THE EFFECT OF (UN)RESPONSIVENESS OF UNFAIR LEADERS ON EMOTIONAL STATE AND PROTEST BEHAVIOUR

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June, 2016

Dissertation presented for the Integrated Master’s in Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of University of Porto, supervised by Professor Isabel Rocha Pinto (F.P.C.E.U.P.)
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thanks first, Professor Isabel Pinto, for being my inspiration to pursue the branch of the Social Psychology, and above everything, for teaching so much.

To Professor José Marques, for contributing with his criticism and corrections that make this a better thesis.

To Ana Lourenço, for being my Lab mate, all these months of work. If it was not for your jokes, this would not be as fun as it was.

To my colleagues of the Laboratory of Social Psychology, which made the realization of this thesis much easier, with help and fun times. Especially to Sónia Cardoso, who is always present to help me.

To the Laboratory of Neuropsychology, especially to Professor Fernando Barbosa and Tiago Paiva, for teaching and help me in the physiological data treatment.

To all my friends, especially Mara, Mónica, Ana Isabel, Márcia and Catarina Ruano for listening me.

To Nuno Silva, for having to take with all the frustrations and moments of low mood, but always had a comforting word to cheer.

In particular, to my grandparents who have always been there to support me.

And above all to my mother, for all the effort made over the years and for being the best personal psychologist ever!

To my father, for everything, for being my shining star!
Resumo

Num estudo ($N = 119$), os participantes jogaram o “jogo do Ditador” num computador, no qual lhes foi apresentado um líder (programado pelos investigadores) que distribuiu, de forma injusta, dinheiro durante 10 ensaios. Numa condição (condição Líder Responsivo), o líder passou de uma distribuição extramente injusta para uma menos injusta, enquanto noutra condição (condição Líder Não Responsivo), o líder foi extremamente injusto na distribuição em todos os ensaios. Além disso, manipulamos o comportamento de protesto de um suposto comparsa, que protestou contra as decisões injustas do líder em todos os ensaios (condição Protesto) ou que não protestou em nenhum (condição Apatia). Durante a experiência, medimos emoções de autorrelato, como desinteresse e raiva, assim como medidas fisiológicas, nomeadamente a condutância elétrica da pele e o ritmo cardíaco, e os comentários feitos pelos participantes em relação à distribuição monetária do líder em cada ensaio. Os participantes apresentaram um aumento do ritmo cardíaco e da condutância elétrica da pele, nas condições de Apatia enquanto reportaram mais raiva na condição de Protesto. O desinteresse aumentou em condições de líderes Não Responsivos. Verificámos ainda, que os participantes protestaram mais nas condições de Protesto; no entanto, o protesto foi mais repressivo em relação a líderes Não Responsivos do que a líderes Responsivos. Os participantes foram mais apáticos em relação a um Líder Não Responsivo, em contexto Apático. Este estudo contribui para uma melhor compreensão da (in)ação coletiva enquanto reação a líderes não éticos, assim como do papel das emoções no comportamento de protesto e apatia.

(249 palavras)

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: AÇÃO COLETIVA, LÍDERES NÃO ÉTICOS, EMOÇÕES, ÍNDICES FISIOLÓGICOS
Abstract

In a study ($N = 119$), participants played the "Dictator Game" on a computer, in which they were presented with a leader (programmed by the researchers) that unfairly distributed money in ten trials. In one condition (Responsive Leader condition), the leader moved from extremely unfair to slightly unfair in his/her distribution, whereas in the other condition (Nonresponsive Leader condition) the leader was always extremely unfair in his/her distribution. Moreover, we also manipulated the protest behaviour of a bogus confederate, who protested against the leader in every trial (Protest condition) or not (Apathy condition). During the experiment, we measured self-reported emotions, such as anger and disinterest, as well as physiological indexes, including skin conductance and heart rate, and comments made by participants after each leader’s distribution. The participants had an increased heart rate and skin conductance, in the Apathy condition, whereas reported more anger in Protest conditions. Furthermore, disinterest increased regarding Nonresponsive leaders. In addition, participants protested more in both Protest conditions, although protest assumed a higher repressive character in the Nonresponsive than in the Responsive condition. Finally, participants were more apathetic regarding a Nonresponsive Leader (in an Apathetic context). This study contributes to a better understanding of collective (in)action, reaction to unethical leaders and the role of emotions in protest and apathetic behaviour.

(213 words)

KEY WORDS: COLLECTIVE ACTION, UNETHICAL LEADERS, EMOTIONS, PHYSIOLOGICAL INDEXES
Conceptual Framework

Group leaders have great impact on members’ daily-life. Their decisions, their leadership style, their intentions behind their decisions are, therefore, target of a deep scrutiny from regular members. The perception that leaders contribute to a more positive or negative members’ life might trigger reactions that, accordingly, may legitimate or reinforce distrust regarding the leaders. Protest action is one of the possible responses that group members may adopt to react to a leader. Austerity policies implemented in Europe adopted by political leaders, for instance, has being found as causing discontent among citizens; political leaders are blamed for these policies, leading to an increase in collective protest (Rudig & Karyotis, 2012). Indeed, the competence, credibility and honesty of our policy-makers have been called into question and, frequently, people engage in demonstrations, namely collective protest, demanding for social change or/and their resignation. However, collective protest does not maintain its intensity through time. Indeed, we are assisting to a decrease (declination in some countries) of collective protest regarding austerity policies. Does this mean that citizens are more satisfied or resigned with austerity? Is this apathy related to a comprehensive and, thus, conforming attitude regarding these policies, or may reflect a deeper discontent than that found with the implementation of austerity policies? Can it be a reflection of a lack of perceived opportunity to change the current social order or leaders’ decisions? We believe that last option is reasonably stated: apathy co-occurs with increased disbelief on political leaders and decreased confidence on institutions’ integrity (Hespanha, 1996). Such association is consistent with a lack of involvement around the defence of group’s current social order. On the contrary, protest is more activated when people perceive the possibility to obtain positive results regarding their interests (e.g. Klandermans, 1997).

