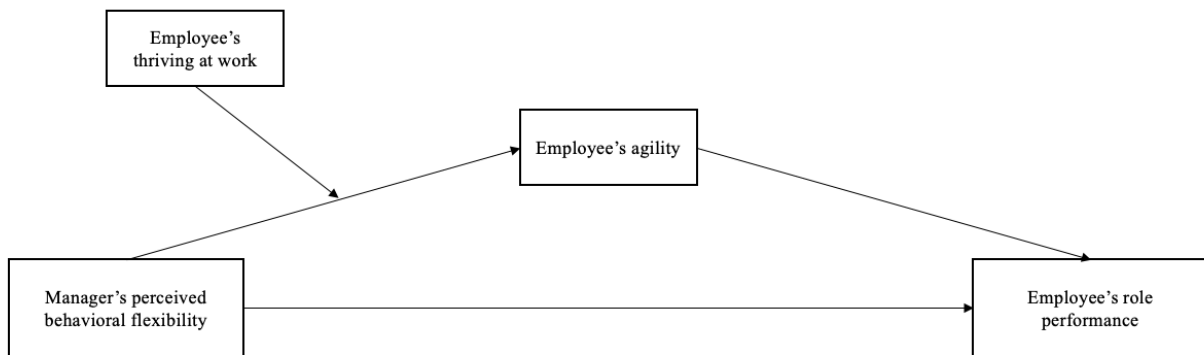
Hypothesis 3 *Employee's thriving at work will moderate the positive relationship between manager's perceived behavioral flexibility and employee's agility such that this relationship will be weaker (vs. stronger) when thriving is high (vs. low).*

Hypothesis 4 *Employee's thriving at work will moderate the positive indirect relationship between manager's perceived behavioral flexibility and employee's role*

performance through employee's agility such that this indirect relationship will be weaker (vs. stronger) when employee's thriving at work is high (vs. low).

Figure 1

Conceptual Model



Method

Participants and procedure

Data for this study came from 366 employees, including 228 (62.3%) males, 134 (36.6%) female employees, and 4 (1.1%) participants that preferred not to answer. The age distribution ranged from 23 to 73 years, and the average age was 38.59 years ($SD = 9.743$). In terms of highest level of education, 21 (5.7%) employees indicated having completed high school, 36 (9.8%) completed some form of associate degree or technical school, 230 (62.8%) completed an undergraduate university degree, 75 (20.5%) completed a postgraduate university degree, while 4 (1.1%) preferred not to answer. On average, participants had been working with the same manager they assessed for 5.59 years ($SD = 4.6$).

Participants mostly from the United States (362 (98.9%)) and Canada (4 (1.1%)) were recruited for an online survey study using the popular crowdsourcing website Amazon's

Mechanical Turk (MTurk; <http://www.mturk.com>). Researchers recommend the use of MTurk to collect high-quality survey data in a fast and inexpensive manner (Arthur et al., 2021; Buhrmester et al., 2011; Cheung et al. 2017; Mason & Suri, 2011). For example, Buhrmester et al. (2011) showed that data obtained using MTurk had satisfactory psychometric properties comparable to characteristics of published studies. In addition, it is argued that MTurk workers are generally more diverse than student samples (Horton et al., 2011).

A *Human Intelligence Task* (HIT) was created for 450 workers to participate. For MTurk workers to have access to the study, they had to have a success rate of at least 96% for at least 1000 different assignments, as well as being in the United States or Canada. Workers who respected these criteria could then sign up for the study. For the aim of our study, participants were then selected based on the following criteria: they were required to be at least 18 years of age, employed in the same organization for at least 6 months, being in their current position under the same manager for at least 6 months, to have a supervisor with whom they interacted at least once a week as well as to be working more than 10 hours a week. By controlling workers' IP address, workers were limited in the number of HITs they could complete. Therefore, they could only participate once in the study.

Individuals who respected those criteria first gave their consent, then completed the one-time 35-minute survey where they were asked to answer questions about their direct supervisor's paradoxical leadership behaviors, their own thriving, agility, and performance at work, as well as other variables related to the larger study from which this research took place. Upon completion of the survey, an automatic random code was generated for them to submit in their MTurk account to confirm the completion of the survey. Participants who submitted their code received \$3 U.S. for their participation in the study. Data was securely stored, and password protected by

LimeSurvey servers (<https://www.limesurvey.org/>). From there, all data was available to download and use for analyses.

Measures

To capture the impact of COVID-19, participants were instructed to answer the questionnaire while having in mind the pandemic context in which they were evolving. Therefore, before each measure, the following statement was presented: “Since the COVID-19, [...]”.

Paradoxical leader behavior in people management

Employees were asked to rate their manager’s flexible behaviors at work using a reliable and validated 22-item scale developed by Zhang et al. (2015). A sample item is “Uses a fair approach to treat all subordinates uniformly, but also treats them as individuals.” The items were answered on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*a lot*). Previous studies have successfully used this scale (Yang et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2015). Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was ,918 in the current study.

Employee agility

Employee’s agility was assessed using the 5-item scale developed by Braun et al. (2017). A sample item is “I am always thinking about what we need to do differently to meet upcoming change”. Participants were asked to indicate how accurately each statement describes them using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very inaccurate*) to 5 (*very accurate*). The internal consistency for the scale was adequate at .778 in the current study.

Thriving at work

Participants also filled out the 10-item Thriving at work scale (Porath et al., 2012). A sample items is “I see myself continually improving.” Participants were asked to indicate to

which extent they agreed with each item using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .843 in the present study.

Subordinate work role performance

Participants then completed the 9-item Individual role performance scale (Griffin et al., 2007). A sample item is "Coped with changes to the way you have to do your core tasks." Responses ranged from 1 (*Very little*) to 5 (*Great deal*). Cronbach's alpha value was .819 in the current study.

Control variables

We controlled for the participants' opportunity to observe manager's leadership as well as for their level of knowledge of the assessed manager, since they have been found to be associated with employees' perception of managerial flexibility (Kaplan & Kaiser, 2006; Kaplan & Kaiser, 2012).

Validation questions

A total of three validation questions were included throughout our questionnaire. A sample question is "Please select 3 (neither agree nor disagree) to demonstrate you are paying attention." These questions were included to assess the quality of the participants' answers and to ensure that the questions were read properly by participants.

Statistical analyses

Preliminary analyses were first conducted to ensure that the data respected the postulates for the subsequent analyses. Next, a confirmatory analysis was performed on the PLB scale (Zhang et al., 2015) through IBM SPSS Amos (Version 26) to further validate the factorial structure of this scale. Lastly, Hayes's (2013) PROCESS macro in IBM SPSS (Version 27) was used to test our hypotheses.

Data preparation

While we requested the participation from 450 workers, the data was then prepared by screening and cleaning for missing values, validation question violations, and outliers. This left us with the final sample of 366 participants presented above.

First, we removed participants that didn't answer all items for the PLB scale (Zhang et al., 2015). Second, we removed participants who did not answer at least one of the validation questions properly. Next, we checked for any participants with very fast completion times. Participants who had taken less than 11 minutes were removed from our final sample. In fact, we believe that 11 minutes is the minimum time required to read the full questionnaire.

The sample was also screened for both univariate and multivariate outliers. Using z-scored of ± 3.29 as maximum and minimum values (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), a total of 16 (less than 4%) univariate outliers were identified and winsorized to the next acceptable value within the ± 3.29 . Regarding the multivariate outliers, 28 were identified at $p < .001$ using the Mahalanobis distance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013) and were removed from the sample. Finally, items' means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis were then inspected. No further participants were removed.

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis of the PLB

We first examined the structural validity of the PLB (Zhang et al., 2015) using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) via IBM SPSS Amos (Version 26). Since the PLB was only confirmed in a Chinese context (Zhang et al., 2015), it is important that we assess this scale in a Western context. This will allow us to confirm whether the PLB is effective in other cultural

contexts, and whether leaders in these contexts display similar behaviors when managing tensions.

To examine the factor structure of PLB, we explored the fit of a second-order model in which all 22 items were loaded onto their respective factors and the five factors were then loaded onto the same second-order latent PLB factor (see Figure 2). This hypothesized second-order model displayed a good fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 1.96$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .04). Results also indicated that the items are representing their respective factor well as all standardized regression coefficients were between the recommended values of .60 and .90 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The standardized regression coefficients for the first-order latent factors on the higher-order latent factor representing the global construct of managerial need support varied between and .549 and .998.

