

RESEARCH ARTICLE

No news, no excitement, no creativity: Moderating roles of adaptive humour and proactivity

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When employees believe that organizational authorities are engaged in unfair information provision, it might evoke some negative behavioural responses, like diminished creativity. But when and why are such responses more likely? To answer these questions, the current study investigates the mediating role of job dissatisfaction in the relationship between unfair organizational information provision and creative behaviour, as well as the moderating roles of employees' own adaptive humour and proactivity. Survey data, collected from employees who operate in the oil and gas sector, reveal that employees' convictions that organizational leaders are not open in their communication can prompt them to avoid creative work activities, because these employees become unhappy with their jobs. This mediating role of job dissatisfaction is less salient if they have a good sense of humour and like to take initiative though. Organizations therefore should take these findings as a relevant caution: Lack of excitement about their jobs, as informed by organizational information deficiencies, can make employees complacent. To address this potentially negative outcome, organizations might help employees leverage their own valuable personal resources.

KEYWORDS

adaptive humour, conservation of resources theory, creative behaviour, job dissatisfaction, proactivity, unfair organizational information provision

1 | INTRODUCTION

Organizations need to encourage creativity among their employees, such that they actively attempt to develop novel ideas that can alter and enhance the organizational status quo (Frederiksen & Knudsen, 2017; Oldham & Cummings, 1996). To enable such creative behaviours, organizations also should ensure that employees have sufficient access to valuable information (Wang & Noe, 2010). Extant research accordingly shows how information sharing among employees has positive implications for their creativity levels (Chiang et al., 2015; De Clercq & Pereira, 2020; Seidler-de Alwis & Hartmann, 2008). Information provided by organizational authorities, or the people in charge, arguably should have similarly beneficial effects, though relatively less research attention has been devoted to this issue (Gilstrap & Collins, 2012; Shin et al., 2015). In particular,

organizational information might be instrumental for employees' creativity, because it reflects the broad overview, across departments or work units within the firm, that only organizational leaders may be able to access, especially with regard to organizational challenges that require creative solutions (Allen et al., 2013; Amabile & Khaire, 2008).

To understand the relevance of such organizational information provision for creativity, we take a distinct approach with this study, in that we focus on the detrimental effects of a *lack* of pertinent organizational information provision. In developing this perspective, we rely on the notion of informational justice (also referred to as informational fairness; Gilstrap & Collins, 2012; Kernan & Hanges, 2002). Unfair organizational information provision might take different forms—as mirrored in the operationalization of this construct in the empirical part of the study—such as when organizational authorities deprive employees of complete work-related information, maintain

inadequate communication practices, fail to explain work procedures in detail or do not adjust their communication to employees' specific needs (Colquitt, 2001). This conceptualization aligns with existing definitions of informational justice as 'the extent to which managers provide adequate justification and sufficient information' (Shin et al., 2015: p. 506) or parallel definitions of informational injustice as the 'perceived unfairness of explanations and communication' (Adamovic, 2021: p. 128). Notably, most creativity research that investigates organizational fairness adopts a positive angle, highlighting the beneficial roles of fair employee treatment for spurring creative work behaviours (Gupta & Singh, 2015; Kim et al., 2017). With a carefully designed, complementary approach, we investigate how *unfair* or incomplete information provision by organizational authorities may inhibit such creativity (De Clercq et al., 2013).

2 | RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In turn, the primary objectives of this research are to identify *why* and *when* beliefs about unfair organizational information provision might escalate into tarnished creativity. First, acknowledging that employees tend to count on organizational leaders to share information so they can do their jobs (Shin et al., 2015), we postulate that a critical mechanism that underpins the unfair information provision–creative behaviour link is that employees feel unhappy about their job situation (Jiang et al., 2009). Such *job dissatisfaction* reflects a depletion in people's positive emotional resources, such that employees are left feeling little excitement or enthusiasm about their work (Abbas et al., 2014; Sun & Pan, 2008). Consistent with the logic of conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), we expect that employees' frustrations with organizational authorities, because they do not provide valuable information, lead to their diminished creative behaviour, because it prompts job dissatisfaction and an associated desire to *conserve* their individual energy, instead of 'wasting' it on constructive work activities that otherwise would help their organization (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000). As prior studies have shown, diminished job satisfaction represents a key function that connects various workplace challenges—such as breaches and violations of psychological contracts (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014; Turnley & Feldman, 2000), behind-the-scenes political decision-making (Hsiung et al., 2012), role conflict (Jou et al., 2013) or passive avoidant leadership (Froome et al., 2012)—with negative work outcomes. We extend this research by explicating its possible mediating role with respect to the harmful effects of unfair information provision by organizational leaders on creative behaviours.

Second, we explicitly recognize that employees' negative responses to resource-depleting work circumstances may vary, according to whether they have access to valuable personal resources (Al-Hawari et al., 2020; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Consistent with this COR-based logic, we propose that employees' *adaptive humour* or the extent to which they can rely 'on their wit to cope with and master challenging situations' (De Clercq et al., 2020: p. 295) and their *proactivity* or 'tendency to take initiative to affect changes in

themselves and/or their environments' (Chong et al., 2021: p. 575) may serve as factors that weaken or mitigate both (1) the translation of organizational information deficiencies into enhanced job dissatisfaction and (2) the subsequent translation of such job dissatisfaction into lower creativity levels. Our selection of these two personal resources is purposeful. Both of them can endow employees with positive work energy, which they can leverage to protect against resource-depleting unfair organizational information provision and subsequent job dissatisfaction (Quinn et al., 2012). But these two resources also *complement* each other. The use of adaptive humour reflects a somewhat *passive* approach in terms of how employees deal with difficult work situations. When employees score high on this personal resource, they tend to adjust flexibly to difficult situations by joking around and using their wit (José et al., 2007; Lehmann-Willenbrock & Allen, 2014). Proactivity instead conveys a more *active* approach, such that they meet workplace challenges head on and take the initiative to deal with difficult situations (Jiang & Gu, 2015; Kisamore et al., 2014). Together, adaptive humour and proactivity thus represent a consistent, complementary set of factors that might shield employees from the hardships associated with organizational information deficiencies and the subsequent experience of job dissatisfaction.

3 | CONTRIBUTIONS

We aim to make several contributions to creativity research. First, we leverage COR theory to theorize and empirically demonstrate that beliefs about unfair organizational information provision can escalate into diminished creative behaviour, guided by employees' unhappiness with their job situation (Jiang et al., 2009). Inadequate communication by organizational leaders, who generally are expected to support their workforces with sufficient information (Gilstrap & Collins, 2012), may undermine employees' propensity to partake in new idea generation, because they lack positive energy and excitement in relation to their jobs (Aslam et al., 2018). The experience of job dissatisfaction is an unexplored and relevant mechanism by which perceived organizational information shortages may cause employees to become complacent and refrain from creativity. What makes this mechanism interesting from a theoretical perspective is that it implies a possible counterproductive *spiral* (Hobfoll, 2001), through which employees may shoot themselves in the proverbial foot. In particular, if employees, upset with organizational leaders who withhold pertinent information, become unhappy with their job situation and thus refuse to generate novel ideas (Spanjol et al., 2015), they may deprive themselves of the possibility of finding novel *solutions* to the information shortages from which they suffer.