In this work, we follow this line of reasoning. Leaders contribute significantly to the quality of group membership, to members’ well-being, and even to the organization and demonstration of social movements. Nevertheless, there is absence lack of sufficient studies about how leaders may influence and shape those social movements, and importantly, how leaders shape apathy. This work aims to contribute to fulfil this gap. We investigate the effect of responsiveness of unethical/unfair leaders on members’ emotional state and engagement in collective (in)action; that is, we examine the idea that how unethical leaders respond to
members’ claims may determine members’ well-being and shape their involvement in collective protest vs apathy.

Protest Collective Action

Traditionally, protest has been explored within three major theoretical trends, considering that protest usually englobes two groups, one that exerts power and is perceived as unfair/ illegitimate towards the other, and another that responds to this group unfair actions (Klandermans, 2003).

The most classical theories emphasize the impact of perceived negative and unfair situations as determinants of protest, namely the perception of relative deprivation (Morrison, 1971). According to this theory, individuals’ involvement in collective protest is the result of a perception that they, personally, have less than they are entitled to, comparatively with their aspirations or other individuals (egoistic relative deprivation) or the sense that the group has less than it is allowed to, deriving from comparisons with unrelated others or members of other groups (fraternal relative deprivation).

The second theoretical trend emerged as a criticism to the classic approach and explores involvement in collective protest as the result of an analysis about how effective is to engage in mobilization. The authors of this theory affirm that individuals engage in collective protest, based on the result of an analysis of their participation in collective protest in terms of costs and benefits (McCarthy & Zald, 1976). This idea suggests that relative deprivation is not sufficient to enact protest. Individuals protest to the extent that they recognize that through protest, their group has the resources required to obtain more gains than costs (Klandermans, 1997).

Finally, the third theoretical trend, greatly inspired by Social Identification Approach (see Tajfel & Turner, 1979), sees protest as a competition tool that allows groups to improve their status within the social structure. According to this theory, protest is motivated by a strong politicized identification, perceptions of illegitimacy, perceived instability and unfairness of groups’ relative status and the impermeability of the boundaries between groups (Wright, 2009). Protest is, then, a social change strategy (Tajfel, 1978) adopted by the group with lower condition, in order to achieve a higher status or obtain more relevant resources, and, ultimately, achieve a positive social identity.
Nowadays, the investigation in collective protest has evolved to consider multifaceted sets of motivation factors in determining individuals’ engagement in social movements. Klandermans (2003) emphasized three motivations that should be jointly investigated: instrumentality, identity and ideology. “Instrumentality” refers to protest as an attempt to influence the social and political environment, namely the source of the unfairness (e.g. groups with higher power or leaders), and achieve change towards the group’s interests. “Identity” motivation refers to protest as an expression of ingroup identification: a strong identification with the ingroup makes participation in collective political action on behalf of the group more likely. Social support for protesting (having related others engaged in protest behaviour) is also included in this category. Finally, individuals may involve in protest as a search for meaning to show their beliefs and moral indignation; the more they feel that their group values are threatened, the more they are motivated to engage in collective protest. This represents the “ideology” motivation.

Apathy Collective (In)action

While a great amount of literature has been focusing on the factors that predict collective action, apathy/inaction remains almost unexplored. Apathy is not only difficult to measure (since it corresponds to non-behaviour, an absence of action), but is mainly difficult to be defined. Within literature, apathy has been studied based on different conceptions. Sarfaraz, Khalid, Ahmed and Air Ajmal (2012) approached apathy as a reflection of people’s indifference towards some aspects of social life. For instance, they propose that people are apathetic because they perceive the political system to not affect them directly, thus, becoming unresponsive to political decisions. On the contrary, Greenberg (2010) proposes that apathy (namely, nonparticipation) may correspond to a sophisticated statement of people’s indignation, especially facing a great deterioration of the social order. According to this author, apathy can be considered as an effective measure of democratic deterioration. Although, these definitions seem apparently contradictory, both rely on the perception of hopelessness regarding the collective; that is, either as an indignation statement or as an indifference regarding the collective, individuals are apathetic to the extent that the social order is perceived to be too weak (deteriorated or to not affect them directly) to maintain individuals’ commitment with it and the
Thus, facing a negative and unfair situation, apathy may be the last response that group members engage in, after perceiving protest to be ineffective, but before group dissolution.

Thus, literature within both collective action and apathy, predict that a relevant determinant of people’s participation in collective (in)action is the perception how effective the group is in influencing the source of the negative situation (group or leader) towards the desired social change (Finkel, 1987; Klandermans, 2003; Osborne, Sibley, & Yogeeswaran, 2015). How leaders respond to influence attempts to change his/her behaviour from other group members, thus, may be a relevant determinant to predict collective (in)action. Indeed, if a leader shows openness to be influenced, may lead participants to perceive that their action can produce social change. On the contrary, a leader that shows an unresponsive attitude facing influence attempts, may give the impression that any attempt will be ineffective, unfairness will persist, and apathy may increase.