Hypothesis testing

Table 2 provides the results of the (moderated) multiple regression analyses predicting employee's agility and employee's role performance and provides the basic information that is necessary to test our hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 predicted that manager's perceived behavioral flexibility will be positively linked to employee's role performance. As seen in Table 2 (Model 3), manager's perceived behavioral flexibility ($B = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$) is positively related with employee's role performance at work, thus fully supporting Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 stated that employee's agility will partially mediate a positive relationship between manager's perceived behavioral flexibility employee's role performance at work. Table 2 (Model 1) shows that manager's perceived behavioral flexibility was positively related ($B = 0.60$, $p < 0.01$) to employee's agility. Moreover, Table 2 (Model 3) shows that employee's agility was positively related to employee's role performance ($B = 0.14$, $p < 0.01$). Using Hayes's (2013)

PROCESS macro, we found that the indirect positive effect of manager's perceived behavioral flexibility (0.08, CI = 0.03, 0.15) on employee's role performance was only partial. These results bring support to our hypothesis by demonstrating the partial mediation effect of employee's agility between manager's perceived behavioral flexibility and employee's role performance. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that employee's thriving at work will moderate the positive relationship between manager's perceived behavioral flexibility and employee's agility such that this relationship will be weaker (vs stronger) when thriving is high (vs low). As seen in Table 2 (Model 2), manager's perceived behavioral flexibility ($B = -0.14$, $p < 0.05$) significantly interacts with employee's state of thriving in predicting employee's level of agility. This interaction is graphically represented in Figure 2. Simple slopes tests (Aiken et al., 1991) indicated that manager's perceived behavioral flexibility was positively related to employee's agility at work when thriving was low (i.e., 1 *SD* above the mean) ($B = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$), and that this relationship was significantly stronger when thriving was high (i.e., 1 *SD* above the mean) ($B = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

To continue, we used Hayes's (2013) PROCESS macro to test Hypothesis 4, which predicted that employee's thriving would moderate the indirect effects of manager's perceived behavioral flexibility on employee's role performance via employee's agility such that this indirect relationship will be weaker (vs. stronger) when employee's thriving at work is high (vs. low). Contrary to our predictions, the index of moderated mediation was not significant (-0.02, CI = -0.04, 0.00), meaning that thriving as a moderator was unable to produce a differential effect in the results. However, the conditional indirect effect of manager's perceived behavioral flexibility on employee's role performance was significantly positive when employee's thriving was low

(0.07, CI = 0.03, 0.12), as well as significantly weaker when thriving was high (0.05, CI = 0.01, 0.10). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is not supported,

Finally, our results show that the frequency of interactions ($B = 0.20, p < 0.01$). as well as the level of knowledge of the evaluated manager ($B = 0.18, p < 0.01$). were two significant control variables in the model linking manager's perceived behavioral flexibility to employee's role performance through employee's agility (Model 3). However, these variables did not seem to have a significant impact when manager's perceived behavioral flexibility was only linked to employee's agility (Model 1 and Model 2).

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>
1. Gender	–	–	–								
2. Educational level	–	–	0.08	–							
3. Frequency of interactions with manager	3.49	0.51	0.10	-0.07	–						
4. Level of knowledge of the manager	3.58	0.54	0.01	-0.03	0.40**	–					
5. Age	38.59	9.74	-0.15**	-0.01	0.06	0.09	–				
6. Perceived managerial behavioral flexibility	2.60	0.60	0.06	-0.01	0.21**	0.23**	-0.06	(0.92)			
7. Employee agility	3.59	0.76	0.04	0.14**	0.08	0.12*	-0.02	0.48**	(0.78)		
8. Employee thriving at work	3.80	0.64	-0.05	-0.04	0.20**	0.34**	0.03	0.49**	0.43**	(0.84)	
9. Employee work role performance	3.87	0.62	0.01	-0.18**	0.32**	0.34**	0.06	0.58**	0.41**	0.55**	(0.82)

Note. Internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alphas) are reported in parentheses along the diagonal.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table 2*Multiple Regression Results*

Variables	Employee agility		Employee work role performance	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Frequency of interactions with manager	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.03 (0.08)	0.20** (0.06)	0.20** (0.06)
Level of knowledge of the manager	0.04 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.07)	0.18** (0.05)	0.18** (0.05)
Perceived managerial behavioral flexibility (MBF)	0.60** (0.06)	0.43** (0.07)	0.44** (0.05)	0.44** (0.05)
Employee thriving at work		0.27** (0.07)		
Employee agility			0.14** (0.04)	0.14** (0.04)
Perceived MBF x Employee thriving at work		-0.14* (0.06)		0.13** (0.04)
Total R^2	0.23**	0.29**	0.42**	0.42**
ΔR^2		0.06**	0.13**	0.00

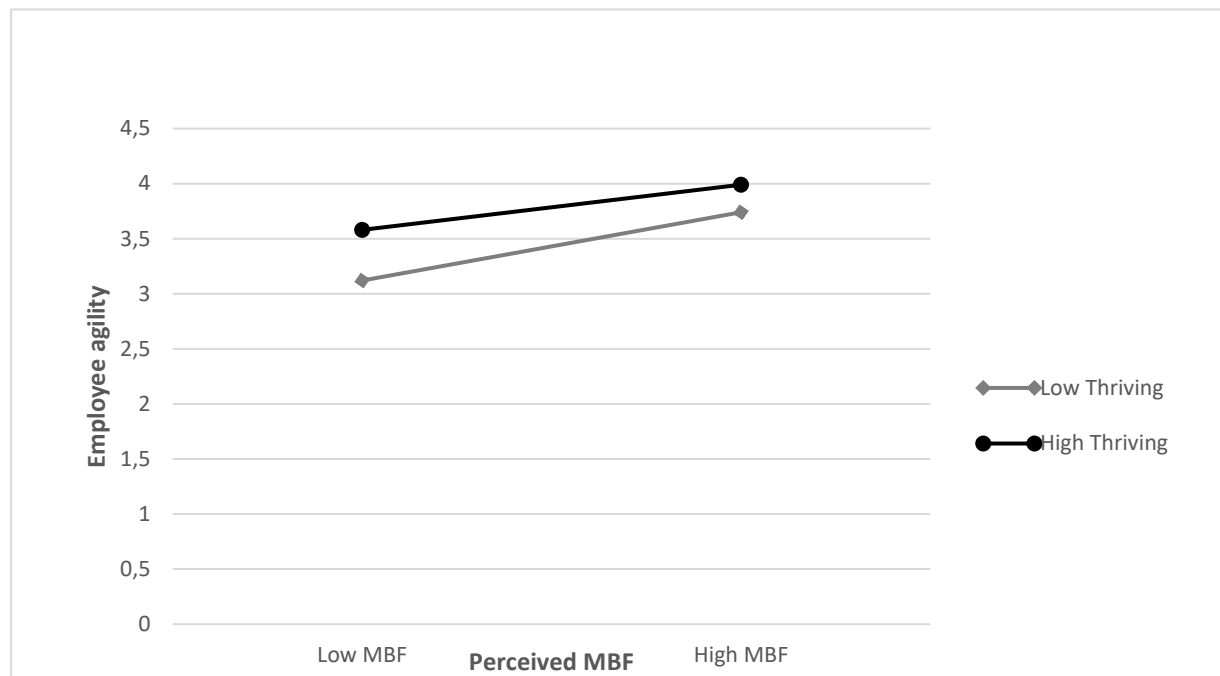
Note. N = 366. Except for Total R^2 and ΔR^2 rows, entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Standard errors are provided in the parentheses next to the unstandardized regression coefficients.

* $p < 0.05$.

** $p < 0.01$.

Figure 2

Moderating Effect of Employee Thriving on the Relationship Between Perceived Managerial Behavioral Flexibility (MBF) and Employee Agility



Discussion

While the COVID-19 pandemic has completely transformed our world and added even more strains and constraints to the way we do business, managers are faced with even more competing and paradoxical demands. More than ever before, flexibility and agility have become imperatives for managers to lead effectively (Kaiser, 2020). Developing and testing theoretical models that help us explain why, how and under which conditions managerial flexibility impacts individual outcomes is essential to get well prepared for the next crisis to come. The present research addressed this issue by shedding new light onto the mediating and moderating processes associated with the effects of perceived managerial flexibility on employee role performance, an individual outcome that has received limited attention in the literature (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Consistent with our predictions, we found that the perception of managerial flexibility positively affected employee role performance both directly and indirectly, namely through employee agility. Importantly, our results indicated that perceived managerial flexibility predicted employee agility and that employee thriving moderated the managerial flexibility-employee agility path. The implications and limitations of the present findings as well as future research directions are discussed in the sections below.