Second, we explicate specific ways in which organizations can diminish the chances that this negative spiral unfolds, that is, by stimulating employees to *apply* their personal resources to cope with the experienced hardships. With a contingency perspective, we specifically detail how the risk of diminished creative behaviours, in response to unfair organizational information provision and subsequent job

dissatisfaction, might be mitigated to the extent that employees are humorous (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006) or proactive (Kim, 2019). Prior research identifies conditional, harmful effects of informational unfairness on employees' work emotions, as informed by their access to supportive structural and relational *contextual* features (De Clercq & Saridakis, 2015). To expand this research, we focus on the mitigating roles of two *personal* resources. That is, we examine how employees' sense of humour and interest in initiative taking might mitigate the mediating role of job dissatisfaction in linking their beliefs about unfair organizational information provision with creative behaviour. In so doing, we establish two complementary paths through which organizations can avoid the negative scenario in which one negative situation (perceived organizational information deficiencies) begets another (reduction in creative efforts). That is, they can help employees *leverage* their sense of relativism through humour or their interest in initiative taking.

4 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

4.1 | Creative behaviour: Benefits, challenges and the role of unfair information provision

Employees can enhance the success of their employing organizations with their creative activities (Chen & Kaufmann, 2008; Maimone & Sinclair, 2014) to generate change-inducing ideas that have the potential to improve the current organizational situation (Amabile, 1996; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Creative activities are advantageous not only for the organization but also for their undertakers, in that these activities can stimulate people's own learning capacities (Parboteeah et al., 2015), give a boost to their work performance (Gong et al., 2009) or generate a sense of personal fulfilment (Kim et al., 2009). Despite these beneficial outcomes, developing new ideas also creates important challenges for employees, because other members may consider the ideas intrusive or threats to their existing positions or privileges (Van Dijk & Van Dick, 2009; Yuan & Woodman, 2010). Other members might even reject creative ideas, if they believe that they highlight their own failures, for which they may be held accountable (Buchanan & Badham, 1999; Hon et al., 2014).

Because creative work behaviours are thus inherently challenging, employees who encounter resource-draining situations at work might be reluctant to devote significant energy to developing new ideas (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000). Extant research accordingly has established that employees tend to avoid creative behaviours to the extent that they are exposed to dysfunctional organizational politics (Malik et al., 2019), excessive workloads (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2019), workplace ostracism (Kwan et al., 2018) or supervisor bullying (Jiang et al., 2019). A common denominator binds these factors, namely, the frustrations that they evoke in employees, regarding the lack of support they receive from the organization. Another, hitherto unexplored inhibitor of employees' creative behaviour may derive from incomplete information about their work, which

employees expect to receive from organizational authorities (Colquitt, 2001; Shin et al., 2015). Extant research has not explicitly examined the potentially detrimental effects of unfair organizational information provision on employees' engagement in creative activities, let alone pertinent factors that might *explain* or *influence* this process. This oversight is striking. Organizational leaders need a comprehensive understanding of how their own inadequate communication practices could compromise diligent, creative work efforts among their employee bases.

In particular, when employees have access to valuable work-related information, it helps keep them motivated and able to complete their job tasks successfully (Guenter et al., 2014; Wang & Noe, 2010). For example, the extent to which employees frequently exchange information with colleagues enhances their organizational commitment (Curado & Vieira, 2019) and ability to meet their job requirements (Yun & Lee, 2017). Access to information also should come from organizational authorities (Au & Leung, 2016; Colquitt, 2001). To the extent that employees believe that the people in charge are forthcoming and fair in their information provision, they tend to experience higher-quality relationships with those leaders (Walumbwa et al., 2009) and trust them (Kernan & Hanges, 2002). If instead employees perceive their organization as *unfair* because it fails to provide them with adequate or complete information, they generally feel frustrated and skeptical (De Clercq & Saridakis, 2015; Judge & Colquitt, 2004). As mentioned in Section 2, our focus is specifically on (1) how the translation of unfair organizational information provision into tarnished creative behaviour can be explained by employees' job dissatisfaction and (2) how this counterproductive dynamic can be contained by two key personal resources, adaptive humour and proactivity.

4.2 | COR theory

The theoretical arguments for these relationships—a mediating role of job dissatisfaction and moderating roles of the two personal resources—are anchored in two principles of COR theory, as relating to its core premise that employees' work-related feelings and engagement in energy-consuming work behaviours (such as creativity) are influenced by their desire to safeguard their current resource reservoirs in resource-draining situations (Hobfoll et al., 2018). First, COR theory postulates that resource drainage caused by unfavourable organizational treatments directs employees toward sentiments and actions that enable them to *avoid* such drainage and protect their remaining resources (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000). Second, it predicts that employees' access to valuable personal resources can diminish or *mitigate* the perceived need to exhibit self-protective responses to difficult work situations (Azeem et al., 2021). That is, these resources make it less likely that experienced organizational hardships deplete their resource bases and require protective responses (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000).

The application of the first COR principle to our study context informs the prediction that unfair organizational information provision

may deplete employees' emotional resources, from which they otherwise could draw to undertake discretionary work behaviours (De Clercq et al., 2019), such as creativity. In particular, the dissatisfaction that employees feel about their jobs and subsequent reluctance to engage in creative behaviours appear justified and enable them to avoid 'throwing away' valuable individual energy on productive creative activities, which their information-withholding employer seemingly does not *deserve* (Walumbwa et al., 2009). The second COR principle in turn implies that the vigour of these responses is contingent on the extent to which employees can leverage relevant personal resources (Hobfoll, 2001). We posit that employees' adaptive humour (José et al., 2007) and proactivity (Jiang & Gu, 2015) may diminish the likelihood that (1) they develop unhappy feelings about their job situation in response to unfair organizational information provision and (2) these negative feelings escalate into work-related complacency, in the form of tarnished creativity. As prior research reveals, employees who can draw from their humour or initiative are better placed to cope with resource-draining work situations, such as perceived contract breaches (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2020) or role stress (Zhang et al., 2019), respectively. We add to this research stream by postulating similar moderating effects, in relation to the hardships they experience in the presence of unfair organizational information provision and subsequent job dissatisfaction, as well as the ultimate beneficial outcomes of this process for the development of new ideas for organizational improvement.