Collective Protest vs Apathy as a Reaction to Unethical/ Unfair Leaders

Traditionally, research on collective protest, usually considers regular members and the focuses of protest as two opposed groups placed in an overt or covert conflict. Research directed to the relevance of the intragroup relationship, established between leaders and protesters, has, nevertheless, been developing. Leaders play an important role in shaping collective action (Van Belle, 1996). They not only can be fundamental to persuade people to participate in collective action (Komai, Grossman and Deters, 2011), but can also foster protest by being the target of it, owing to adopt decisions/behaviours perceived as unfair or undesirable (Machado, Scartascini & Tommasi, 2011).

However, to our knowledge, the influential role of leadership as a target for protest is almost unstudied. There are, nevertheless, some relevant exceptions. Indeed, Worchel (1967) demonstrated a significant positive relationship between a negative evaluation of leader and the willingness to protest and to resort to violence, such that, the more negative were leader’s evaluations, the more individuals agreed with engaging in violent collective action. A study of Marques, Pinto, Leite, Randsley de Moura, Van Prooijen, & Marques (submitted) also show that willingness to engage in punitive collective protest (demanding for the leader’s demotion) is more directed towards illegitimate (rather than legitimate) transgressive leaders, and especially when the group is unable to exert social control over the leader. Although, not directly
related to collective protest, literature on reaction to transgressive leaders also follows this line of reasoning. Transgressive (unethical) leaders trigger extreme negative reactions from the group members when they are perceived as illegitimate, have not gained idiosyncratic credit to transgress, and do not show group-serving motivations, as compared to perceived legitimate leaders, who have gained idiosyncratic credit to transgress, and show group-serving motivations to justify the deviant behaviour (Abrams, Randsley de Moura, Marques, & Hutchison, 2008; Abrams, Randsley de Moura, & Travaglino, 2013; Hollander, 1958; Marques et al., submitted).

On the other hand, Sarfaraz and colleagues (2012) found that political apathy, in turn, was related to perceived leader’s dishonesty and his/her disregard for public demands. Schachter’s (1951) studies on reaction to deviance may also contribute to a broader comprehension of the processes involved in collective protest and apathy. This author demonstrates that a deviant member that maintains his/her deviancy throughout several trials, irrespectively of other members’ attempts to influence him/her, triggers more extreme negative punitive reactions than a slider (a deviant member that changes his/her position towards the norm; see also Levine, 1989). These results suggest that an unethical (deviant) member that responds positively to the remaining group members’ attempts of influence elicits more positive attitudes and acceptance, than a member that resists such attempts, who at a long run, be psychological or physically excluded from the group’s life (Israel, 1958; Levine, 1989, for a review; Orcutt, 1973).

In sum, it seems that collective protest, namely punitive or violent collective protest, has on its base the fact that the leader is perceived to illegitimately assume the leader’s role, and to favor other interests besides those of the group. Apathy, nevertheless, was found to be associated to leader’s unresponsive attitude regarding group members’ demands.

In an attempt to integrate literature on reaction to deviance with literature on collective protest vs apathy, we posit that leadership style (namely, leaders’ motivations and/or attitudes), may also contribute to shape the type of protest that members engage in. We believe that leaders that show more group-serving interests to justify an unfair decision might trigger protest based on more positive motivations (leader’s legitimation) than leaders that do not show such interests (Abrams et al., 2013). Accordingly, we can reason that leaders, who have changed their behaviour towards the members’ demands, should be less punished and more legitimizized than the leaders who resist others’ influential attempts, leading to harsher negative reactions.
Emotions and Collective (in)Action

Emotions play a motivational role in collective action (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008) and contribute to a dynamic system of meaning that shapes ongoing commitment to protest (Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009).

Facing perceived unfairness, some emotions (such as anger) work as accelerators or amplifiers of collective protest, turning intentional behaviour into action (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2007; Van Zomeren et al., 2004). Anger is usually reported by participants as the key determinant for collective action (Jasper, 2014), functioning as an energizer for members’ engagement in protest if treated unfairly (Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2006).

Interestingly, research also shows that inaction can also be motivated by emotions. For instance, sadness and the perception that things are likely to get worse, undermine collective action (Smith, Cronin, & Kessler, 2008), that may cause disinterest. Thus, emotions seem to be particularly informative about which motives and expectations, and consequently, which type of (in)action individuals will engage in, facing a leader that adopts unfair/ illegitimate decisions.

**Emotional physiological indexes.** Literature on collective action and emotions is usually based on participants’ self-reported information. Nevertheless, emotions can be measured through physiological indexes, giving additional (if not more accurate) information regarding individuals’ emotional state. Behavioural Inhibition System (BIS) and Behavioural Activation System (BAS), two relevant neurophysiological systems for the present work, can be of great help to a broader comprehension of emotions and (in)action (Gray, 1981; Carver & White, 1994). The physiological indexes relevant to represent BIS and BAS responses are skin conductance (SC) and heart rate (HR).

