The Moderating Effect of Self-efficacy on the Relationship Between Destructive Leadership and Employee Performance

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Abstract

This study investigates the moderating role of self-efficacy on the relationship between destructive leadership and employee performance. Leveraging Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory of Self-efficacy (1986) and literature on leader-employee dynamics, we hypothesize that when self-efficacy is high, the negative effects of destructive leadership on employee performance will be reduced. Data was generated from 89 leader-employee dyads in various Dutch-speaking work environments. Participants were asked to complete questionnaires that measured the variables of destructive leadership (IV), self-efficacy (M), and employee performance (DV). Statistical regression analyses were conducted to test for a moderation effect. The results were indicative of a non-significant interaction between destructive leadership and self-efficacy on employee performance ($\beta = -0.042$, $p = 0.293$), failing to identify the moderating role of self-efficacy. These findings, although insignificant, provide insight into the nuances of leader-employee dynamics in an organizational context. Future research prospects are essential to elucidate the deficiency of the current study and further investigate the potential adverse effects of destructive leadership on employee performance.

Keywords: *Destructive Leadership, Self-efficacy, Employee Performance, Dyadic Relationship, Moderation*

The Moderating Effect of Self-efficacy on the Relationship Between Destructive Leadership and Employee Performance

Leadership is characterized by the authoritative capability to guide individuals toward specific objectives aligned with predetermined goals within a work environment (Aydinay et al., 2021). According to Stringer (2002), leadership styles directly affect an organization's climate. As a result, analyzing the impacts of both positive and negative leadership behaviors in the workplace is fundamental to the development of organizational success (Price-Dowd, 2020) Baumeister et al. (2001) posit that the negative events in interpersonal interactions and social network patterns, possess more influential 'power', as a result of the stronger emotional response evoked from negative events than positive ones. In this way, destructive leadership styles generate unfavorable employee organizational behaviors, potentially leading to detrimental impacts on a corporation and its counterparts. Destructive leadership is a conceptual framework that encompasses several adverse leader behaviors concerning their role as a superior within an organization (Einarsen et al., 2017). Adverse leadership behaviors have negative effects on employees, notably on 'individual-follower related concepts' such as affectivity, stress, well-being, and notable employee performance (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Accordingly, insight and prevention of destructive leadership patterns and behaviors could be imperative to the minimizing of counterproductive behaviors in the workplace.

Conclusive research has been conducted on leadership styles and more specifically constructive and positive leadership behaviors (Kelloway, 2006). However, there is currently limited research conducted on the specific effects of destructive leadership on employees within an organizational environment (Tepper, 2000). In addition, the 'dark side' of leadership has become a topic of heightened focus over the past few years (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). This is

the result of increased reports on the prevalence of destructive leadership in the workplace, as reported by Hubert & van Veldhoven (2001) detecting a prevalence rate of around 11% in the Netherlands, with a further 13.6% and 30% in the US and Norway, respectively (Tepper, 2007; Asland et al., 2010). Altogether with the findings indicating the harmful impact of destructive leadership on employees (Duffy et al., 2002), there is an ongoing push for further investigation into adverse leadership styles. Moreover, preceding studies that investigate the relationship between destructive leadership and employee performance often explore potential mediators but do not study potential moderating effects on the main negative relationship (Wu, et al., 2018).

Sheaffer (2018) proposes that there is an individual trait that attenuates the negative impact of destructive leadership on employee performance, known as self-efficacy. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1977) highlights the influence of subjective perception of an individual's capabilities as a crucial determinant of behavioral outcomes. Interestingly, there is a close association between self-efficacy and psychological job stress (Berneth, 2004), implying that the rate at which an employee perceives themselves as efficacious, evokes physical and emotional responses that may facilitate overall employee capabilities. When self-efficacy is low, it has the potential to negatively impact employee health and performance, consequently affecting the overall conduct of the company (Bharti et al., 2022). Furthermore, destructive leadership behaviors such as unappreciativeness, inflated self-esteem, and self-seeking towards employees (Bakkal et al., 2019) have a negative influence on concepts such as self-image and self-efficacy, leading to counterproductive behaviors such as poor engagement, and declining job performance (Li et al., 2021). In this way, investigating the role of self-efficacy adds to previous research by contributing to the exploration of the underlying, nuanced effect of destructive leadership on employee performance. Furthermore, the exploration of self-efficacy as a moderating variable

may help in the development of future organizational interventions to promote and optimize workplace climates.