4.3 | Proposed conceptual model

Figure 1 depicts the proposed conceptual model. Anchored in COR theory, it indicates how unfair organizational information provision may spur unhappy feelings about a job situation, which then undermine creative behaviour. Adaptive humour and proactivity function as moderators of this process. That is, the escalation of unfair organizational information provision into diminished creativity, through job

dissatisfaction, is less probable when employees are equipped with high levels of these two personal resources.

4.4 | Mediating role of job dissatisfaction

We predict a positive relationship between employees' beliefs about the informational unfairness exhibited by organizational authorities and their job dissatisfaction. As mentioned in the Section 1, these beliefs reflect frustrations about pertinent information deficiencies, such as when communication by organizational leaders is incomplete or insufficiently tailored to employees' individual needs (Colquitt, 2001). In line with COR theory, the disappointments that employees experience when their organization holds back valuable information likely reduces the positive emotional resources they have available to function properly at work (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000; Taggar & Kuron, 2016). Convictions about the inadequacy of how organizational leaders communicate evoke energy-depleting effects, which cause employees to ruminate on and question the quality of their work functioning overall, such that excitement about their jobs diminishes (Aslam et al., 2018; De Clercq & Saridakis, 2015). According to prior research, employees tend to feel unhappy about their job situation when they are overburdened by negative energy, as might occur if organizational leaders deprive them of valuable information (Byrne et al., 2012; Shin, Seo, Shapiro, & Taylor, 2015). Similarly, their irritation about a lack of open, accessible communication may generate negative thoughts about the limited recognition that they receive from organizational authorities, such that they interpret this form of organizational unfairness as a sign of disrespect for their dedicated job efforts (Kim, 2009). These interpretations then may lead to tarnished enthusiasm about their jobs as a way to cope with their frustrations (Charoensap et al., 2019).

In turn, this depletion of positive emotional resources, in the form of limited job-related excitement, may leave employees worried about their work status (Jiang et al., 2009; Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

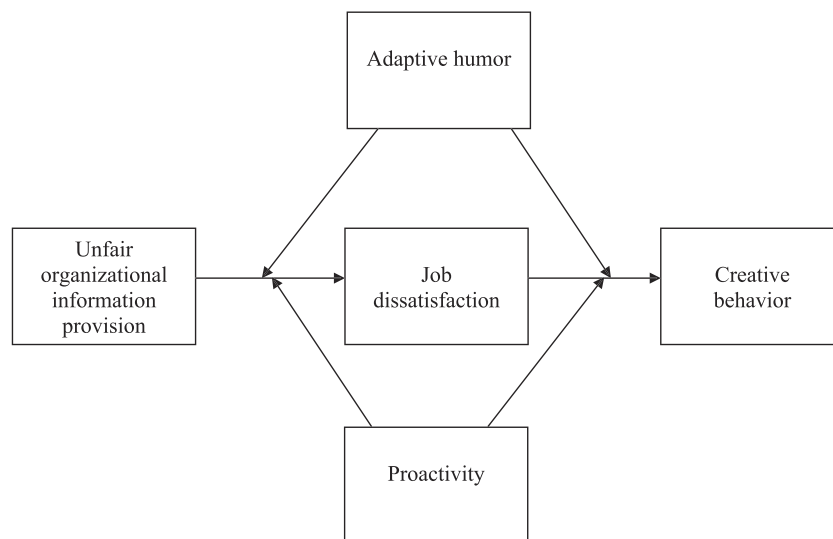


FIGURE 1 Conceptual model

According to COR theory, these worries likely diminish their creative activities, because they seek instead to avoid additional resource losses and keep their valuable energy for themselves, rather than allocating it to the employing organization (Hobfoll et al., 2018). The negative connection between job dissatisfaction and creative behaviour thus reflects the core COR argument that unhappy employees seek to conserve their personal time for themselves, instead of spending it on discretionary work behaviours that add to organizational effectiveness (De Clercq et al., 2019). As prior research indicates, the unhappiness they feel about their job situation may channel employees' energy toward negative activities, such as absenteeism (Frooman et al., 2012) or planning to quit (Jou et al., 2013), rather than positive activities, such as enhancing organizational effectiveness with their new idea generation (Spanjol et al., 2015). The energy-conserving propensity that arises with the experience of job dissatisfaction similarly may lead employees to feel indifferent about supporting their employer with constructive work behaviours that generate new ideas for organizational improvement (Quinn et al., 2012).

The combination of these arguments points to a critical mediating role of job dissatisfaction. If they are convinced that organizational authorities are not open or forthcoming in their communication, employees likely shy away from directing personal energy to the development of new ideas from which their organization could benefit, because they experience a lack of excitement about their jobs (Charoensap et al., 2019; De Clercq & Saridakis, 2015). With this reasoning, we argue that excitement about work represents an important mechanism that connects unfair organizational information provision with diminished creativity. This argument complements previous research that reveals how diminished job satisfaction informs the harmful effects of conflicting job roles or psychological contract breaches, for example (Jou et al., 2013; Rayton & Yalabik, 2014).

Hypothesis 1. Employees' job dissatisfaction mediates the relationship between their beliefs about unfair organizational information provision and their own creative behaviour.

4.5 | Moderating role of adaptive humour

The escalation of unfair organizational information provision into diminished creative behaviour, through job dissatisfaction, may be less likely among employees who can rely on their adaptive humour, which reflects their propensity to use humour to cope with adverse situations (José et al., 2007). According to COR theory, the resource-draining effect of adverse work conditions is mitigated to the extent that employees can draw on valuable personal resources that counter the resource losses (Hobfoll et al., 2018). A key aspect of humour is the notion of relativism (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006; Thorson & Powell, 1993); employees who possess adaptive humour likely are better positioned to cope with frustrations about their limited access to organizational information and associated feelings of job-related unhappiness, because they put the information gaps in perspective

(Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). For example, they may joke that there are worse things in life than not having access to detailed information about every aspect of the organization or not being perfectly satisfied with their job situation (Lehmann-Willenbrock & Allen, 2014; Smith & Khojasteh, 2014). Employees with a good sense of humour also tend to be more approachable, such that colleagues who suffer similar challenges may reach out to share their own experiences with respect to receiving incomplete information and feeling limited excitement about their jobs (Jalalkamali et al., 2018; Pouthier, 2017). The associated feelings of solidarity and being in the same boat could reduce employees' job dissatisfaction and subsequent reluctance to develop new ideas for organizational improvement in response to their perceptions of unfair organizational provision, because of their effective ability to laugh about the experienced hardships together (Wijewardena et al., 2016).