BIS regulates negative affect in response to threats or punishments (Lang, Bradley, & Cuthbert, 1990). It is associated with enhanced attention, arousal and anxiety. Individuals tend to inhibit behaviour in response to feared or/and aversive stimuli, inducing a higher stress and consequently, a higher arousal (with a raise of SC and HR). This arousal occurs because in order to avoid negative experiences or painful outcomes, individuals make efforts to be more attentive to and to process information about the negative stimuli situation (Balconi, Falbo, & Conte, 2012). On the other hand, BAS regulates positive affect in response to incentives or rewards (Fowles, 1980), inducing goal directed behaviour, associated with pleasure anticipation (Carver & White, 1994). It is a neurophysiological system, sensitive to reward signals, promoting
behaviour toward rewards (Balconi et al., 2012). Feelings like anger are associated with this system (Gable, Reis, & Elliot, 2000; Gray & McNaughton 2000). This system induces low arousal both in SC and HR.

We believe that BIS is consistent with apathy or punitive protest and BAS with instrumental protest. Indeed, facing an unfair situation posed by a leader, we believe that whereas apathy and punitive protest should essentially respond to a threatening situation (since belief in change is no longer considered), instrumental protest should emerge as a response to a challenging and more positive situation (since the leader’s behavioural change shows participants that their “active” efforts are effective, legitimizing, somehow, the leader’s attitude).

Present Study

In the present study we propose to test the idea that how leaders respond to members’ claims (responsive vs non-responsive), regarding an unfair decision, may trigger different emotional states among group members and type of collective (in)action they will engage in. If the leader becomes to be less unfair in his/her decisions through time, individuals may perceive such sliding response as an attitude of giving away for individuals’ claims or needs. Protest behaviour, in this situation, should rely mainly on instrumental motives, given the perspective of obtaining response for group members’ claims. On the contrary, a leader that maintains his/her unfair decision consistently through time should be perceived as being unresponsive to members’ claims and attempts of influence. In such a situation, members should show harsh negative protest (also consistent with Schachter, 1951).

In this study, we propose to interact leader’s (un)responsiveness with a moderator: presence vs absence of a protesting member. A great amount of literature has highlight group identity as activist and the presence of others in protest collective action as determinants to foster protest (Born, Akkerman, & Thommes, 2016). Thus, the presence of another member that protests against the leader, should contribute to the emergence of the above mentioned protest responses. On the contrary, another member that is apathetic, should increase individuals’ tendency for inaction. Inaction should be at its highest, thus, when the leader is perceived to be unresponsive and the other partner as apathetic.
Regarding emotional state, usually, literature about collective action, examines participants’ emotional state based on self-reported measures. To our knowledge, no study has examined physiological emotional responses related to collective protest. We believe that physiological responses, together with self-reported emotions, can contribute to a more accurate analysis of this phenomenon. For instance, based on BIS and BAS, we may think that BAS should occur with willingness to engage in instrumental protest behaviour, thus, especially when the leader is responsive. Nevertheless, anger should co-occur with any type of protest (instrumental or punitive). However, a nonresponsive leader in an apathy context should be perceived as the most negative situation (since change is unexpected), enacting a threat physiological response (consistent with BIS), leading to an increase of arousal, accompanied with inaction. Inaction should co-occur with self-reported disinterest.
Empirical Study

1. Overview and Hypotheses

We conducted an experiment aiming to test the above ideas. Participants played “The Dictator” game, in which they were presented with two bogus confederates, one that was “randomly” chosen to play the leader role and supposedly distributed money unfairly (more for him/herself than for the other players) throughout 10 trials. In one condition (Responsive condition), the supposed leader moved from extremely unfair to slightly unfair in his(her) distribution, whereas in the other condition (Nonresponsive condition) the leader was always extremely unfair in his(her) distribution. We also manipulated the protest behaviour of the other bogus confederate, who protested against the leader in every trial (Protest condition) or not (Apathy condition). At the end of the trials, we asked participants to report how angry and disinterested they felt throughout the game. During the experience, we measured physiological indexes: skin conductance and heart rate, as well as, participants’ comments regarding the leader’s unfair decision.

Regarding the self-reported emotions, physiological measures, and number of comments, we propose that the highest level of disinterest, the highest level of arousal of SC and HR, and the lowest number of comments should emerge in the Nonresponsive - Apathy condition, since this is the situation that provides most constraints to evolve to a positive position for participants thus, being perceived as the most negative and threatening situation: not only the leader adopts consistently a high unfair decision, but also there is no social support for indignation regarding leader’s unfairness. On the contrary, we should find the highest amount of comments together with the highest reported level of anger in both (Responsive and Nonresponsive) Protest conditions. Nevertheless, low levels of arousal (SC and HR) should especially emerge in the Responsive – Protest condition, since it should consist in the most challenging and satisfactory situation. Indeed, because anger is reported as an emotional incitement to protest behaviour, we believe we should find both measures to show highest levels in the Protest conditions. Nevertheless, because high levels of arousal are associated with
increased stress, we expect low levels of arousal to be associated with protest collective action, and especially when the leader gives signs to be influenced by participants’ protest behaviour.

Finally, although a high amount of comments is expected in both Protest conditions, we predict that the content of these comments should depend on leader’s responsiveness. Indeed, we expect more negative comments (consistent with punitive or negative reaction towards the leader) in the Nonresponsive condition and more positive comments (consistent with instrumental motivation) in the responsive condition.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and design.
A sample of 95 female and 24 males (\(N = 119\))\(^1\), aged from 17 to 56 years old (\(M = 19.60; SD = 4.83\)) participated in this study. There were no significant differences in sex (\(\chi^2 = 2.98, p = .395, N = 119\)) or age (\(F_{3,115} < 1\)) across experimental conditions.