Due to the finite information on how self-efficacy influences the negative impact of destructive leadership on employee performance, the present study aims to bridge this gap and build upon the findings of prior research. For this reason, this study will make use of a moderation hypothesis to investigate the impact that the moderator (M), self-efficacy, has on the relationship between the independent variable (IV), destructive leadership, and the dependent variable (DV), employee performance.

Theory Development and Hypotheses

Destructive Leadership and Employee Performance

Recent research suggests that leadership styles play a fundamental role in employee performance (Priyashantha, 2016), in that negative leadership styles such as destructive leadership may negatively affect employee performance. Destructive leadership is an umbrella term encompassing various similar concepts about damaging leadership behavior within an organization (Aydinay et al., 2021). A few concepts emphasize the “abusive” traits exhibited by leaders (Hornstein, 1996) often leading to the deteriorating “psychological health” (Kile, 1990) of the employee, whereas others expand on leaders' violation of the “legitimate interests of the organization” (Einarsen, 2010). Destructive leaders possess traits such as intimidating, threatening, and shouting (Armitage, 2015), and are often characterized as “toxic” (Hadadian Z, 2016) by their subordinates, which often creates an unhealthy work environment (Wolor, 2022). In any of its forms, destructive leadership is characterized by behaviour from a leader that is harmful to an organization and its employees (Krasikova et al., 2013). This is grounded in the belief that leaders who “sabotage and undermine the achievements of subordinates and/or

organizations by focusing purely on the leader's self-interest" (Webster & Brough, 2022) also encourage employees to pursue counter-productive goals and behaviors, that are not in line with the interests of the organization (Krasikova et al., 2013).

Employee performance pertains to the collective outcome derived from the skills, efforts, and abilities of all individuals within a workplace, ultimately driving the achievement of organizational goals (Dahkoul, 2018). The conceptual relationship between destructive leadership and employee performance can be further materialized using George Homans' (1958) Social Exchange Theory (SET). SET suggests that social interactions operate on the principle of reciprocity, in that individuals aim to optimize rewards while minimizing costs in their day-to-day interactions (Homans, 1958). SET posits that if an individual perceives that the benefit gained from a behavior outweighs the costs of performing it, they are likely to engage in said behavior. By contrast, if the individual anticipates that costs will surpass the benefits, they are unlikely to engage in the behavior (Jonason & Middleton, 2015). In this way, SET stands as a foundation for understanding behaviors within the workplace (Cropanzano & Rupp, 2008).

Furthermore, within a professional setting, workers and leaders participate in a social exchange, contributing their efforts, time, and skills in hopes of obtaining favorable outcomes. As explained by the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, developed by Graen et. al, (1975), the dyadic relationship between leader and follower explains performance, in that high-quality LMX indicates high levels of trust, support, and perceived rewards (Bauer & Green, 1996) directly affecting employee motivation and performativity (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). Therefore, in an environment dictated by a destructive leadership style, wherein a leader negatively impacts the organization as a whole, along with the rights, interests, and motivations of the personnel (Aydinay et al., 2021), employees are more likely to place little value on

maintaining a leader-member relationship. This fosters distrust in the leader's ability to fulfill promised rewards, increasing the likelihood of employees expecting lower value in social exchange (Jonason & Middleton, 2015), in turn diminishing their levels of performance.