Formally, these arguments indicate a moderated mediation dynamic (Hayes & Rockwood, 2020). That is, employees' adaptive humour may serve as a personal boundary condition for the indirect relationship between their beliefs about unfair organizational information provision and their creative behaviour, through job dissatisfaction. When employees can use humour to cope with challenging work conditions (José et al., 2007), their job dissatisfaction becomes a less important mechanism for transforming organizational information deficiencies into a reluctance to perform devoted, creative work efforts. This personal resource diminishes the frustrations that arise from beliefs that organizational authorities withhold information, and it lessens the risk of diminished creativity in response to an unhappy job situation. Conversely, when employees cannot draw on their good sense of humour, the lack of excitement they feel about their jobs constitutes a potent explanation for how their sense that organizational information provision is inadequate makes them creative 'sluggards,' unwilling to go out of their way to offer creative ideas.

Hypothesis 2. The indirect relationship between employees' beliefs about unfair organizational information provision and their own creative behaviour, through job dissatisfaction, is moderated by their adaptive humour, such that this indirect relationship is weaker among employees who are more humorous.

4.6 | Moderating role of proactivity

We propose a similar moderating effect of employees' proactivity levels on the indirect relationship between their beliefs about unfair organizational informational provision and creative behaviour (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Reiterating COR theory, the resource-depleting effect of challenging work situations should be subdued to the extent that employees can compensate for resource losses with proactive approaches that undo or reverse these situations (Hobfoll et al., 2018). An inclination to take the initiative may stimulate employees to reach out to organizational leaders, whether to solicit more information or to find out why they might be withholding it

(Seibert et al., 2001; Wichmann et al., 2015). The resulting insights can constrain the development of negative feelings about their job situation (Kisamore et al., 2014; Parker & Sprigg, 1999), as well as keep employees more motivated to support their organization with devoted creative behaviours, even if some job dissatisfaction cannot be avoided (Jiang & Gu, 2015; Kim, 2019). Employees with an interest in initiative taking even may find it appealing to confront difficult work conditions, because their ability to thrive in these conditions gives them a sense of personal accomplishment (Chen et al., 2013; Fuller et al., 2006). Proactivity thus might increase not only their ability to protect themselves from the hardships of unfair organizational information provision and subsequent job dissatisfaction but also to generate a sense of personal fulfilment when they find pertinent solutions to dysfunctional situations (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Similar to the case of adaptive humour, the implied moderated mediation dynamic suggests that for proactive employees, job dissatisfaction is a weaker mechanism by which unfair organizational information provision escalates into diminished creativity. Their strong initiative (Parker & Sprigg, 1999) mitigates the probability of experiencing job-related unhappiness in response to frustrations about unfair organizational information provision, and it also lowers the chances that employees exhibit diminished creativity in response to this unhappiness (Spanjol et al., 2015). In contrast, the role of job dissatisfaction as an explanatory factor that leads to passivity in response to unfair information provision likely is more relevant among less proactive employees. For example, employees with a reactive (instead of proactive) attitude may consider their job dissatisfaction, sparked by resource-draining organizational information deficiencies, as a justification for their diminished creativity levels (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000).

Hypothesis 3. The indirect relationship between employees' beliefs about unfair organizational information provision and their own creative behaviour, through job dissatisfaction, is moderated by their proactivity, such that this indirect relationship is weaker among employees who are more proactive.

5 | RESEARCH METHOD

5.1 | Sample and data collection

To test the research hypotheses, we collected survey data from employees who work for a large organization in the oil and gas sector in Angola. Because pertinent organization-level factors, related to structure and culture, tend to exert strong influences on employees' creativity levels (Gaspary et al., 2020; Naranjo-Valencia et al., 2017), we focus on a *single* organization, in an effort to diminish the possible impact of unobserved differences. Although a single-firm focus can decrease external validity, it enhances internal validity, because the theorized links are not 'muddled' by alternative explanations for the salience of creative behaviours among employees (Hair et al., 2006).

Moreover, the oil and gas sector in Angola is marked by intensive competitive rivalry, among both local and foreign actors that seek to protect their market positions amidst a global crisis (Fernandes et al., 2019; Teka, 2012). The extent to which employees are creative and develop new ideas that enhance their employer's competitive standing therefore is important for organizations that operate in this sector, as well as in the country. The internal management of oil and gas companies also is complex, and their physical operations take place in various locations (Al-Qubaisi & Ajmal, 2018; Shuen et al., 2014), so it may not be easy or appropriate for organizational leaders to provide all employees with detailed information about developments within the company. The issues that we seek to study—that is, why and when employees might be more or less likely to undertake creative activities, in the presence of inadequate organizational information provision—accordingly are highly relevant in this study context.

A significant portion of the studied organization's employees work in remote areas and have limited Internet access, so we administered a paper-based survey to collect the study data. The survey questions were first prepared in English and then converted into Portuguese by a bilingual translator. To ensure the quality of the translation and diminish culture-related biases, as well as to identify any translation errors, the Portuguese version was back-translated into English by a second bilingual translator (Brislin et al., 1973). In addition, a pilot version was pretested among a group of five employees who did not participate in the main data collection. We used their feedback to enhance the readability of the surveys and the quality of the data collection. The final version of the survey was administered in Portuguese.

Several actions were undertaken to protect the rights of the research participants. In particular, they were told that they could count on complete confidentiality. We also noted that our research interest was in detecting aggregate data patterns, so any reports we generated would not include any individual-level responses. We requested that they respond to the questions as truthfully as possible, such that they did not need to worry about there being true or false answers or if different respondents provided varying answers. These specifications and explanations help reduce the risk of social desirability and acquiescence biases (Spector, 2006). The complete list of about 300 employees served as the sample frame and we then randomly selected 200 employees for possible participation, using a random digit generator. From the 200 administered surveys, we received 130 completed surveys, for a response rate of 65%. The final sample consisted of 80% men and 20% women; their average age was 34 years; they had worked for their organization for an average of 8 years; 17% had supervisory responsibilities, and 23% worked in administration and 77% in operations.

5.2 | Measures

To measure the study constructs, we used previously validated scales drawn from prior research. The Likert-type anchors included seven

TABLE 1 Constructs and measurement items

	Factor loading	t-value
Unfair organizational information provision ($\alpha = .79$; CR = .78; AVE = .43) (reverse-coded)		
Organizational authorities are candid/frank in their communications with me.	.821	1.546***
Organizational authorities tailor their communications to individuals' specific needs.	.478	5.852***
Organizational authorities communicate details in a timely manner.	.509	5.766***
Organizational authorities explain work procedures thoroughly.	.526	6.017***
Organizational authorities offer reasonable explanations regarding work procedures. ^a	.839	--
Job dissatisfaction ($\alpha = .93$; CR = .94; AVE = .75) (reverse coded)		
I feel satisfied with my present job.	.700	9.959***
I consider my job to be very pleasant. ^a	.875	--
Most days I am enthusiastic about my work.	.877	14.225***
I enjoy each day that I am at work.	.935	16.419***
I feel real enjoyment in my work.	.913	15.843***
Creative behaviour ($\alpha = .80$; CR = .82; AVE = .61)		
I often come up with original solutions to organizational problems.	.906	6.960***
I often create novel ideas for organizational improvement. ^a	.543	--
I often search out new working methods, techniques, or instruments.	.839	6.760***
Adaptive humour ($\alpha = .92$; CR = .92; AVE = .75)		
Uses of humour help me master difficult situations.	.928	13.639***
Coping by using humour is an elegant way of adapting for me.	.836	15.291***
Humour helps me cope. ^a	.828	--
Uses of humour help to put me at ease.	.874	1.913***
Proactivity ($\alpha = .72$; CR = .72; AVE = .43)		
I am always looking for better ways to do things.	.979	8.111***
I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition.	.345	3.424***
I excel at identifying opportunities.	.488	6.830***
If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen. ^a	.619	--

Note: $n = 130$; α = Cronbach's alpha; CR = construct reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

^aInitial loading was fixed to 1 to set the scale of the construct.