\(A\ 2 (\text{leadership}: \text{Responsive vs Nonresponsive}) \times 2 (\text{context}: \text{Protest vs Apathy})\) experimental design full between-participants factors was used.

2.2. Procedure.
This is a laboratorial study. All participants were invited to go to the lab to play a game. The game was inspired on the “The Dictator” game (Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1986). The game is based on simple economic decisions, centered on fairness regarding distribution of resources, and the desire to respect social norms of justice (equitative, egalitarian, etc.). One participant assumes the leader role, the one that decides how much each player will receive.

In our study, we told participants that they were going to play a similar game with other two participants (although in reality, these two other players were simulated by computer). Participants learned that the leader was chosen, randomly, by the computer, and that s/he had to distribute money by him/her and the other two players. The other two players could comment

\(^1\) We eliminated one participant from our original sample, because this participant did not meet the standards of HR analysis, i.e. the participant HR pattern presented too many artefacts, which blurred the original data tracing.
or not the leader’s distribution. We told participants that our goal was to study physiological indexes in a game context.

To access to physiological indexes, we use disposable electrodes. Before, attaching this, the skin was cleaned with alcohol. We use BIOPAC student Lab 4.1 system to collect physiological data. The sample rate was of 2000.000 samples/second. Also, we use MATLAB to remove artifacts from our data.

We proceeded to the polygraph assembly (physiological indexes registration) and measured participant’s baseline/normal activation state regarding SC and HR. All participants gave their consent regarding their participation in the experiment.

Participants were informed that, depending on the resources that the leader would ascribe to them, these resources would be converted into raffles for a draw. Finally, the computer “randomly” chose the participant to be the last one (after the other player) to comment the leader’s decision.

2.2. Leadership.

We manipulated two types of leadership decisions: responsive vs nonresponsive. In half of the conditions (Responsive), the leader supposedly changed his/her decision throughout the trials, from an extremely unfair decision towards a slightly unfair decision (all decisions were unfair in order to allow the emergence of protest): in the first three trials, the leader gave 11 euros to him/herself and 2 euros to the other players. In the next four trials, the leader gave 9 euros to him/herself and 3 euros to the others players. In the last three trials, the leader gave 7 euros to him/herself and 4 euros to the other players. In the Nonresponsive conditions, the leader consistently gave 11 euros to him/herself and 2 euros to the other participants, throughout the 10 trials.

2.2. Context.

We also manipulate the context of protest. Therefore, in the Protest condition, the bogus confederate, in every trial, made negative comments towards the leader’s distribution. Some of these comments were: “Unfair distribution”; “I Disagree”; “It is an unequal distribution”, “Remains unequal”. All the comments were constructed in order to represent disagreement, but
to avoid repressive or instrumental protest comments (related to our hypotheses). In the Apathy
condition, the confederate did not make any comment.

3. Measures

We measured three sets of dependent measures: self-reported emotions (at the end of the
10 trials), physiological indexes and comments (during the 10 trials).

3.1 Self-reported emotions.

Participants reported how much disinterest and anger they felt during the game (1 = Not
at all; 7 = Very much).

3.2 Physiological indexes.

We measured SC and HR. SC was measured in microsiemens (µS), and HR was
measured in millivolts (mV).

3.3. Number of comments.

In each trial, after the confederate’s comment or absence of comment, participant had
the opportunity to make his/her comment.

4. Results

4.1. Self-reported Emotions.

We predicted anger to emerge more in the protest conditions, whereas disinterest should
occur more in the Apathy conditions, especially in the Nonresponsive – Apathy condition. We,
thus, conducted two separate Anovas, one on the Anger and another on the Disinterest score. A
Leadership x Context Anova computed on Disinterest yielded a significant effect of Leadership
\(F(1,115) = 4.423, p = .038, \eta^2 = .037\). Context \((F(1,115 < 1)\) and Leadership x Context \((F(1,115
< 1)\) were not significant. Participants significantly felt more disinterest in Nonresponsive \((M = 3.38, SD = 1.94)\) than in Responsive \((M = 2.67, SD = 1.72)\) conditions.
We also conducted a Leadership x Context Anova on the Anger score. Results showed a significant effect of Context condition ($F_{1,115} = 4.97, p = .028, \eta_{p}^{2} = .041$), indicating that participants felt more anger in the Protest condition ($M = 3.16, SD = 2.23$) than in the Apathy condition ($M = 2.31, SD = 1.84$) (see Table 1). Leadership and Leadership x Context were not significant ($F_{1,115} < 1$).

These results are partially consistent with our hypothesis. It seems that leader’s responsiveness has impact on participants’ Disinterest regarding the unfair situation, whereas Anger is indeed related to Protest.