The Social Exchange Theory and Leader-Member Exchange (Graen et. al, 1975), guide the investigation into how leaders demonstrating destructive leadership behaviors contribute to decreased employee performance. In this way, the following hypothesis can be generated for this study:

H_1: *Destructive Leadership is negatively related to employee performance.*

Self-efficacy and Employee Performance

Self-efficacy is said to have a powerful impact on employee performance in the workplace (Hadi, 2023). According to Bandura (1995), self-efficacy is defined as an individual's assessment of their abilities to plan and carry out actions necessary to achieve specific types of performances. The human performance framework within the 'Social Cognitive Theory' (Bandura, 1986) suggests that self-efficacy has an influential theoretical contribution to inherent behavior and motivation (Hadad, 2015). This is supported by Graham & Weiner (1996), who assert that self-efficacy is a reliable measure for predicting behavioral outcomes such as performance, implying that higher levels of self-efficacy may have a positive influence on employee performance.

Bandura (1986) also believed that merely possessing the necessary knowledge and skills for a task is insufficient; individuals must also hold the belief that they can effectively execute the required behavior in challenging or stress-inducing situations, which we can extend to the work environment. This infers that to successfully carry out a task, employees are required to

have a strong sense of self-efficacy specific to the task, alongside resilience, to overcome inevitable obstacles.

As a result, the tasks that people choose to complete are often dictated by whether or not they believe they will succeed, highlighting the influence self-efficacy has on performance (Lunenburg, 2011). Thus, those who exhibit high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to participate, complete, and succeed in a task, as they invest greater effort and demonstrate sustained persistence in the presence of challenges (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Consequently, people low in self-efficacy are seen to demonstrate unsatisfactory performance, as a result of their tendency to indulge in self-limiting processes such as task avoidance due to the uncertainty in their capabilities (Bandura et al., 1999). In this way, research (Judge et al., 2007; Miraglia et al., 2015) suggests that an increase in employee performance is associated with strong perseverance linked to self-efficacy (Cherian & Jacob, 2013).

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory perpetuates a deeper investigation of the influence of self-efficacy beliefs on employee performance within the organizational context. Therefore we can hypothesize the following:

H_2**:** Self-efficacy is positively related to employee performance.

The Moderating Role of Self-efficacy

In environments where employees feel like their self-respect and efficacy have been compromised, their confidence as well as performance is negatively impacted (Kusy & Holloway, 2009). In the realm of destructive leadership styles, self-efficacy emerges as a promising adaptive approach that can assist employees in overcoming significant adverse effects to achieve enhanced performance levels.

High levels of self-efficacy, endorse high personal goal-setting and persistence in the face of challenges (Lunenburg, 2011), in turn heightening the tendency for employees within an environment governed by a destructive leadership style, to suppress counterproductive goals and behaviors, thus reducing the negative effect of destructive leadership on employee performance. One principle of Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1982) contends that self-efficacy influences the determination with which individuals tackle unfamiliar and challenging tasks and obstacles (Cervone & Peake, 1986). Employees exhibiting high levels of self-efficacy are assured in their abilities to learn and perform tasks, making them prone to persist in their pursuit of goals, even when confronted with challenges stemming from destructive leadership styles. Their strong sense of self-confidence allows them to "expend more effort and persist longer in the face of difficulties than those who are unsure of their capabilities" (Bandura, 1977). Another principle of Bandura's theory proposes that self-efficacy impacts the goals that employees set for themselves. Individuals possessing highly efficacious attitudes in the workplace tend to set high personal goals. Studies suggest that people perform at levels consistent with their self-efficacy beliefs (Lunenburg, 2011), hence it can be deduced that highly efficacious employees may nevertheless set, commit to, and accomplish ambitious performance goals (Bandura, 1989; Bouffard-Bouchard, 1991; Locke & Latham, 1990) regardless of unfavorable work environments. Consequently, it can be anticipated that self-efficacy alleviates the negative relationship between destructive leadership and employee performance by buffering the potential adverse outcomes of negative leadership styles.