*** $p < .001$.

categories, ranging from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 7 ('strongly agree'). The measurement items are listed in Table 1.

5.2.1 | Unfair organizational information provision

We assessed employees' beliefs that organizational authorities are not forthcoming in their information provision with a reverse-coded, five-item scale of informational justice (Colquitt, 2001). For example, employees noted whether 'Organizational authorities are candid/frank in their communications with me' and 'Organizational authorities tailor their communications to individuals' specific needs' (Cronbach's alpha = .79).

5.2.2 | Job dissatisfaction

To measure the extent to which employees feel unhappy about their job situation, we applied a reverse-coded, five-item scale of job satisfaction (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2017). Respondents indicated, for example, whether 'I feel satisfied with my present job,' and 'I consider my job to be very pleasant' (Cronbach's alpha = .93).

5.2.3 | Creative behaviour

To assess the degree to which employees develop novel ideas for organizational enhancement, we relied on a three-item scale of creativity (Janssen, 2001). Two example items were 'I often come up with original solutions to organizational problems' and 'I often create novel ideas for organizational improvement' (Cronbach's alpha = .80). Gathering self-assessments of creativity is recommended by previous studies (e.g., Joo et al., 2014; Kühnel et al., 2020), because other assessors, such as colleagues or supervisors, might have restricted views of the specific creative activities that employees pursue (Ford, 1996; Zhou et al., 2008).

5.2.4 | Adaptive humour

To gauge the extent to which employees use humour to deal with adversity, we employed a four-item item scale of adaptive humour (José et al., 2007), which is part of the broader Multidimensional Sense of Humour Scale (Thorson & Powell, 1993). Respondents indicated, for example, whether 'Uses of humour help me master difficult situations' and 'Coping by using humour is an elegant way of adapting for me' (Cronbach's alpha = .92).

5.2.5 | Proactivity

The measure of employees' tendencies to take initiative relied on a four-item scale of proactivity (Parker & Sprigg, 1999). Two sample

items were as follows: 'I am always looking for better ways to do things' and 'I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition' (Cronbach's alpha = .72).

5.2.6 | Control variables

The statistical analyses accounted for the role of five individual characteristics: gender (1 = female), age (in years), organizational tenure (in years), job level (1 = line worker, reflecting no supervisory responsibilities, 2 = intermediate level, reflecting some supervisory responsibilities, 3 = senior management, reflecting significant supervisory responsibilities) and job function (0 = administration, 1 = operations). Female employees may have a greater tendency to contribute to organizational well-being with productive work behaviours (Baer & Kaufman, 2008), and older, more experienced, or higher ranked employees may perceive their own greater ability to develop novel ideas for organizational improvement (Gong et al., 2009). Detailed information about the specific nature of employees' jobs (and whether it required creativity) was not available, yet we accounted for the effect of job type to some extent by assessing whether the employees worked primarily in the office (administration) or in the field (operations).

5.3 | Construct validity

To assess the construct validity of the focal constructs, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis of a five-factor measurement model. The fit of this model was good: $\chi^2(156) = 345.38$, confirmatory fit index = .92, incremental fit index = .92 and standardized root mean square residual = .07. The presence of convergent validity was further confirmed in the strongly significant factor loadings of each measurement item on its respective construct ($p < .001$, Table 1). Moreover, the average variance extracted (AVE) values were greater than .50, except for unfair organizational information provision and proactivity, for which they equaled .43. Prior research indicates that AVE values lower than .50 but higher than .40 are acceptable in underresearched country settings (Hair et al., 2006; Kashif et al., 2017), including in Africa (De Clercq & Pereira, 2021). We also confirmed the presence of discriminant validity, because the AVE values exceeded the squared correlations between the associated construct pairs, and the fit of 10 models that included each of the possible unconstrained construct pairs (correlation between two constructs set free) was significantly better ($\Delta\chi^2_{(1)} > .3.84$) than the fit of their 10 constrained counterparts (correlation between constructs set to equal 1) (Hair et al., 2006).

5.4 | Common method bias

To check for the presence of common method bias, we applied the advanced marker technique, based on confirmatory factor analysis (Williams et al., 2010). We compared the fit of three models: (1) a

baseline model; (2) a Method-C model, in which the method factor loadings were constrained and forced to have the same values; and (3) a Method-U model, in which these method factor loadings were unconstrained and allowed to vary freely (De Clercq et al., 2013).¹ The conceptually unrelated marker variable referred to whether employees were early or late respondents, based on a median split of the point in time that they responded to the survey. The fit of the two method models was not significantly better than that of the baseline model, as indicated by the absence of significant fit differences in comparisons of the baseline model ($\chi^2(177) = 387.20$) with the Method-C model ($\chi^2(176) = 384.54$; $\Delta\chi^2_{(1)} = 2.66$, *ns*) or the Method-U model ($\chi^2(161) = 377.66$; $\Delta\chi^2_{(16)} = 9.54$, *ns*). In scenarios with both equal and unequal method effects, we thus find no evidence of common method bias. From a conceptual point of view, the probability of such bias also is significantly lower for theoretical frameworks that include multiple moderating effects, as in our study, because participants likely cannot identify the hypothesized relationships or adapt their answers accordingly (Simons & Peterson, 2000).

5.5 | Statistical technique

We tested the hypotheses with the Process macro (Hayes et al., 2017), which enables the estimation of mediation and moderated mediation effects in a comprehensive fashion. With its bootstrapping estimation technique, it can be applied to scenarios in which indirect and conditional indirect effects do not follow a normal distribution (MacKinnon et al., 2004). To check for the presence of mediation, we estimated the indirect relationship between unfair organizational information provision and creative behaviour, through job dissatisfaction, as well as the corresponding confidence interval (CI), based on the Process macro's Model 4. In this first stage, we also

assessed the signs and significance of the direct paths between unfair organizational information provision and job dissatisfaction and between job dissatisfaction and creative behaviour. To evaluate the presence of moderated mediation, we estimated the CIs for the conditional indirect effects of unfair organizational information provision at different values of adaptive humour or proactivity. As specified in the Process macro, these CIs capture effects at three levels of the moderators: one standard deviation (SD) below the mean, at their mean, and one SD above the mean. Consistent with the proposed conceptual framework, the estimated models included the moderating effects of adaptive humour and proactivity on the relationships between unfair organizational information provision and job dissatisfaction, as well as between job dissatisfaction and creative behaviour (i.e., Model 58 in the Process macro).