Theoretical implications

This study makes a number of important contributions to the literature. First, by contextualizing our research during the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to study the impact of managerial flexibility during a crisis context. Therefore, we contribute to research on leading through crisis by considering a more integrative model of flexible and adaptable management consisting of opposing and complementary skills and behaviors (Kaiser, 2020). The present study considers the different critics of previous researchers by staying away from traditional

approaches to management that are said to be poorly equipped to handle the rising frequency and increasingly varied and unprecedented types of crises (Mitroff, 2005). By opting for a paradoxical lens to examine management behavior, the current results are consistent with Kaiser's (2020) identification of flexibility as a key attribute for crisis management.

Second, one key and unique contribution of our study is our choice to base our research on the concept of paradoxical leadership proposed by Zhang et al. (2015) to conceptualizing managerial flexibility, which is exclusively focused on dilemmas involving interpersonal relations and influencing others. Instead of emphasizing either pole of a paradox separately, this model reflects a *both-and* strategy that integrates competing demands simultaneously over time, thus, providing us with a perfect tool to measure how flexible managers attend to employees' competing demands in a complex environment. Moreover, it offers us with an unprecedented opportunity to focus primarily on the relationship between a leader and an employee along with understanding how managerial flexibility is impacting both employee's agility and performance.

Third, our mediation findings have important implications for the research on managerial flexibility. Indeed, the tested model offers a first look into an individual-level mechanism by which the perception of managerial flexibility can impact employee role performance, namely through employee agility. As we have already noted, most studies on flexible and paradoxical management have focused on studying its impacts on organizational and team levels, it is only recent Eastern researchers such as Zhang et al. (2015) and Yang et al. (2021) that have gained an interest in studying the effects of such management approach on individual outcomes (i.e., employee role performance and employee creativity). Our results not only confirm this relationship but also broaden our understanding of the process by which flexible management impacts employee role performance. In relation to our hypotheses, the present findings are coherent with both social learning perspectives as well as flexible management theories. On the

one side, the present study proposes employee agility as mediator in the perceived management flexibility-employee role performance relationship, which supports the idea that being in the presence of a flexible manager is linked to an enhanced agility on the employee's part. Such results may be interpreted using leadership social learning theories (Sims Jr. & Manz, 1982) explaining how a manager may serve as a role model, and therefore employees' agility can be learned through observation and role modeling. Furthermore, our control variables were significant in our model, meaning that the frequency of interactions with the managers as well as the level of knowledge of the manager significantly contribute to the relationship between perceived managerial flexibility and employee performance. Thus, the more an employee can observe his or her manager's behavioral flexibility the more chances he or she will be perceived as a role model. On the other side, building on previous research that have linked employee's thriving to a paradoxical mindset (Liu et al., 2020), the results of the present study support that when employees experience thriving at work, they are motivated to engage in new behaviors in order to demonstrate more agility. In consequence, said employees will tend to rely less on the perceived flexible behaviors of the managers.

Practical implications

From a practical perspective, ensuring employees' overall organizational performance is essential for an organization to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage, even more so when evolving in an environment frayed with change and complexity (Sull, 2009). Our results suggest three ways through which organizations can contribute to managerial flexibility as well as employee role performance.

First, our results linking managerial flexibility to employee role performance suggest that promoting managerial flexible behaviors might be an excellent avenue to explore, even more so

knowing that when employees experience less thriving, they tend to rely more on the perceived flexibility of their manager to demonstrate agility. Accordingly, managers should be aware of their impact on employee learning and behavioral change. In particular, because of their position in the organizational hierarchy, managers often serve as a role model to subordinates and should be made aware of their responsibility to show exemplary flexible behavior (Sims Jr. & Manz, 1982). Organizations expecting their employees to demonstrate a better role performance should take actions to promote flexible behaviors for their managers, such as offering coaching to their managers (Blythe, 2014; Dubrin, 2013). Opting for a paradox-based lens can help managers better understand the different strategies they can use to deal with increasing uncertainties and the competing possibilities that come with their management role (Zhang et al., 2015). Coaches can assist managers using techniques for framing problems and choosing between response strategies that take into account the paradoxical demands related to their management responsibilities (J.H. Johansen, 2018; Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Second, our results suggest that employee thriving plays a moderating role between perceived managerial flexibility such that when employees experience a high level of thriving at work, they tend to rely less on their manager to express agile behaviors. Accordingly, this finding suggests that organizations, managers, practitioners, and coaches should monitor and promote employee thriving at work. Such information will provide useful feedback regarding the extent to which employees experience a sense of vitality and learning inherently to their work activities (Porath et al., 2012).

Finally, while the COVID-19 pandemic brought its share of challenges for managers, many indicators seem to point out that our postpandemic world will too be tainted by uncertainty and ambiguity (Wartzman & Tang, 2020). Organizations will need help with reviewing their leadership models and methods of development in order to meet the demands of this new era

(Salicru, 2020). Consultants and practitioners will need to get fluent with more recent theory and research on flexible and paradoxical leadership models in order to assist managers in adapting to disruptive change and paradoxical demands (White & Shullman, 2010). Therefore, our study highlights the importance of having an integrated behavioral repertoire as well as the ability to recognize the appropriate response according to the situation so managers be prepared for the next crisis – or simply for what may be our next normal (Kaiser, 2020).

Limitations and future research avenues

Despite the contributions of this study, there are a few limitations that need to be addressed in future research. First, our moderated mediation model was not significant, meaning that our results did not support our third hypothesis. More specifically, employee's thriving did not seem to moderate the positive indirect relationship between manager's perceived behavioral flexibility and employee's role performance through employee's agility. Although employee's thriving was found to moderate the relationship between manager's perceived behavioral flexibility and employee's agility, this variable didn't play a moderator role in the overall proposed model. This could be explained by the fact that thriving at work is more often studied in relation to more innovation-related variables, such as employee's creativity (e.g., Yang et al., 2021) rather than a broader concept like employee's role performance. Future work is then needed to further assess the role of employee's thriving at work in the relationship linking perceived managerial flexibility and employee's creativity.

Second, we were not able to assess employee agility and role performance in an objective way (e.g., through specific and relevant key performance indicators) or through peer or supervisor reports. Instead, we relied on single-source employee self-reports, which may not accurately reflect employees' actual agility and role performance. Participants' responses may

have been biased due to factors such as social desirability and enhancement bias. Hence, it is important to point out that our findings may not generalize to more objective measures of employee agility and role performance. However, it has been found that companies that were successful before COVID-19 pandemic remained remarkably productive during the health-crisis by capitalizing on their talent as well as the latest technology (Garton & Mankins, 2020). Overall performance of both employees and organizations has therefore not been significantly affected, which is an indirect indicator of employees' ability to perform in their role despite everything. Future research is needed to establish the role of managerial flexible behaviors, as well as the moderating role of employee thriving, in order to objectively assess employee agility and role performance. Another potential problem of collecting single-source self-report data is common method bias from which artificially inflated correlations among the study variables may have stemmed.

Third, the use of a cross-sectional design does not allow conclusions about causality nor the temporal changes in behavior. However, it is very common for researchers to use cross-sectional data for their first empirical tests of a relatively new theory (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Moreover, the present findings are generally consistent with the paradoxical leadership theory (Zhang et al., 2015). Nevertheless, future research should lean toward multisource (i.e. managers and employees) or longitudinal designs to confirm the model presented in Figure 1.