4.2. Physiological indexes.

We expected participants to have a higher level of arousal of SC and HR more in the Apathy than in the Protest conditions, and especially in the Nonresponsive - Apathy condition. Before proceeding into the analyses, we constructed two single scores: SC and HR scores corresponding to the mean scores of the respective index throughout the 10 trials. We conducted two Anovas, one on the SC score and another on the HR score. Although we expected a similar pattern of means difference on both scores, we decided to conduct separate Anovas and not a Manova on both scores, in order to control participants’ baseline of both measures. Thus, we first conducted a Leadership x Context Anova on the SC, taking SC baseline as covariate. As expected, results showed a significant effect of Context ($F_{1,115} = 4.383, p = .039, \eta_{p}^{2} = .037$) and a significant Leadership x Context ($F_{1,115} = 7.47, p = .007, \eta_{p}^{2} = .061$). Leadership was not significant ($F_{1,115} < 1$). The effect of Context shows higher levels of SC in the Apathy ($M = 7.10, SD = 3.43$) than in the Protest condition ($M = 5.89, SD = 3.96$). As predicted, results are consistent with the idea that the highest SC emerges in the Nonresponsive - Apathy condition ($M = 7.40, SD = 3.70, p$ always < .05, as compared to other conditions). The activation in the Responsive - Apathy condition ($M = 6.79, SD = 3.19$) is also higher than in both Protest conditions ($p$ always < .05). Interestingly, we also found significant differences between the Responsive and Nonresponsive Protest conditions. The lowest arousal occurs in Responsive condition ($M = 5.66, SD = 3.66, p = .039$, as compared to the Nonresponsive condition). Furthermore, we analyse the data, taking into account monetary changes occurring in the responsive leader, from trail 3 to 4 and from trial 7 to 8. Thus, we divided the data having this change into account. So, we created three new scores, corresponding to the average of trials 1
to 3, trials 4 to 7, and trials 8 to 10. Results are consistent with those found with the general analyses (see Table 2).

A Leadership x Context Anova on the HR score, taking HR baseline as covariation, showed a significant effect of Context ($F(1,114) = 9.92, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .080$). Leadership and Leadership x Context were not significant ($F(1,114) < 1$). The effect of Context indicates that participants in the Apathy condition ($M = 77.98, SD = 11.09$) exhibited an increased arousal, compared with those of the Protest condition ($M = 74.39, SD = 9.10$). Regarding HR, we also created three new scores, corresponding to the average of trials 1 to 3, trials 4 to 7, and trials 8 to 10. The effect of Context mentioned above is clearer when we inspect differences between trials 4 to 7 and trials 8 to 10 (see Table 3).

These results, show that Apathy condition is related with an increased arousal, associated with an higher activation of SC and HR, as compared with Protest condition. Also as expected, a higher arousal emerged facing a nonresponsive leader as compared to the responsive leader, especially in SC.

4.3. Number of comments.

We predicted that participants would comment the least in the Nonresponsive – Apathy condition, and would show higher amount of comments in both Protest conditions (although different types of protest; see “Analyses of the comments’ content”). A Leadership x Context Anova computed on number of comments score shows significant effects of Leadership ($F(1,115) = 5.88, p = .017, \eta_p^2 = .049$) and Context ($F(1,115) = 48.51, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .297$). Leadership x Context was marginally significant ($F(1,115) = 3.04, p = .084, \eta_p^2 = .026$).

Participants in the Responsive condition ($M = 7.77, SD = 3.20$) made more comments than in the Nonresponsive condition ($M = 6.60, SD = 3.70$). Moreover, as expected, participants made less comments in the Apathy ($M = 5.38, SD = 3.79$) than in the Protest condition ($M = 8.98, SD = 1.91$). The simultaneous occurrence of both main effects and the marginally significant interaction encouraged us to proceed to analyse the mean differences between conditions. As predicted, results confirm that the lowest amount of comments was found in the Nonresponsive – Apathy condition ($M = 4.15, SD = 3.56, p$ always $< .001$ as compared to the remaining conditions) (see Table 1).
These results are consistent with our hypothesis. The lowest number of comments emerged in the Nonresponsive Leader – Apathy condition. Moreover, the Apathy conditions triggered, in general, less number of comments than in the Protest condition.

4.4. Analyses of the comments’ content.

We expected different types of comments’ content, depending on Leadership condition in both Protest conditions. Before analysing the content of the comments, we constructed a content categorization guideline based on key concepts grounded on relevant collective action literature (e.g. Klandermans, 1997). We considered four categories, namely Leader Legitimacy, Disagreement, Negative Reaction and No Comments. Leader Legitimacy incorporate comments that legitimate the leader money distribution; this category is consistent with a positive attitude towards the leader’s attitudes, thus, related with instrumentalization motives. Negative Reaction includes comments that are related with a negative, and punitive attitude regarding the leader; this category would be consistent with the type of repressive protest. Disagreement, although irrelevant to distinguish between types of protest, is consistent with the situation (unfair situation) and with the comments supposedly adopted by the confederate. Lastly, in the No Comments category, we included the amount of absence of comments (inaction); it is consistent with apathetic attitude.

To proceed to the categorization of the comments, we asked a group of 9 individuals from the same population as participants to classify each comment in the proposed categories. At the end of the categorization process, we analyse the consistencies of these 9 individuals and proceeded to the analyses of the comments. In the Leader Legitimacy category, the following comments were included: “I agree because it distributes the same amount by two opponents”, “You are a righteous person and leader” and “Nice distribution, continue the good work”. In the Disagreement category, we can find the following comments: “I do not agree with the distribution”, “The distribution is uneven” and “It is not a fair distribution”. Finally, the following comments are examples of the Negative Reaction category: “The leader is unfriendly! Bad leadership”, “The leader is annoying” and “You are selfish and have little receptivity and sensitivity to criticism”.