Conversely, for employees exhibiting low levels of self-efficacy, it can be expected that the negative relationship between destructive leadership and employee performance will be magnified. According to the Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964), individuals are motivated to

perform tasks based on their beliefs about the potential success of achieving certain outcomes. Employees who doubt their professional abilities and do not believe their efforts will lead to success are characterized by low self-efficacy and low expectancy. Destructive leadership behaviors are indicated by tyranny, incompetence, and carelessness (Shaw et al., 2011), all of which may undermine an employee's confidence in their ability to perform. As a result, these individuals are prone to being demotivated more quickly, in turn increasing the likelihood of leaving tasks incomplete (Bandura, 1998). Furthermore, avoidance behaviors are often adopted by those with low levels of self-efficacy (Lee & Mao, 2016). Avoidance behaviors, including procrastination and absenteeism (Cucchiellaa et al., 2014), not only undermine productivity and performance (Gupta et al., 2012) but are often characterized as a "form of emotion-focused coping in response to incivility" (Hershcovis, 2018). In an organizational context, the aforementioned behavior is especially prominent when threatening situations are detected by an individual (Bandura, 1977). This suggests that employees with low self-efficacy may engage in avoidance behaviors as a way to handle the negative effects of 'incivility' or destructive leadership behaviors in a workplace environment. In this way, this achievement-diminishing characteristic can be expected to decline within an already damaging environment regulated by destructive leadership styles, in turn, hindering optimal employee performance.

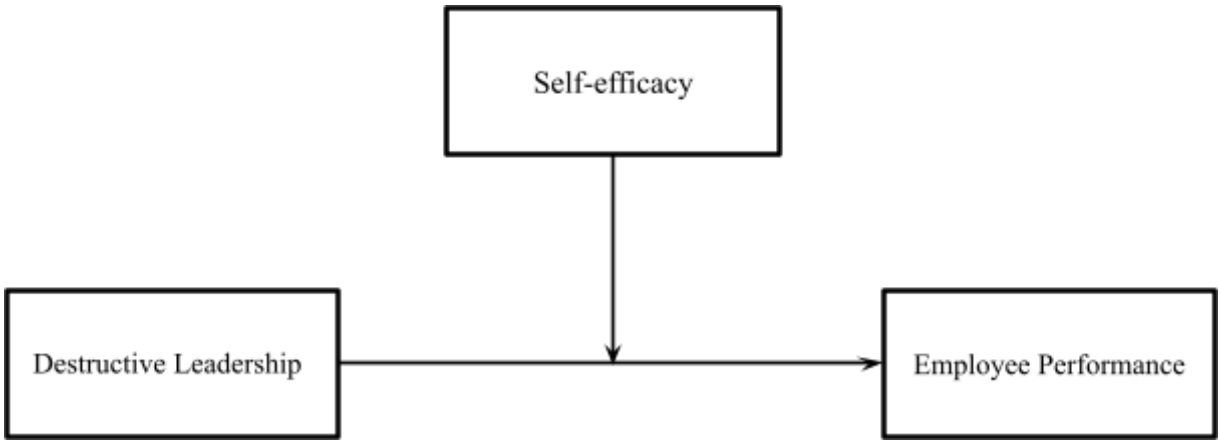
This conceptual framework provides a structured approach to understanding the intricacies between destructive leadership, self-efficacy, and employee performance. It guides the investigation into how self-efficacy may act as a moderator, influencing the strength and direction of the relationship between destructive leadership and employee performance. In this way, we can hypothesize that the negative relationship between destructive leadership and

employee performance is moderated by self-efficacy such that the impact is weaker for employees with higher levels of self-efficacy.

H_3**:** Self-efficacy moderates the effect of destructive leadership on employee performance. The negative effect of destructive leadership on employee performance will be weaker/less negative with higher levels of employee self-efficacy. However, when self-efficacy is low the negative effect of destructive leadership on employee performance will be stronger/ more negative.

Figure 1

Research Model: Relationship of Destructive Leadership with Employee Performance Moderated by Self-efficacy



Methods

Participants

The population of this study are working individuals, either in a leadership or employee position, within an organization. The overall sample size, N=385, is comprised of 191 leaders and 194 employees. The sample criteria included those who are Dutch-speaking, 18 years old or older, and work at least 17 hours per week. Data from questionnaires with missing values for the variables of interest, as well as those who failed to meet the eligibility criteria were excluded from this study. Therefore, after matching leader/employee responses and combining them into dyads, the final effective sample size is N=89, with 89 leaders and 89 employees.