6 | RESULTS

Table 2 shows the correlation coefficients and descriptive statistics, and Table 3 reports the mediation results, as generated from the Process macro. Unfair organizational information provision enhanced job dissatisfaction ($\beta = .558$, $p < .001$), which in turn diminished creative behaviour ($\beta = -.236$, $p < .001$). The mediation test revealed an effect size of $-.132$ for the indirect relationship between unfair organizational information provision and creative behaviour through job dissatisfaction; its CI did not include 0 $[-.249, -.046]$. We thus have evidence of the presence of mediation (Hypothesis 1).

Table 4 shows the results for the moderating role of adaptive humour. We found a negative effect of the unfair organizational information provision \times adaptive humour interaction term ($\beta = -.179$, $p < .001$) in predicting job dissatisfaction, as well as a positive effect of the job dissatisfaction \times adaptive humour interaction term

TABLE 2 Correlation table and descriptive statistics

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Unfair organizational information provision										
2. Job dissatisfaction	.601**									
3. Creative behaviour	-.576**	-.604**								
4. Adaptive humour	-.569**	-.427**	.469**							
5. Proactivity	-.629**	-.538**	.568**	.643**						
6. Gender (1 = female)	.044	.103	.060	.010	.086					
7. Age	-.087	.180*	-.075	-.195*	-.007	-.028				
8. Organizational tenure	-.013	.052	.090	-.264**	.034	.097	.638**			
9. Job level	.023	.069	.029	-.159	-.062	-.041	.364**	.383**		
10. Job function (1 = operations)	.084	-.012	-.105	-.011	-.009	-.274**	-.056	-.101	-.318**	
Mean	3.732	3.231	4.526	4.725	4.300	.200	33.708	8.446	1.238	.769
Standard deviation	1.127	1.313	.969	1.285	.996	.402	5.770	4.279	.568	.423

Note: $n = 130$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

TABLE 3 Mediation results (process macro)

	Job dissatisfaction	Creative behaviour		
Gender (1 = female)	.390 ⁺	.126		
Age	.074 ^{***}	-.027 ⁺		
Organizational tenure	-.041	.047 ⁺		
Job level	-.049	.094		
Job function (1 = operations)	-.074	-.102		
Unfair organizational information provision	.558 ^{***}	-.183 ⁺		
Adaptive humour	.042	.103		
Proactivity	-.354 ^{**}	.160 ⁺		
Job dissatisfaction		-.236 ^{***}		
R ²	.477	.514		
	Effect size	Bootstrap SE	LLCI	ULCI
Indirect effect	-.132	.052	-.249	-.046

Abbreviations: SE = standard error; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval.

Note: $n = 130$.

⁺ $p < .10$.

^{*} $p < .05$.

^{**} $p < .01$.

^{***} $p < .001$.

($\beta = .100$, $p < .001$) in predicting creative behaviour. The signs of these interaction terms confirmed the presence of mitigating effects of adaptive humour on both relationships. Specifically, the positive relationship between unfair organizational information provision and job dissatisfaction grew weaker at higher levels of adaptive humour (.746 at one SD below, .475 at the mean, .296 at one SD above), as did the negative relationship between job dissatisfaction and creative behaviour (-.358 at one SD below, -.206 at the mean, -.106 at one SD above). The formal test for the presence of moderated mediation also revealed weaker effect sizes at higher levels of adaptive humour: from -.267 at one SD below the mean, to -.098 at the mean, to -.031 at one SD above the mean. The CIs did not include 0 at the two lower levels of adaptive humour ([-.449; -.136] and [-.194; -.030], respectively) but the CI included 0 when it was high ([-.101; .006]). In other words, adaptive humour weakened the positive indirect relationship between unfair organizational information provision and creative behaviour through job dissatisfaction, in support of Hypothesis 2.

The moderating results for proactivity in Table 5 mirror those for adaptive humour, revealing a negative effect of the unfair organizational information provision \times proactivity interaction term ($\beta = -.151$, $p < .05$) for the prediction of job dissatisfaction and a positive effect of the job dissatisfaction \times proactivity interaction term ($\beta = .164$, $p < .001$) for the prediction of creative behaviour. The positive relationship between unfair organizational information provision and job dissatisfaction became weaker at increasing levels of proactivity (.685 at one SD below, .534 at the mean, .383 at one SD above), and the negative relationship between job dissatisfaction and creative behaviour also was less pronounced at higher levels of proactivity (-.388 at one SD below, -.224 at the mean, -.060 at one SD above).

Further, we found diminishing effect sizes for the indirect effect: -.266 at one SD below the mean, -.120 at the mean and -.023 at one SD above the mean. The CIs did not include 0 at the two lower levels of proactivity ([-.448; -.135] and [-.224; -.042], respectively) but included 0 when this personal resource was high ([-.092; .028]), consistent with Hypothesis 3.

7 | DISCUSSION

7.1 | Contributions to theory

This study provides novel insights by detailing how beliefs about unfair organizational information provision can escalate into tarnished creative behaviour, with particular attention to unexplored factors that explain or impact this escalation. Adverse organizational treatments—in the form of workplace ostracism or bullying, for example (Jiang et al., 2019; Kwan et al., 2018)—can steer employees away from creative behaviours that otherwise could enhance their organization's competitive positioning. But why or how do deficiencies, in terms of how organizational leaders provide work-related information, compromise employees' willingness to develop new ideas for organizational improvement? And what personal boundary conditions might make this detrimental process more or less probable? To address these pertinent questions, we have drawn from COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018) to postulate that (1) employees halt creative work behaviours when they consider organizational leaders insufficiently forthcoming in their communication, because they become unhappy about their job situation, but (2) their adaptive humour and proactivity subdue this process. The empirical findings corroborate these theoretical predictions.