Fourth, while we positioned our study during the COVID-19 pandemic to study the impact of managerial flexibility on employee role performance during a crisis context some limitations come with our study design. In fact, this study doesn't allow us to prove that managerial flexibility is more important to employee role performance in times of crisis. By collecting data from a largely diversified pool of participants we might have neglected the fact that not all employment sectors were affected by the pandemic in the same way. For example, it has been

pointed out that the sanitary crisis has put a great deal of stress and anxiety on healthcare and frontline workers compared to the general public (Danet, 2021; Luan et al., 2020; Trumello et al., 2020). By the same token, the sanitary restrictions imposed were not the same across countries nor states or provinces, resulting in even more discrepancy among our pool of participants. Subsequent research should focus on studying management flexibility in a crisis context by controlling for the crisis environment, such as the sector of employment as well as industry volatility, size, and regulation (Hambrick & Abrahamson, 1995). Thus, researchers should consider the use of an experimental design with random assignment or within subjects repeated measures (Grant & Wall, 2009).

Considering the few empirical studies on managerial flexibility, future research may also explore additional aspects of the theory. For example, studies could investigate possible antecedents of managers' flexible behaviors (e.g., goal orientation, holistic thinking, cognitive complexity, organizational structure or even manager's thriving at work; Zhang et al., 2015). In addition, dealing with competing and paradoxical demands is not only a challenge for managers but also for employees (Liu et al., 2020). Thus, more knowledge about what helps employees integrate paradoxical behaviors in conjunction with how flexibility is demonstrated on the employee's part is necessary to promote flexibility across all organizational workforces. Another interesting avenue for impending research may be to explore the potential downsides of paradoxical management. As pointed out by Zhang et al. (2015), behaving in a paradoxical way may impact negatively both managers and employees. On the one hand, managers who continuously consider multiple competing demands and try to respond in an integrated way may be prone to greater psychological stress. On the other hand, employees who have narrow view of what management should be and view demands in an *either-or* fashion may experience

discomfort around a paradoxical manager. Therefore, further research should consider the potential negative consequences of such a management style.

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Conclusion

C'est en ayant deux principaux objectifs en tête que la présente thèse fut entamée. D'un côté, il était question de contribuer à une meilleure compréhension de la façon dont la flexibilité managériale est définie, mesurée et étudiée. Pour ce faire, une revue systématique de la littérature a été entreprise afin d'organiser et d'intégrer l'ensemble des connaissances théoriques et empiriques sur le sujet. D'un autre côté, l'objectif était celui de valider l'impact de la flexibilité managériale perçue par les employés et ses impacts sur leur performance en plus de mieux comprendre à travers quels mécanismes ce lien opère. Un modèle empirique fut alors proposé et testé lors de la seconde étude de la thèse.

Cette conclusion permet de faire un retour sur les deux articles composant la thèse afin d'en synthétiser les principaux résultats et d'exposer les principales contributions théoriques au champ de la flexibilité managériale. Les limites et pistes de recherche futures ainsi que les applications pratiques de la thèse sont aussi abordées et vont au-delà de celles discutées dans chacun des articles.

Sommaire des résultats et contributions de la thèse

En ce qui a trait au premier objectif de la thèse, soit celui d'organiser et d'intégrer l'ensemble des connaissances théoriques et empiriques sur le sujet de la flexibilité managériale, les constats du premier article offrent une synthèse conceptuelle permettant de bien définir et situer la flexibilité managériale. Comme discuté dans l'introduction de cette thèse, l'étude de la flexibilité comportementale des gestionnaires demeure relativement éparse. Bien que le concept ait gagné en popularité au courant des dernières années et que de nouvelles appellations ont vu le jour (Norton, 2010), aucun travail de synthèse des diverses conceptualisations n'a été entrepris

jusque-là. En l'absence d'une typologie claire en plus du manque de consensus entre les chercheurs, les recherches sur la flexibilité managériale ont tendance à utiliser, parfois même de manière interchangeable, différentes appellations (p. ex., flexibilité et adaptabilité dans Yukl et Mahsud, 2010). Déjà en 2000, Pulakos et ses collègues notaient que les concepts de flexibilité, d'adaptabilité et de versatilité sont des notions qui peuvent être très vagues (ou équivoques); les rendant très difficiles à comprendre, mesurer, prédire et à enseigner. Ainsi, plus de vingt ans plus tard, alors que la documentation a évolué, il semble d'autant plus important de bien distinguer ces multiples conceptualisations en cernant leurs similarités et différences.

À cela s'ajoute un flou au niveau de la manière dont la flexibilité comportementale des gestionnaires peut être mesurée; en effet, plusieurs échelles de mesure sont actuellement disponibles et diffèrent principalement au niveau de la conceptualisation, des items inclus, ainsi que du calcul du score de flexibilité. Or, le choix de la mesure à utiliser, autant pour les chercheurs que pour les praticiens, peut s'avérer être un exercice complexe puisqu'aucune ligne directrice claire n'existe actuellement. D'ailleurs, Kaiser (2020) lance un appel aux chercheurs afin d'identifier ce que ces mesures ont en commun et en quoi elles diffèrent. Cela permettra notamment de faire avancer les études empiriques et, en particulier, les études abordant la flexibilité managériale, un concept qui gagne en pertinence, dans un environnement organisationnel de plus en plus imprévisible et incertain, en proie à des paradoxes et des contradictions.

Le premier article de la thèse s'inscrit donc en réponse à ce besoin d'organiser la littérature sur le sujet de la flexibilité managériale et d'ainsi permettre aux chercheurs et praticiens intéressés par le sujet d'avoir une vue d'ensemble à laquelle se référer. À cet effet, une revue systématique de la littérature a été entreprise et a permis d'identifier trois principales

conceptualisations, soit la complexité comportementale (Lawrence et al., 2009), le leadership versatile (Kaiser et al., 2007) et le leadership paradoxal (Zhang et al., 2015). Retenues puisqu'elles s'appuient sur l'approche des valeurs concurrentes, l'ensemble de ces théories décrit la façon dont les gestionnaires efficaces trouvent des moyens d'équilibrer des demandes paradoxales et des comportements opposés. Ce qui caractérise ces conceptualisations, ce sont les demandes paradoxales faites aux gestionnaires ainsi que les comportements et stratégies utilisées par ces derniers pour y répondre. Par exemple, la théorie du leadership versatile (Kaiser et al., 2007) considère autant les besoins organisationnels sur lesquels les gestionnaires doivent se concentrer (vision vs exécution, croissance vs efficacité, innovation vs stabilité) que les besoins d'ordre interpersonnels reliés à la gestion du personnel (contrôle vs délégation, décisif vs participatif, responsabiliser vs considérer). De son côté, la théorie du leadership paradoxal (Zhang et al., 2015) se concentre uniquement sur les demandes contradictoires en lien avec la gestion du personnel. À cet effet, les auteurs identifient cinq dimensions comportementales d'un leader paradoxal : 1) considérer autant ses besoins que ceux des autres ; 2) maintenir à la fois la distance et la proximité avec les subordonnés ; 3) traiter les subordonnés de manière uniforme, tout en permettant l'individualisation ; 4) faire respecter les exigences de travail, tout en permettant la flexibilité; et 5) maintenir le contrôle des décisions, tout en permettant l'autonomie.

Une importante contribution de la thèse est de s'être concentré principalement sur un champ de recherche particulier, soit celui de l'approche des valeurs concurrentes. Cela a permis de répondre à l'appel de Yukl et Mahsud (2010) ainsi que celui de Kaiser (2020) qui ont invité les chercheurs intéressés par la flexibilité managériale de tenter de couvrir l'ensemble des théories dans le domaine. En procédant ainsi, nous avons été en mesure de dégager un principal constat : les chercheurs dans ce courant de recherche semblent tous adopter une vision paradoxale

de l'exercice du leadership. Conformément à l'approche des valeurs concurrentes, la perspective paradoxale soutient que pour maintenir l'efficacité à long terme, les gestionnaires doivent trouver des moyens de répondre aux demandes concurrentes (c'est-à-dire une approche *both-and*). Bien que la perspective paradoxale soit très populaire dans la littérature orientale, elle commence tout juste à attirer l'attention des chercheurs occidentaux étudiant la flexibilité managériale (Denison et al., 1995; Kaiser et al., 2007; Kaiser et Overfield, 2010; Lavine, 2014; Lawrence et al., 2009). Ainsi, ce souci de répondre aux demandes contradictoires de manière *both-and* est précisément ce qui différencie les théories de l'approche des valeurs concurrentes des théories situationnelles ou contingentes du leadership qui mettent l'accent sur une approche *either-or* qui implique plutôt que les gestionnaires doivent faire un choix quant à la demande à adresser (Smith et Lewis, 2011). Les demandes paradoxales sont souvent illustrées à travers la proposition de compromis des auteurs dans leurs théories respectives. Cette tendance générale à adopter une vision paradoxale lors de l'étude de la flexibilité comportementale des gestionnaires n'est pas toujours explicitement relevée dans les recherches sur la flexibilité managériale et constitue l'un des principaux apports du premier article de la thèse. En fait, de nombreux chercheurs se réfèrent à l'approche paradoxale en utilisant différents termes tels que la maîtrise des contraires (*mastery of opposites*; Kaiser et al., 2007) ou la philosophie yin-yang (Zhang et al., 2015). Cependant, l'idée première reste la même : pour faire face aux contradictions organisationnelles, les gestionnaires doivent simultanément accepter et harmoniser des valeurs concurrentes.