The employee demographic included 34 men, 53 women, and 2 with unspecified gender, with a mean age of 33 years old (SD = 12.32). Employee participants work an average of 30 hours per week (SD= 12.32) and have educational backgrounds ranging from HAVO (and equivalent) to university level. The leader sample consisted of 33 women, 55 men, and 1 unspecified, with a mean age of leaders is 42 (SD= 12.39). The leader's educational background ranged from VMBO (and equivalent) to university level. Leaders worked an average of 38 hours per week (SD= 7.31).

The sample is derived from varying organizational fields, mostly working in industries, including healthcare (12.4%), catering (9.55%), construction and installation (9%), education (6.7%), business services (6.7%), transport (4.5%), and government (4.5%).

Design and Procedure

This cross-sectional, multi-source field study, recruited participants by utilizing the research group's personal contacts. Upon agreeing to partake in the study, participants were provided with a QR code or link to the online questionnaire to complete. Two distinct links were

provided, depending on whether the participant was an employee or a leader. Following the provision of informed consent, participants were asked to create a four-letter identification code before completing their respective questionnaires. This code, comprised of the first two letters of their surname and the first two letters of their leader's or employee's surname, would be used to identify and match the dyadic pairs, all while maintaining participant anonymity.

The questionnaire required approximately 15-20 minutes to complete, during which employees were evaluated on their perceived level of self-efficacy and their provided answers on destructive leadership behaviors from their leader. Whereas, leaders completed an employee performance measure.

Measures

Peer-reviewed, likert scales were utilized to measure each variable and adapted to align with the dyadic approach used for the present study. All example items provided below are translated from the Dutch questionnaire given to the participants. See Appendices A, B, C, and D for the complete original scales for each variable of interest.

Destructive Leadership

Destructive leadership in organizations was measured using a scale developed by Shaw et al. (2011), building upon the foundations of Erickson et al. (2001). Destructive leadership was identified through the employee's perception of the manager's leadership styles. Participants were asked to answer questions about their manager on 18 items. Of those, items 1 to 5 explore the manager's decision-making based on inadequate information. Items 6-12 pertain to micro-managing and over-controlling behaviors from the manager/leader. The rest of the 6 items investigated despotic leadership behaviors, an extreme form of destructive leadership, (Albashiti et al., 2021). Examples of items in this scale are "[Leader] wants to control me", "[Leader] is

authoritarian" and "[Leader] acts impulsively", to which participants had to respond using a 7-point scale ranging from '1= strongly disagree; 7= completely agree, 4= neither agree nor disagree'. The complete scale can be found in Appendix A. In this way, a higher score on this scale is indicative of more destructive leadership behaviors. The reliability of the subscale was Cronbach's alpha= 0.94.

Employee Performance

Employee performance was measured using two separate scales. Firstly, the 'Organizational Citizenship Behaviour' (OCB), scale was designed by Williams & Anderson (1991). Leaders were asked to answer items relating to the performance of their employees. The scale contains 7 items investigating the performance of in-role behavior' (IRB), 7 items about the performance of organizational citizenship behaviors that have a specific individual as a target (OCBI), and 7 items concerning the performance of organizational citizenship behaviors that focus on primarily benefiting the organization (OCOBO). Sample items include "[My employee] helps others who have a heavy workload" or "[My employee] performs assigned tasks properly". This scale was answered using a 7-point system, '1= strongly disagree; 7= completely agree, 4= neither agree nor disagree'. As a result, a high score indicates high and positive employee performance. However, 6 items from this scale are reverse-coded, in that a low score indicates high employee performance. Examples of the reverse-coded items include "[My employee] takes too many work breaks" and "[My employee] fails to perform essential duties". See Appendix B for the complete scale. The reliability of the status comparison subscale was Cronbach's alpha= 0.92.