We constructed a single variable resultant from the Leadership x Context interaction. With this new variable we were able to conduct a Kruskal–Wallis non-parametric test on each
category of comments. The relevant categories for our hypotheses are Legitimization of Leader, Negative Reaction and No Comments. Disagreement was an irrelevant category for our purposes.\(^2\)

Regarding the Legitimization of Leader category, results show that leader’s responsiveness plays an important role in accounting for the variability of this category. Results show a lower amount of comments in Nonresponsive, both in Apathy and Protest conditions, \(n = 21\) compared with both Responsive (Apathy and Protest conditions) \(n = 90\), \(\chi^2 3 = 28.26, p = .001\).

Participants display more Negative Reaction comments in the Responsive - Protest condition \(n = 47\) and in Nonresponsive – Protest condition \(n = 31\) than in both Apathy conditions (Nonresponsive: \(n = 14\); Responsive: \(n = 19\), \(\chi^2 3, N = 110 = 8.32, p = .040\)).

Finally, and as predicted, participants were more apathetic in Nonresponsive – Apathy condition \(n = 40\), than in the remaining conditions. In fact, participants globally commented less in both Apathy conditions (Responsive Leader – Apathy condition: \(n = 33\), \(\chi^2 3 = 28.26, p < .001\)) than in both Protest conditions (Responsive: \(n = 20\); Nonresponsive: \(n = 18\)) (see Table 4).

Our hypothesis was partially confirmed. Participants tended to legitimate more the leader in both Responsive conditions, irrespectively of the context they were presented with. Moreover, participants displayed more negative reactions towards leader in both Protest conditions, while adopting an apathetic behaviour in the Apathy conditions.

5. Discussion

Consistent with our predictions, social support for protest behaviour (having another member that protested or not) emerged as a determinant of participants’ engagement in protest behaviour. Interestingly, however, leaders’ (un)responsiveness indeed affects participants’

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\(^2\) In the Disagreement category, results show that participants in Protest condition \(n = 63\) disagree more with the leader’s decision than in Apathy condition \(n = 47\), \(\chi^2 3, N = 110 = 14.76, p = .002\).
emotional state and, consequently shape the type of protest behaviour they will engage in. All in all, our results were fairly consistent with our hypotheses.

Participants that faced a nonresponsive leader and a partner that did not comment leader’s unfair decision (Nonresponsive - Apathy condition) showed a BIS activation, that is, a significant increase in heart rate, as well as in skin conductance (as compared to the other conditions and to their own baseline). Moreover, these participants reported high disinterest in the game and a high level of apathy (low level of comments regarding the unfair decision). We believe that this situation is, indeed, highly stressful, for not allowing participants to have a positive perspective about the situation: not only the leader seems to be unresponsively unfair, but there is no social support regarding this perception of unfairness. Apathy, in this condition, co-occurred with self-reported disinterest for the game, but also with a negative emotional state, being consistent with the idea that inaction does not simply represent a state of indifference regarding the situation.

The opposing situation, the most positive of all for participants, was that with the presence of a confederate that protested for the leader’s unfair decisions, and a leader that changes his/her decisions towards a fairer situation (Responsive – Protest condition). Indeed, we found in this condition the highest BAS activation, probably increased by the expressed anger (fuel for protest). In this condition, participants anticipate change towards a desirable situation and become higher committed to protest. BAS indicates that their emotional state is positive, an adaptive response to a challenging situation, thus not being a source of anxiety.

The other two conditions, although intermediate in results, assume completely different meanings for participants, thus leading to different emotional states and commitment to (in)action. The Responsive – Apathy and the Nonresponsive - Protest conditions contribute to reinforce the idea that the presence of social support for protest behaviour regarding an unfair leader is a relevant source for reverse the threatening situation posed by an unfair situation. Indeed, we found responses consistent with BAS in the Nonresponsive – Protest, and BIS in the Responsive – Apathy condition. Interestingly, leaders that are perceived as nonresponsive, irrespectively of the amount of comments that they trigger from participants, seem to enact negative and repressive responses, more anger, and probably, more aggressiveness.
In brief, whereas social support potentiated participants’ engagement in protest, leader’s (un)responsiveness seem to be a relevant determinant to shape members’ attitudes facing protest, namely underlying leaders’ legitimization or derogation motivations.

6. Conclusion

We believe the present study has some relevant theoretical implications, not only regarding theory about collective (in)action, but also regarding reaction to unethical leaders.

Collective (in)action.

Social support emerged the major determinant of individuals’ adherence to protest behaviour. Nevertheless, such encouragement to protest did not contribute to shape the type of protest individuals adopted. The type of protest was, in turn, associated to responsive attitudes that leaders (the source of unfairness) adopted facing group members’ claims. Depending on the leader’s attitude (responsive or unresponsive), protest can assume a positive function within the group (based on instrumental and positive motivations) or be disruptive, by challenging the social order (namely, by posing into question leader’s legitimacy and, ultimately, leader’s maintenance).

This study is also a relevant contribution to the study of apathy. Facing an unfair situation, apathy emerged together with anxiety, which seem to reflect a constraining situation for individuals. Anxious inaction reflects, to our point of view (and consistent with Greenberg, 2010), a sign of distrust in the leader, lack of hope on social change, and disinvestment from the situation. At a long run, it might be quite problematic to social cohesion maintenance.