Une seconde contribution de la thèse est indéniablement les efforts émis afin de recenser l'ensemble des mesures de flexibilité managériale, fournir des recommandations en ce sens en plus de tester (ou d'utiliser) pour la première fois une mesure généralement utilisée dans un contexte orientale, soit l'échelle de leadership paradoxale (Zhang et al., 2015). Le premier article

de cette thèse représente une première tentative visant à recenser et analyser les mesures de flexibilité managériale selon l'approche des valeurs concurrentes. Un tel travail est d'une grande importance, car il fournit aux chercheurs des recommandations claires d'échelles psychométriques en plus de préciser le contexte d'utilisation de chacune d'entre elles. Un total de huit mesures de la flexibilité du leadership ont été identifiées et examinées par rapport à des critères rigoureux de développement et de validation, tels que l'adéquation du contenu, l'analyse factorielle, la cohérence interne, la réplication ainsi que les relations spatiales (Hinkin, 1995; Hinkin et al., 1997; Kaiser et Overfield, 2010; Lawrence et al., 2009). Cette démarche a permis de retenir trois mesures spécifiques de la flexibilité managériale, soit les échelles de complexité comportementale (Lawrence et al., 2009), de leadership versatile (Kaiser et Overfield, 2010) et de leadership paradoxal (Zhang et al., 2015). Les mesures identifiées décrivent plus concrètement comment les gestionnaires répondent à des demandes paradoxales et permettent ainsi une meilleure compréhension des comportements spécifiques à la flexibilité managériale.

Une autre contribution de la thèse concerne le travail de recension des études empiriques à devis quantitatif ou mixte en lien avec la flexibilité managériale. À notre connaissance, un travail de telle envergure n'avait jamais été effectué auparavant. Cette recension de 26 études empiriques a permis de mettre en lumière l'ensemble des variables étudiées en lien avec la flexibilité managériale, soit les antécédents, les médiateurs, les modérateurs ainsi que les conséquences de cette flexibilité. Ces constats contribuent à une meilleure compréhension de la flexibilité des gestionnaires de deux façons. D'un côté, le réseau nomologique proposé permet d'informer les chercheurs et praticiens sur l'étendue des variables en lien avec la flexibilité managériale, ce qui permettra de mieux orienter de futures recherches ou interventions en lien

avec ce construit. De l'autre côté, cette revue offrira aux chercheurs une meilleure vue sur les liens qui restent à explorer davantage.

Par ailleurs, la recension de la documentation effectuée dans le premier article a permis de mettre en lumière certaines lacunes dans la littérature scientifique sur la flexibilité managériale. La première lacune se situe au niveau du nombre d'appellations existantes pour parler de flexibilité managériale ainsi que le manque de consensus quant à la définition du concept. En effet, il est reconnu que la prolifération de nouveaux construits, surtout dans le domaine du leadership, mène bien souvent au non-respect du principe de parcimonie (Banks et al., 2018). Ainsi, une revue de la littérature est souvent recommandée afin d'identifier les redondances et mieux circonscrire le concept et c'est ce que le premier article de cette thèse permet de faire. Une seconde lacune concerne le flou existant autour de l'application concrète des comportements flexibles ; aucune précision n'existe par rapport au meilleur moment d'émettre une réponse paradoxale. Aussi, il n'est pas toujours clair si, pour être considérés flexibles, les gestionnaires doivent *toujours* trouver moyen de répondre à des demandes concurrentes ou s'il est plutôt question de leur *tendance générale* à émettre des comportements opposés. Ce faisant, la seconde option semble pointer vers la notion d'un trait d'adaptabilité, par exemple. Dans le même ordre d'idées, une troisième lacune touche les autres facteurs pouvant contribuer à la flexibilité comportementale, mais qui sont jusque-là ignorés dans la majorité des conceptualisations. Par exemple, la capacité à choisir le bon moment pour émettre un comportement ou l'habileté avec laquelle il a été exécuté peuvent très bien contribuer à qualifier un gestionnaire de flexible. Enfin, une lacune majeure dans la littérature scientifique concerne le peu d'études empiriques ayant étudié l'impact de la flexibilité managériale sur les employés, et ce, malgré la présupposition qu'un gestionnaire flexible contribue à une meilleure performance chez les employés. Cette

recension a aussi permis de proposer un riche agenda de recherches futures pour développer davantage les connaissances sur la flexibilité comportementale, sur ses antécédents et conséquences en plus des méthodes de recherche associées.

En ce qui concerne le deuxième objectif de la thèse, soit de valider l'impact de la flexibilité managériale perçue sur les employés en plus de mieux comprendre à travers quels mécanismes ce lien opère en contexte de crise, le deuxième article s'affaire à valider un modèle reliant la flexibilité managériale perçue au niveau d'agilité des employés ainsi qu'à la performance de rôle de ces derniers lors de la pandémie de COVID-19. Également, le degré d'épanouissement au travail des employés est postulé comme étant un modérateur de la relation entre la flexibilité managériale perçue et l'agilité des employés. Afin de tester le modèle proposé, un échantillon de 366 employés provenant d'organisations et de secteurs variés fut sollicité. Les analyses de régression effectuées à travers la macro-PROCESS de Hayes (2013) nous ont permis de contribuer à l'avancement des connaissances sur l'impact de la flexibilité managériale à un niveau individuel. En effet, les résultats démontrent que la flexibilité managériale perçue impacte positivement le niveau d'agilité des employés ainsi que la performance de rôle de ces derniers. Ainsi, interagir avec un gestionnaire flexible générerait plus d'agilité du côté des subordonnés en plus de contribuer à une meilleure performance de rôle.

Par ailleurs, bien que les auteurs sur la flexibilité managériale s'entendent pour dire que la présence d'un gestionnaire flexible puisse avoir des retombées positives autant au niveau organisationnel qu'au niveau des employés, le processus par lequel se produit un tel effet n'est pas documenté. Ainsi, une seconde contribution originale de cet article est de mieux comprendre la relation entre la flexibilité managériale et la performance de rôle des employés en s'appuyant sur la théorie de l'apprentissage sociale (Sims Jr. et Manz, 1982). Les résultats de cette étude ont

ainsi démontré que la présence d'une gestionnaire flexible agit comme modèle afin d'encourager l'agilité de son employé. Plus spécifiquement, lorsqu'un employé perçoit son gestionnaire comme étant flexible, il a plus souvent tendance à lui aussi émettre des comportements agiles (ou se considérer comme étant agile). Cela s'expliquerait par le fait qu'il aurait tendance à percevoir son gestionnaire comme un modèle et serait donc plus enclin à imiter ses comportements. Les variables contrôles du modèle testé étant significatives viennent appuyer cette perspective d'apprentissage sociale de la part de l'employé. En effet, nos résultats indiquent un lien entre le niveau d'interactions de l'employé avec son gestionnaire, le fait de bien connaître son gestionnaire et la perception des participants à l'étude de la flexibilité de leur gestionnaire. Ainsi, avoir de nombreuses interactions avec son gestionnaire en plus de bien connaître ce dernier seraient des facteurs contribuant à percevoir les comportements flexibles de son gestionnaire sur lesquels l'employé peut s'appuyer pour émettre des comportements adaptés au contexte de travail. Les résultats de cette seconde étude constituent l'une des premières démarches visant à expliquer le processus par lequel un gestionnaire flexible peut contribuer à l'agilité de son employé et, par le fait même, à une meilleure performance de ce dernier.