TABLE 4 Moderated mediation results for adaptive humour (process macro)

	Job dissatisfaction	Creative behaviour		
Gender (1 = female)	.326	.121		
Age	.077***	-.034*		
Organizational tenure	-.050 ⁺	.053**		
Job level	.004	.065		
Job function (1 = operations)	-.102	-.074		
Unfair organizational information provision	.418***	-.127		
Adaptive humour	.147	.042		
Proactivity	-.348**	.165 ⁺		
Unfair organizational information provision × adaptive humour	-.179***			
Job dissatisfaction		-.174**		
Job dissatisfaction × adaptive humour		.100***		
R ²	.535	.557		
Conditional direct effect of unfair organizational information provision on job dissatisfaction				
	Effect size	Bootstrap SE	LLCI	ULCI
-1 SD	.746	.112	.524	.967
Mean	.475	.103	.271	.679
+1SD	.296	.121	.056	.536
Conditional direct effect of job dissatisfaction on creative behaviour				
	Effect size	Bootstrap SE	LLCI	ULCI
-1 SD	-.358	.072	-.499	-.216
Mean	-.206	.063	-.331	-.082
+1SD	-.106	.073	-.250	.038
Conditional indirect effect of unfair organizational information provision on creative behaviour				
	Effect size	Bootstrap SE	LLCI	ULCI
-1 SD	-.267	.080	-.449	-.136
Mean	-.098	.042	-.194	-.030
+1SD	-.031	.028	-.101	.006

Note: $n = 130$.

Abbreviations: LLCI, lower limit confidence interval; SD, standard deviation; SE, standard error; UCLI, upper limit confidence interval.

⁺ $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Accordingly, a first theoretical contribution of this study is that we pinpoint a critical mechanism by which unfair organizational information provision, a notable resource-draining work situation (Ng & Feldman, 2012), undermines creativity in the workplace: It occurs because employees lack enthusiasm about their jobs (De Clercq et al., 2019). The connection between beliefs about information deficiencies, which capture employee cognitions, and diminished

TABLE 5 Moderated mediation results for proactivity (process macro)

	Job dissatisfaction	Creative behaviour		
Gender (1 = female)	.390 ⁺	.113		
Age	.069***	-.030*		
Organizational tenure	-.041	.048*		
Job level	.012	.045		
Job function (1 = operations)	-.062	-.046		
Unfair organizational information provision	.454***	-.139 ⁺		
Adaptive humour	.056	.077		
Proactivity	-.296*	.097		
Unfair organizational information provision × proactivity	-.151*			
Job dissatisfaction		-.137*		
Job dissatisfaction × proactivity		.164***		
R ²	.504	.591		
Conditional direct effect of unfair organizational information provision on job dissatisfaction				
	Effect size	Bootstrap SE	LLCI	ULCI
-1 SD	.685	.115	.457	.914
Mean	.534	.105	.327	.741
*1SD	.383	.125	.136	.629
Conditional direct effect of job dissatisfaction on creative behaviour				
	Effect size	Bootstrap SE	LLCI	ULCI
-1 SD	-.388	.068	-.523	-.254
Mean	-.224	.060	-.343	-.106
+1SD	-.060	.070	-.199	.079
Conditional indirect effect of unfair organizational information provision on creative behaviour				
	Effect size	Bootstrap SE	LLCI	ULCI
-1 SD	-.266	.080	-.448	-.135
Mean	-.120	.047	-.224	-.042
+1SD	-.023	.030	-.092	.028

Note: $n = 130$.

Abbreviations: LLCI, lower limit confidence interval; SD, standard deviation; SE, standard error; UCLI, upper limit confidence interval.

⁺ $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

creativity thus can be explained by negative *emotional* responses to these beliefs (Fisher, 2000). This intermediate role of depleted emotional resources is particularly insightful, in light of the potential for creative work behaviours to help reveal novel solutions to the challenge of unfair information provision. Our research provides the valuable insight that the frustrating organizational condition actually *contests* employees' willingness to allocate personal energy to the generation of novel ideas, because they feel unexcited about how they could add to organizational effectiveness (Turnley &

Feldman, 2000). In line with the logic of COR theory, employees react to resource-depleting informational unfairness with negative feelings and behavioural complacency (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000).

This result is also theoretically interesting because it points to the possibility of a worrisome, negative *loop*. Negative responses may appear justified to employees, as a way to avoid self-damaging ruminations about the diminished quality of their professional functioning caused by inadequate communication by organizational leaders (Judge & Colquitt, 2004). But the unfavourable organizational treatment also may translate *inadvertently* into other unfavourable situations. First, job-related unhappiness and subsequent complacent reactions (i.e., reduced creative efforts) may prevent the employees, as well as their employer, from finding effective ways to address and overcome issues around unfair information provision. Second, employees' work-related complacency might put them in a negative light for organizational authorities, such that the decision makers become convinced that the employees do not deserve further information access (Gong et al., 2009). Continued studies could formally assess the salience of this counterproductive dynamic: To the extent that 'lazy' behavioural responses are poorly received by organizational leaders, employees may exacerbate their negative situation, by becoming even further excluded from valuable information access.

Furthermore, providing another theoretical insight, this study reveals a way out of the negative spiral, if employees can rely on valuable personal resources. As we postulated, employees' job dissatisfaction becomes a less powerful conduit through which unfair organizational information provision escalates into a reluctance to undertake creative behaviours when they can (1) turn to their own propensity to react to resource-draining work conditions with relativism and jokes (De Clercq et al., 2020) or (2) search actively for solutions, according to their own initiative (Kisamore et al., 2014). The mitigating roles of these personal resources are somewhat counterintuitive, and therefore interesting. A tendency to make jokes about negative situations, or else to take the initiative instead of remaining indifferent, may leave these employees more aware of and upset by unfair organizational information provision, such that they would vigorously respond with negative feelings and behaviours. But our findings instead reveal that these self-protective responses are *less* likely among humorous, proactive employees (Hobfoll et al., 2018). The probability that employees, deprived of complete organizational information, become dissatisfied with their jobs and hesitate to undertake creative work behaviours thus is lower when they have a good sense of humour or exhibit proactive tendencies.

The affirmation of these beneficial roles in turn offers an additional theoretical contribution to extant research. Consistent with COR theory, the depleting effect of inadequate information sharing can be subdued if employees possess valuable personal resources that help them deal with the associated frustration (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000). Importantly, this study reveals how the two personal resources have *dual* beneficial roles, because they protect employees against both the hardships of unfair information provision *and* their resulting lack of job-related excitement. Moreover, these findings extend prior investigations of the *direct* beneficial role of employees'

sense of humour in spurring individual (Jalalkamali et al., 2018) and team (Lehmann-Willenbrock & Allen, 2014) performance, as well as their proactive tendencies for enhancing creativity levels (Jiang & Gu, 2015) and career success (Seibert et al., 2001). Together, they offer the novel insight that for humorous, proactive employees, limited excitement about their jobs is a less important determinant of the risk that one adverse condition (information deficiencies) will trigger another (complacency in new idea development). Future research could leverage this insight by explicitly testing how pertinent personal boundary conditions might *diminish* the risk of the aforementioned downward loop, through which tarnished creativity compromises employees' organizational standing and deprives them of further information access (Gong et al., 2009).