Although many studies indicate the role of emotion in protest (especially self-reported anger), this study allowed us to access emotional physiological state in protest and apathy situations, depending on the context (support for apathy or protest) and on the leader responsiveness. This study’s results suggest that facing an unfair situation posed by a leader, collective protest behaviour may be a catalyst agent of negative emotions, and therefore a good vehicle to balance the psychological well-being of individuals that engage in this type of behaviour.
Reaction to unethical leaders

Our study also contributes to extend literature on reaction to unethical leaders. Indeed, our results show that how leaders respond to regular members' demands seems to be a relevant determinant for the reactions s/he triggers when adopting an unfair decision. In fact, it seems that this attributes (responsiveness) might be determinant to improve or loose legitimacy as a leader. Our results are congruent with the Marques and colleagues (submitted), by suggesting that a nonresponsive leader is more perceived as illegitimate, thus triggering more negative reactions than a responsive leader (see also Sarfaraz et al. 2012).

Importantly, nevertheless, protest (especially punitive protest) seems to be potentiated by the presence of social support. Indeed, in the presence of a protesting partner, participants increased essentially the repressive protest (negative reaction) and the expression of anger. Social support for protest seems to inflame repressive reactions towards the leaders.

Collective (in)action in Portugal

The main inspiration of this study was the current Portuguese deprived situation, in which perceived injustice, lack of hope, and despair seem to take over the population. And yet, Portugal is one of the most apathetic European country. Protest is meager, and nothing seems to shake this inaction. That was why we decided that, more than studying protest collective action, we should adventure within the apathy path.

One important contribution, we believe this study has, namely, for institutional leadership, and especially for political leaders, is the relationship between collective (in)action and leadership attitude. Nonresponsive leaders, i.e., those leaders that, once adopt unfair decisions, are impermeable to the members’ needs and demands, seem to trigger negative reactions. Such reactions may appear under the shape of protest (negative and repressive protest), or of apathy. However, such apathy does not reflect calm regarding the unfair situation. On the contrary, it might reflect anxiety and disengagement from group members. A responsive leader, on the contrary seems to encourage members’ confidence and belief in the leader’s legitimacy, adopting a positive attitude either facing a confrontation with the leader (instrumental protest) or not (adopting an expectant attitude regarding the leader’s decisions). A perceived responsive leader, thus, seem to be a facilitator of group functioning and even individuals positive well-being. An unresponsive leader, on the contrary, seems to create social
conflict and disaggregation. Thus, a leader that listens to the people/members’ needs, responds to their demands and adopts a positive attitude towards negotiation seems a leader with a reasonable attitude to maintain his/her own legitimacy as a leader. Even when leader’s decisions might be perceived as unfair to members, a positive and responsive attitude from the leader prevents inquietude and anxiety within group members and facilitates the occurrence of positive expectancy or instrumental motivation from the part of group members.

**Future directions of research**

Taking our results into account, we definitely think that studying the role of emotions in greater depth is the following step of our research, particularly complementary emotions related with expectancy and hope in a future social change. These seem relevant emotions to distinguish more directly, instrumental from repressive protest. For instance, consistent with this idea, Paez, Javaloy, Wlodarczyk, Espelt, and Rimé (2013), have highlighted not only the role of anger, but also the role of other group-related emotions, such as hope regarding the group, as determinants to potentiate protest.

Furthermore, and in order to interpret our results with more accuracy, we could implement more controlling conditions; for instance, conditions without confederates. These conditions would allow us to ascribe the real impact of leaders’ responsiveness.

The final suggestions are related with intention to improve external and theoretical validity. It would be important to complement this study with new emotional measures, like electromyography, in which emotions would be better diagnosed by analyzing the specific muscles activation. Nevertheless, these studies should also be complemented with non-laboratorial studies (using other methodologies – correlational studies), namely field studies in real contexts, so psychological and social realism could be improved. We would certainly obtain a broader, more complex, and systematic vision about protest and apathy phenomena.
Bibliography


Appendix A

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Anger, Disinterest, and Number of Comments by Leadership and Context.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Skin Conductance (Baseline, 1-3 Trials, 4-7 Trials, 8-10 Trials, and Total) by Leadership and Context.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of Heart Rate (Baseline, 1-3 Trials, 4-7 Trials, 8-10 Trials, and Total) by Leadership and Context.

Table 4. Percentage and frequencies of types of Comments by Leadership and Context.
Table 1
*Means and Standard Deviations of Anger, Disinterest, and Number of Comments by Leadership and Context.*

<table>
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</tr>
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<td>Protest</td>
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Table 2
*Means and Standard Deviations of Skin Conductance (Baseline, 1-3 Trials, 4-7 Trials, 8-10 Trials, and Total) by Leadership and Context.*

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*Note:* SC 1-3: Average of skin conductance from trial one to three; SC 4-7: Average of skin conductance from trial four to seven; SC 8-10: Average of skin conductance from trial eight to ten; SC total: Average of skin conductance from trial one to ten.
Table 3  
*Means and Standard Deviations of Heart Rate (Baseline, 1-3 Trials, 4-7 Trials, 8-10 Trials, and Total) by Leadership and Context.*

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*Note: HR 1-3: Average of heart rate from trial one to three; HR 4-7: Average of heart rate from trial four to seven; HR 8-10: Average of heart rate from trial eight to ten; HR total: Average of heart rate from trial one to ten.*
Table 4
*Percentage and frequencies of types of Comments by Leadership and Context.*

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<tr>
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<td>27.55% (n = 30)</td>
<td>30.61% (n = 34)</td>
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<td>27.78% (n = 31)</td>
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<td>42.59% (n = 47)</td>
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<td>30.16% (n = 33)</td>
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*Note: The percentages are analysed per line (sum is 100%).*