En plus de répondre aux deux objectifs de la thèse, une contribution supplémentaire concerne le fait d'avoir ancré l'étude de la flexibilité managériale dans un contexte de crise ayant bouleversé l'ensemble du monde du travail. Il est souvent postulé dans la littérature scientifique portant sur la flexibilité managériale que la capacité d'un gestionnaire d'émettre une réponse rapide et adéquate s'avère être tout à fait pertinente et utile lorsqu'un événement soudain et inhabituel survient. S'adapter rapidement aux changements constitue d'ailleurs un indicateur de flexibilité comportementale (Yukl et Mahsud, 2010). D'autant plus, l'intérêt grandissant envers la flexibilité managériale, autant de la part des chercheurs que des praticiens, s'explique en partie

par le contexte organisationnel dans lequel nous évoluons qui est de plus en plus marqué par le changement. Étant donné la réalisation de cette recherche doctorale pendant les débuts de la crise sanitaire liée à la COVID-19, nous avons été en mesure de circonscrire nos travaux sur la flexibilité managériale et son impact sur les employés dans un contexte sans précédent. Ainsi les résultats obtenus à travers le second article constituent de premiers indices démontrant la pertinence de la flexibilité managériale conceptualisée en fonction de la théorie de valeurs concurrentes sur les employés évoluant en contexte de crise.

Applications pratiques de la thèse

Au-delà des contributions théoriques de cette thèse, celle-ci entraîne plusieurs avancées pratiques. Dans un premier temps, cette recherche doctorale permet d'apporter un regard plus net sur le concept de flexibilité managériale en recensant les différentes appellations et les principaux indicateurs de ce dernier. Cette étude contribue à mieux comprendre comment la flexibilité comportementale se manifeste chez les gestionnaires et offre ainsi un cadre conceptuel plus clair sur lequel les praticiens, coachs ou gestionnaires pourront s'appuyer pour travailler sur le développement de comportements flexibles. En effet, une fois les comportements et indicateurs spécifiques à la flexibilité managériale bien compris, des formations et du coaching individuel pourraient être offerts aux gestionnaires afin de les accompagner dans leur développement. S'appuyant sur le cadre des valeurs concurrentes, nous comprenons qu'il est nécessaire d'accompagner les gestionnaires à adopter une vision *both-and* pour faire face aux multiples demandes paradoxales qu'ils reçoivent.

À titre d'exemple, la démarche de formation ou de coaching pourrait débiter par une prise de conscience de la part du gestionnaire du concept de flexibilité managériale, de sa pertinence et de ses retombées positives autant sur le plan organisationnel, d'équipe qu'au plan individuel.

Ensuite, le gestionnaire pourrait entamer une démarche d'évaluation 360 en suscitant la rétroaction de ses superviseurs, collègues et employés afin de l'aider à situer son degré de flexibilité, tel qu'il est possible de faire à travers l'instrument de mesure LVI (*Leadership Versatility Index*) de Kaiser et Overfield (2010). Une fois complétés, les résultats peuvent aider le gestionnaire à mieux comprendre son répertoire comportemental en plus d'identifier des pistes de développement possibles afin d'agir sur la rétroaction reçue. Enfin, des séances de coaching individuelles peuvent être offertes aux gestionnaires afin de les aider à réfléchir à la manière dont ils peuvent trouver un équilibre approprié pour répondre aux demandes souvent contraires ou paradoxales qui leur sont faites.

Dans un autre ordre d'idées, compte tenu du contexte volatile et extrêmement changeant dans lequel nous évoluons, il est de plus en plus entendu que les modèles de leadership et de développement des gestionnaires ont besoin d'évoluer afin de répondre aux exigences du 21^e siècle (Kaiser, 2020; Kaiser et Curphy, 2013; Salicru, 2020). Certains experts prédisent même que le rythme auquel nous faisons face à des changements ne risque pas de diminuer dans le monde postpandémique ; ce qui demeure certain c'est que les gestionnaires continueront à faire face à cette incertitude omniprésente (Dalcher, 2020, Walker, 2020). Pour pallier ce besoin de traiter différemment de leadership et de gestion, les organisations auraient tout avantage de se pencher sur la notion de flexibilité managériale. En faisant la promotion de comportements flexibles auprès de leurs leaders et gestionnaires, les organisations seraient en mesure d'aider ces derniers à naviguer efficacement dans une plus grande ambiguïté et un environnement marqué par des changements rapides. Ainsi, les praticiens joueraient un rôle clé dans la mise en place de stratégies soutenant le développement d'un large répertoire comportemental reposant sur des perspectives, compétences et comportements complémentaires.

Enfin, au cours des dernières années le concept de flexibilité a gagné en popularité et son application va au-delà du leadership et de la gestion. En effet, les chercheurs et praticiens sont de plus en plus nombreux à s'intéresser aux multiples retombées d'une main-d'œuvre flexible et agile (p.ex., Braun et al., 2017). En s'appuyant sur les résultats du second article de cette thèse, il est possible de tirer deux recommandations pouvant être faites aux organisations et praticiens cherchant à promouvoir la flexibilité de leurs employés. D'un côté, miser sur la présence de gestionnaires flexibles permettrait d'agir sur le degré d'agilité des employés puisque ces derniers ont tendance à considérer leurs supérieurs comme des modèles, et ce, d'autant plus dans un contexte de crise et de changements (Van Vugt et al., 2008). D'un autre côté, surveiller et promouvoir l'épanouissement des employés au travail s'avère être un autre levier intéressant sur lequel les organisations, les gestionnaires et les praticiens peuvent s'appuyer pour promouvoir la flexibilité et l'agilité des employés. Ainsi, mettre en place un environnement de travail soutenant le sentiment de vitalité et d'apprentissage inhérent aux activités des employés est certainement une avenue à explorer pour encourager la flexibilité comportementale à tous les niveaux (Porath et al., 2012).

Limites de la thèse

Malgré ses contributions à l'avancement des connaissances sur la flexibilité managériale, la thèse comporte certaines limites. La première limite concerne la décision d'avoir axé l'entièreté de la thèse sur un seul des sept champs de recherches sur la flexibilité managériale identifiés par Yukl et Mahsud (2010), soit l'approche des valeurs concurrentes. Bien que ce choix fût pris afin d'assurer un premier exercice de revue complet, cela peut avoir pour impact de limiter notre compréhension du concept de flexibilité managériale dans son ensemble. Par exemple, il est bien reconnu que la flexibilité managériale ne repose pas seulement sur les comportements, mais aussi

sur des facteurs cognitifs, émotionnels et motivationnels (Lord et Hall, 2005; Zaccaro et al., 1991). Cependant, l'approche des valeurs concurrentes ainsi que la perspective paradoxale se concentrent uniquement sur l'étude des comportements flexibles. En écartant les variables cognitives, émotionnelles et motivationnelles, nous réduisons certainement notre interprétation du phénomène de flexibilité managériale. Pour émettre des réponses comportementales flexibles, les individus ont besoin à la fois d'un large répertoire comportemental et de la capacité de bien lire l'environnement afin de différencier la réponse appropriée (Lawrence et al., 2009).

La seconde limite concerne la nature transversale du devis de recherche du second article de la thèse et à l'utilisation de données autorapportées. Bien que la directionnalité des relations étudiées dans notre modèle concorde avec l'ensemble des théories identifiées, il demeure toutefois important de noter que le devis est de nature corrélationnelle, signifiant que la causalité des liens n'a pas été validée. En ce sens, on ne peut affirmer sur la base des résultats de la présente thèse que la flexibilité managériale a un réel impact sur l'agilité des employés ainsi que sur la performance de ces derniers. Nous ne pouvons pas non plus affirmer hors de tout doute que l'épanouissement a un réel impact sur la relation entre la flexibilité managériale et le degré d'agilité des employés. Pour pallier cette limite et être en mesure de vérifier le lien de causalité ainsi que la directionnalité, il faudrait conduire une étude à devis longitudinal. De plus, il est important de noter que l'ensemble des mesures utilisées dans la seconde étude de cette thèse proviennent des mêmes participants. Plus précisément, ce sont les employés eux-mêmes qui avaient à rapporter leur degré d'épanouissement au travail, d'agilité ainsi que leur performance de rôle en plus d'évaluer la flexibilité comportementale de leur gestionnaire. Or, l'utilisation de données autorapportées auprès d'une même source peut augmenter le biais de variance commune. Par ailleurs, il apparaît important de mentionner que seule la perception de la flexibilité

managériale a été mesurée et non pas la flexibilité managériale en soi. S'appuyer sur une seule source pour l'évaluation de la flexibilité comportementale du gestionnaire peut entraîner plusieurs biais perceptuels (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Par exemple, un gestionnaire pourrait très bien faire usage de plusieurs stratégies de gestion flexible dont l'employé participant à l'étude n'est pas témoin. Ainsi, solliciter différentes sources pour évaluer les comportements flexibles du gestionnaire pourrait être une excellente avenue de recherche future.