7.2 | Contributions to practice

This research offers valuable advice for managerial practice. When organizational authorities hold back important information, it can frustrate employees and lead them to avoid productive, creative behaviours. Organizational decision makers accordingly must do all they can to avoid evoking such perceptions and be frank and transparent in their communications. Yet in many cases, complete transparency is impossible, such as in hypercompetitive settings in which companies are compelled to protect against information leakage (Akhter, 2003). If they have to impose information gaps, organizations should encourage their workforce to rely on their adaptive humour or proactive mindsets, which can prevent beliefs about incomplete information from escalating into diminished creative work outcomes. Recruitment, retention and reward policies could be tailored toward these specific personal features, particularly if the organization's strategy requires it to encourage creativity without necessarily allowing expansive information sharing.

Still, employees' sense of humour and proactive tendencies tend to be stable characteristics that are difficult to change (José et al., 2007; Parker & Sprigg, 1999). Therefore, to keep employees motivated, organizational leaders might showcase best practices of how other employees have been able to *leverage* their wit or initiative to overcome information-related frustrations. Such efforts should encompass the entire organization, because it may be difficult to identify which employees are most frustrated with the lack of communication. Many employees may be reluctant to complain about limited access to organization-level information too, whether because they do not want to be seen as incapable of collecting adequate information on their own, worry that they lack the status to 'qualify' to receive the information, or want to avoid negative organizational responses to their complaints (Judge & Colquitt, 2004; Viotti, 2016). Therefore, the overall organizational climate needs to make employees comfortable with expressing their concerns about information deficiencies, venting their frustrations and developing positive feelings toward their jobs and employer. Such a climate can be created by establishing various communication channels, both from leaders to employees to provide information about what is going in

the company (e.g., organization-wide events, email, intranet, online discussion forums) (Wang & Noe, 2010) and from employees to supervisors, to express their needs for information freely and appropriately. The initiatives might keep employees motivated to contribute to the organizational collective with their dedicated creative efforts, not just *despite* the frustrations they feel about how organizational authorities communicate but also due to their desire to identify solutions to *resolve* the source of their frustrations.

7.3 | Limitations and future research

As with any research, this study has some shortcomings that indicate areas for continued investigation. First, we cannot rule out the possibility of reverse causality. The positive energy that employees experience when they are successful in their creative endeavours might diminish any unhappy feelings they have about their jobs, which might put a 'rosy glow' on their views of how organizational leaders communicate with them. Our theoretical arguments are grounded in the robust COR framework—in which resource-draining informational unfairness escalates into lower creative behaviours, through job dissatisfaction, due to employees' desire to conserve their individual energy resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018)—but future studies could apply longitudinal designs to assess the study constructs at different times and formally test for causality. Such studies also could include sequential mediation models, such as one designed explicitly to measure employees' motivation to preserve their valuable time and energy when they feel unhappy about their job situation, due to insufficient information provision. Yet another related extension might investigate how diminished creativity that stems from inadequate communication by organizational authorities may translate in lower chances that novel ideas are championed and implemented in the organization (Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017) as well as detail the moderating roles that employees' personal resources can play in this translation.

Second, our focus on adaptive humour and proactivity as potential moderators was guided by their pertinence and complementarity (i.e., reactive and proactive), as means to protect employees from the experience of work-related hardships. It may be useful to consider other personal moderators too, such as employees' creative self-efficacy (Shin et al., 2012), tenacity (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2017) or political skill (Banister & Meriac, 2015). Moreover, we anticipate that contextual resources may have beneficial mitigating roles, in the form of person–organization fit (Ruiz-Palomino & Martínez-Cañas, 2014), trust in top management (Jiang & Probst, 2019) or an organizational climate that supports innovation (Liang et al., 2012). Continued studies could examine the relative power of each of these factors as protective shields against the energy drainage that comes with inadequate organizational communication; comparative evaluations in this respect might be particularly insightful.

Third, we examined a single organization that operates in a specific industry (oil and gas). As explained in Section 5.1, this design may generate some generalizability concerns, but it also significantly

enhances internal validity by reducing the risk of noise due to unobserved, organization-level drivers of job dissatisfaction and creative behaviour, as arises in multi-organization studies (Amabile, 1996; Hair et al., 2006). In addition, the theoretical arguments that underpinned the research hypotheses are industry-neutral, so the nature of the tested links is unlikely to vary, even if we considered firms in other industries, though their *strength* might. In this sense, multi-industry research designs might help explicate the possible role of relevant industry features, such as the extent to which the organization faces turbulence in its competitive markets (Sung & Choi, 2021). In unpredictable markets, employees might be more understanding of why their organization is unable to provide complete information at all times, such that they might react less strongly to unfair organizational information provision with a reluctance to engage in creative work activities. The value of such activities also may seem higher in such adverse conditions (Baron & Tang, 2011). Research that includes multiple firms similarly could explicitly consider the role of organization-level factors—such as the extent to which the organizational climate encourages or discourages out-of-the-box thinking (Sarros et al., 2011)—and examine whether the hypothesized relationships that we test persist, even beyond the influence of these alternative factors.

Fourth, the empirical setting of this research was Angola. Similar to the case for using a single industry, the arguments for the theorized relationships are not country-specific, so we anticipate that the signs of the tested relationships would not change across countries. However, their strength might, as informed by certain cultural factors. In this respect, two specific factors might exert *opposing* influences on the tested conceptual framework. On the one hand, a high level of uncertainty avoidance marks Angolan culture. Information deficiencies raise the level of uncertainty though, so employees might find the situation especially difficult and respond more vigorously with diminished productive work behaviours (Hofstede et al., 2010). On the other hand, Angola scores high on power distance, so employees may find it normative for organizational leaders to be selective in choosing what information they will share with subordinates, which could subdue their negative behavioural responses (Hofstede et al., 2010). Cross-country studies might tease out the roles of these and other cultural characteristics. Moreover, it would be interesting to consider the roles of corresponding *individual* characteristics, such as employees' own risk orientation or power distance orientation (Loi & Ngo, 2010; Yang, 2019).

8 | CONCLUDING NOTE

Despite its limitations, this study adds to creativity research by explicating the relationship between employees' disappointments about unfair organizational information provision and their creative behaviour, including the roles that their job dissatisfaction and two pertinent personal resources (adaptive humour and proactivity) play in this process. The experience of unhappy feelings offers a notable explanation for why perceptions of informational unfairness prompt employees to

halt their creative work activities. The potency of this harmful mechanism can be mitigated, however, by employees' ability to adapt effectively to the negative situation (by leveraging their humour) or else confront it head on through their personal initiative (by leveraging their proactivity). We hope that these insights serve as catalysts for continued investigations of how to avert the risk that employees refuse to come up with new ideas for organizational enhancement, even if they suffer from information shortages that make them feel less excited about their jobs.

ENDNOTE

¹ The specifications of these three models are explained in more detail by Williams et al. (2010).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

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

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