Par la suite, une autre limite réfère à l'utilisation d'un échantillon provenant de la plateforme *Amazon Mechanical Turk* (MTurk; <http://www.mturk.com>). Bien que la grande diversité de l'échantillon puisse constituer une force permettant d'augmenter la validité externe, cela constitue également une limite quant aux conclusions qui peuvent être tirées. En effet, l'échantillon étudié présente une grande diversité tant au niveau de l'âge des participants, de leur niveau d'éducation que de l'industrie ou du type d'organisation dans laquelle ils travaillent. Une telle hétérogénéité des répondants peut contribuer à créer une plus grande variance au niveau des concepts mesurés et peut donc affecter la covariance systématique entre les variables étudiées (Cheung et al., 2017). Par ailleurs, il est reconnu que les échantillons provenant de MTurk possèdent des caractéristiques bien distinctes ce qui peut entraîner un certain biais de participation volontaire (Berg, 2010; Cheung et al., 2017). En effet, outre le fait que les participants ont choisi volontairement de participer à l'étude, ils ont aussi choisi de manière autonome de s'inscrire sur la plateforme MTurk. Il existe plusieurs caractéristiques distinctes des travailleurs MTurk qui peuvent conduire à des biais de participation volontaire, y compris le statut d'emploi irrégulier, l'intérêt envers les incitations monétaires et le plaisir inhérent à participer aux HITs (*Human Intelligence Task*). Ainsi, de telles caractéristiques pourraient constituer une limite à la généralisation des résultats.

Suivant le même ordre d'idées, une limite additionnelle à la généralisation de nos résultats concerne la composition de notre échantillon dans la deuxième étude. Composé d'une majorité d'hommes (62%) en plus d'être principalement basé sur des participants provenant des États-Unis dont la langue principale est l'anglais (99%), il est fort probable que les résultats obtenus ne puissent être généralisés à des populations ayant des caractéristiques distinctes, tel qu'une population franco-canadienne. Définitivement, l'interprétation et la généralisation des résultats se doivent d'être faites avec précaution.

Enfin, une autre limite réfère au modèle de médiation modérée proposé dans le second article de la thèse qui n'a pas pu être validé complètement. Bien que plusieurs liens du modèle aient été confirmés, la proposition comme quoi l'épanouissement au travail agissait comme variable modératrice entre la flexibilité managériale perçue et l'agilité des employés, qui aurait à son tour un impact sur la performance de rôle des employés n'a pas pu être démontrée. Une explication possible pourrait être due au fait que la variable d'épanouissement au travail soit davantage prédictive de créativité et d'innovation de la part des employés plutôt que de performance, qui en soi est un construit beaucoup plus large. En effet, tout comme le suggèrent Yang et al. (2021), l'épanouissement au travail serait davantage relié à la créativité et l'innovation puisque les dimensions d'apprentissage et de vitalité qui le composent prédisposent l'individu à se retrouver dans un état où il est plus facile pour lui de tester de nouvelles choses ou de faire les choses autrement.

Pistes de recherche future

À la lumière des résultats obtenus et des nombreux questionnements tout au long du projet de recherche, plusieurs pistes de recherche future émergent. Premièrement, il serait fort important de s'attarder à la vérification de la valeur incrémentale de la flexibilité managériale par rapport à

d'autres construits, contribuant à favoriser l'agilité et la performance des employés. Plus précisément, il serait intéressant de valider la pertinence d'inclure le volet cognitif de la flexibilité managériale ou s'il est suffisant de se concentrer uniquement sur l'aspect comportemental, tel qu'il a été fait dans cette thèse. Bien qu'il soit convenu que pour faire preuve de flexibilité managériale les gestionnaires doivent autant détenir un large répertoire comportemental qu'une bonne aptitude de différenciation comportementale (Hooijberg, 1996), les études jusqu'ici n'incluent que l'une ou l'autre des caractéristiques dans leur mesure de la flexibilité managériale.

Deuxièmement, étant donné le peu d'études empiriques sur le sujet de la flexibilité managériale, mieux comprendre les antécédents menant à la flexibilité managériale s'avèrerait être une excellente piste de recherche future. Procéder ainsi permettrait d'identifier les différentes variables pouvant impacter la flexibilité managériale, ce qui pourrait contribuer à une meilleure compréhension du phénomène. En ce sens, une étude conduite sur le leadership paradoxal suggère que des antécédents d'ordre cognitifs et contextuels favoriseraient l'expression dudit comportement (Zhang et al., 2015). Plus précisément, les auteurs sont les premiers à se pencher sur la question des antécédents de la flexibilité managériale en identifiant les variables suivantes : la pensée holistique et la complexité intégrative (antécédents cognitifs) ainsi que la structure mécanique ou organique de l'organisation (antécédents contextuels). Cela dit, au-delà de ses variables, de futures recherches pourraient certainement étudier d'autres facteurs ayant été démontrés comme ayant un impact sur différents styles de leadership. En s'appuyant sur une revue systématique relevant les antécédents du leadership transformationnel, les caractéristiques du leader (p. ex., l'auto-efficacité, les valeurs, les traits de personnalité, l'intelligence émotionnelle), les caractéristiques organisationnelles (p. ex., l'équité organisationnelle) ainsi que

les caractéristiques des subordonnés (p. ex., le niveau de développement initial du subordonné) semblent être des pistes de recherches intéressantes (Sun et al., 2017).

Enfin, une prochaine étape importante serait d'étudier d'autres impacts potentiels et mécanismes opérants de la flexibilité managériale sur les employés au-delà de la performance de rôle et de l'agilité. Tout comme pour les antécédents de la flexibilité comportementale, les retombées individuelles de la flexibilité managériale n'ont été que très peu étudiées. Cela est d'autant plus vrai en ce qui concerne l'impact de la flexibilité managériale au niveau individuel, soit son influence sur le fonctionnement des employés qui sont en relation avec un gestionnaire faisant preuve de flexibilité comportementale. Outre valider le lien entre la flexibilité comportementale et la créativité et l'innovation des employés tel que testé par Yang et al. (2021), il pourrait être intéressant d'étudier l'impact de la flexibilité comportementale en s'appuyant sur la théorie de l'autodétermination appliquée au travail et sur le fonctionnement optimal des employés (Gagné et Deci, 2005). En effet, quelques chercheurs soutiennent l'idée selon laquelle des comportements de gestion flexibles permettent de répondre aux besoins psychologiques fondamentaux des employés, soit le besoin d'autonomie, d'affiliation et de compétence (Yang et al., 2021; Yukl et Mahsud, 2010; Zhang et al., 2015). Cependant, aucune recherche, à notre connaissance, ne s'est penchée sur l'impact que peut avoir la flexibilité managériale sur la satisfaction des besoins psychologiques fondamentaux et, ultimement, le fonctionnement optimal des employés (p. ex. bien-être psychologique, satisfaction et épanouissement au travail).

Mot de la fin

La présente thèse est née du désir de réconcilier les multiples notions de leadership existantes. À travers de nombreuses lectures sur le sujet, j'avais la conviction profonde qu'au-delà des styles de leadership, exercer un leadership efficace relève davantage d'une bonne

capacité à faire « un peu de tout » tout en sachant à quel moment et auprès de quel auditoire ces comportements sont les plus appropriés. Ainsi, la notion de flexibilité comportementale m'apparaissait des plus intéressantes. S'éloignant d'un style de leadership qui est prescrit à tous ou d'une liste de comportements bien précise, cette conceptualisation repose davantage sur la tendance générale à considérer le contexte en son ensemble et faire varier son approche en conséquence. En plus de tenir compte de la complexité de l'environnement ainsi que de la diversité d'individus avec lesquels interagissent les gestionnaires, cette notion semblait être la plus complète qui soit. Or, c'est en l'étudiant de plus près que j'ai pris connaissance du paradoxe (et de l'ironie!) qui la caractérise : en voulant tenir compte de l'entière complexité entourant le leadership, cela rendait en soi la théorie complexe et difficile à étudier tandis qu'en cherchant à la simplifier pour la rendre plus digeste et compréhensible, plusieurs éléments semblaient alors y manquer.

Ainsi, cette thèse fut une première tentative d'apporter davantage de lumière sur cette autre façon d'appréhender la gestion et le leadership. Cette recherche doctorale a ainsi montré que des progrès importants ont été réalisés au cours des 30 dernières années avec différentes conceptualisations et théories proposées en plus d'avoir suggéré et testé un modèle expliquant le processus par lequel la flexibilité managériale puisse influencer l'agilité et la performance des employés. J'espère ainsi que cette thèse contribuera à élargir la perspective des chercheurs s'intéressant au leadership et à la gestion, mais aussi qu'elle servira à encourager les praticiens à adopter une approche davantage individualisée qui vise à ramener le gestionnaire sur son propre vécu, ses propres expériences pour l'aider ainsi à définir de quoi composer son répertoire comportemental.

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Annexe A

Questionnaires utilisés dans l'article 2 – Managerial Flexibility and Employee Role

Performance: The Role of Employee Thriving and Agility at Work During the COVID-19

Pandemic

À noter que les items de chaque mesure ont été présentés dans un ordre randomisé.

Paradoxical leader behavior (PLB) in people management scale (Zhang et al., 2015) :

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, I would describe my manager as being skilled in the following...

Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	A lot
0	1	2	3	4

1. Uses a fair approach to treat all subordinates uniformly, but also treats them as individuals.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Puts all subordinates on an equal footing, but considers their individual traits or personalities.	0	1	2	3	4
3. Communicates with subordinates uniformly without discrimination, but varies his or her communication styles depending on their individual characteristics or needs.	0	1	2	3	4
4. Manages subordinates uniformly, but considers their individualized needs.	0	1	2	3	4
5. Assigns equal workloads, but considers individual strengths and capabilities to handle different tasks.	0	1	2	3	4
6. Shows a desire to lead, but allows others to share the leadership role.	0	1	2	3	4
7. Likes to be the center of attention, but allows others to share the spotlight as well.	0	1	2	3	4
8. Insists on getting respect, but also shows respect toward others.	0	1	2	3	4

9. Has a high self-opinion, but shows awareness of personal imperfection and the value of other people.	0	1	2	3	4
10. Is confident regarding personal ideas and beliefs, but acknowledges that he or she can learn from others.	0	1	2	3	4
11. Controls important work issues, but allows subordinates to handle details.	0	1	2	3	4
12. Makes final decisions for subordinates, but allows subordinates to control specific work processes.	0	1	2	3	4
13. Makes decisions about big issues, but delegates lesser issues to subordinates.	0	1	2	3	4
14. Maintains overall control, but gives subordinates appropriate autonomy.	0	1	2	3	4
15. Stresses conformity in task performance, but allows for exceptions.	0	1	2	3	4
16. Clarifies work requirements, but does not micro-manage work.	0	1	2	3	4
17. Is highly demanding regarding work performance, but is not hypercritical.	0	1	2	3	4
18. Has high requirements, but allows subordinates to make mistakes.	0	1	2	3	4
19. Recognizes the distinction between supervisors and subordinates, but does not act superior in the leadership role.	0	1	2	3	4
20. Keeps distance from subordinates, but does not remain aloof.	0	1	2	3	4
21. Maintains position differences, but upholds subordinates' dignity.	0	1	2	3	4
22. Maintains distance from subordinates at work, but is also amiable toward them.	0	1	2	3	4

Employee agility and resilience scale (Braun et al., 2017)

Please use the rating scale below to indicate how accurately each statement describes you.

Describe yourself as you generally are now, not as you wish to be. Describe yourself honestly, knowing that your responses will be kept confidential.

Please read each statement carefully, and then select the response that best fits you.

Very inaccurate	Inaccurate	Neither accurate nor inaccurate	Accurate	Very accurate
1	2	3	4	5

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, ...

1. At work, I continuously spend time thinking about how we can do things differently.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am always thinking about what we need to do differently to meet upcoming change.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I push others/my team to continuously make changes based on what is happening in the company.	1	2	3	4	5
4. In the last month, I have proposed a change about our work to my leader.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I continuously work to understand what is going on in other areas to see if I need to make changes in what I'm doing.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I quickly adapt to new ways of doing things and/or new work assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I easily change course when needed.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I find it easy to adapt to changing situations.	1	2	3	4	5

9. I am able to shift focus and activities quickly in response to changing organizational priorities.	1	2	3	4	5
10.I enjoy experimenting and trying new things.	1	2	3	4	5
11.I bounce back quickly when confronted with setbacks.	1	2	3	4	5
12.I seek out collaboration with other departments/teams.	1	2	3	4	5
13.I readily provide help to other organizations when they need it.	1	2	3	4	5
14.When making decisions, I take special care to include other areas that may be impacted.	1	2	3	4	5
15.I collaborate for the good of the company as a whole rather than focusing on my own area.	1	2	3	4	5
16.I acknowledge and discuss tensions that exist between departments/teams in my organization.	1	2	3	4	5
17.I always support my colleagues or fellow team members.	1	2	3	4	5
18.I get along well with others.	1	2	3	4	5
19.I make myself available for others who want to talk to me.	1	2	3	4	5
20.I am direct but courteous when giving others feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
21.I respect and support the decisions made by my group.	1	2	3	4	5
22.I am good at working in a group.	1	2	3	4	5
23.I have someone at work I can speak with confidentially for guidance.	1	2	3	4	5
24.When faced with concerns at work, I don't feel alone, I have peers I trust to talk with.	1	2	3	4	5
25.At work, I talk with people more than just about work, like personal interests and outside hobbies.	1	2	3	4	5
26.I have strong social connections at work.	1	2	3	4	5
27.I feel like I am part of a team.	1	2	3	4	5
28.I take regular breaks during the day to renew and recharge.	1	2	3	4	5

29. When I find myself feeling overwhelmed at work, I take a brake to clear my mind.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I do things to take care of myself, such as eating a healthy diet, exercising and getting plenty of sleep.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I like reading or hearing opinions that are different from my way of thinking.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I find it easy to consider opinions that differ from my own.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I see change as a natural part of life.	1	2	3	4	5

Thriving at work scale (Porath et al., 2012)

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, at work...

1. I find myself learning often.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I continue to learn more and more as time goes by.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I see myself continually improving.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am not learning.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have developed a lot as a person.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel alive and vital.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have energy and spirit.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I do not feel very energetic.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel alert and awake.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am looking forward to each new day.	1	2	3	4	5

Work role performance scale (Griffin et al., 2007)

Very little	Little	Somewhat	Much	Great deal
1	2	3	4	5

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, you...

1. Carried out the core parts of your job well.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Completed your core tasks well using the standard procedures	1	2	3	4	5
3. Ensured your tasks were completed properly.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Adapted well to changes in core tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Coped with changes to the way you have to do your core tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Learned new skills to help you adapt to changes in your core tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Initiated better ways of doing your core tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Come up with ideas to improve the way in which your core tasks are done	1	2	3	4	5
9. Made changes to the way your core tasks are done.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Coordinated your work with coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Communicated effectively with your coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Provided help to coworkers when asked or needed.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Dealt effectively with changes affecting your work unit (e.g., new members)	1	2	3	4	5
14. Learnt new skills or taken on new roles to cope with changes in the way your unit works	1	2	3	4	5

15. Responded constructively to changes in the way your team works.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Suggested ways to make your work unit more effective.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Developed new and improved methods to help your work unit perform better	1	2	3	4	5
18. Improved the way your work unit does things.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Presented a positive image of the organization to other people (e.g., clients)	1	2	3	4	5
20. Defended the organization if others criticized it.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Talked about the organization in positive ways.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Responded flexibly to overall changes in the organization (e.g., changes in management)	1	2	3	4	5
23. Coped with changes in the way the organization operates.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Learnt skills or acquired information that helped you adjust to overall changes in the organization	1	2	3	4	5
25. Made suggestions to improve the overall effectiveness of the organization (e.g., by suggesting changes to administrative procedures)	1	2	3	4	5
26. Involved yourself in changes that are helping to improve the overall effectiveness of the organization	1	2	3	4	5
27. Came up with ways of increasing efficiency within the organization	1	2	3	4	5