The second scale used to measure employee performance was constructed by Van der Vegt and Bunderson (2005), which has 6 items, all of which are answered using a 7-point Likert

scale ranging from '1= very poor performance, 7= very good performance' (See Appendix C for full scale). Items include questions such as "[How does your employee score on] achieving goals?" and "[How does your employee score on] meeting deadlines?". A high score on this scale suggests high employee performance. The reliability of this scale was Cronbach's alpha= 0.94.

Self-efficacy

Employee self-efficacy was measured using the 'Occupational Self-Efficacy' (Rigotti, 2008) scale. The 6-item scale provided employees with statements such as "Whatever happens at work, I can usually handle it." and "I feel able to cope with the demands of my job", to which they had to rate, from 1 to 7 (1= strongly disagree; 7= completely agree, 4= neither agree nor disagree), how strongly they agree or relate. For the complete scale see Appendix D. A high score on this scale suggests high levels of self-efficacy in a work environment. The reliability of the status comparison subscale was Cronbach's alpha= 0.91.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics and correlations (*r)* for each variable and measure in the study. The extremely low mean score for destructive leadership indicates the absence of destructive behaviors from the leader detected by the 89 employees of the study's sample. Whereas, the variables of self-efficacy and employee performance were relatively high in the sample. Destructive Leadership, as shown in Table 1, is not significantly correlated to employee performance, but displays a moderate, negative correlation with self-efficacy (p = –0.454). Furthermore, the findings depict a weak positive relationship between self-efficacy and employee performance, however, this correlation is insignificant.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Core Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1.	2.
1. Destructive Leadership	1.85	0.945	–	
2. Self-Efficacy	5.66	1.04	-.454*	–
3. Employee Performance	5.06	0.6	-.171	0.169

Note. N= 89, p<.01, ** p<.05*

Prior to the main analyses, the assumptions for each variable were tested to provide a reliable interpretation of results and assess the validity of the conclusions. Firstly, the assumption of normality is not violated as depicted by the histogram of residuals as shown in Appendix E, Figure 1. The presence of the unimodal peak and resemblance to a bell curve indicates that the data is concentrated around the mean, corresponding to a roughly normal distribution. In this way, it can be inferred that the assumption of normality is satisfied. Furthermore, the assumption of independence of observations is also met. The regression analysis obtained a Durbin-Watson value of 2.214, which falls within the acceptable range of a critical value of 2. This suggests that there is no significant autocorrelation present in the residuals and ensures the validity of the analysis. Lastly, in assessing the assumption of linearity, the visual inspection of the scatterplot in Appendix E, Figure 2, indicates a fairly consistent pattern without any noticeable curvatures or significant deviations from a straight line. This indicates that the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable can be adequately represented by a linear model.

However, some ambiguity regarding whether the assumption of homoscedasticity is violated was encountered. While visual inspection of the residual plots did not reveal any clear patterns of heteroscedasticity, there were also no definitive indications of perfectly constant

variance across the range of the independent variables. Additionally, the assumption of multicollinearity is a concern in the regression analysis due to the excessive Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs). The VIF coefficients for each variable exceed the accepted threshold of 4. However, James et al. (2013) posit that VIF values between 5-10 indicate moderate intercorrelation between variables, and values above 10 suggest high intercorrelation of model predictors. As the VIF value for employee performance is only one above 10, we can consider a moderate correlation between predictors acceptable for this project.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the other assumptions of regression analysis such as linearity, independence, and normality of residuals were found to be adequately met. Hence, the uncertain standing of homoscedasticity and multicollinearity may not necessarily invalidate the entire analysis, especially when other assumptions are satisfied. In this way, the aforementioned assumptions have been deemed acceptable in the context of this investigation and therefore we proceed with the hypothesis testing of the regression analyses.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 states that destructive leadership is negatively related to employee performance. To test this hypothesis, destructive leadership was regressed on performance. The independent variable, destructive leadership, explains approximately 2.9% of the variance in the dependent variable, performance, with a coefficient $R^2 = 0.029$. This model has a further Adjusted $R^2 = 0.018$, and $F(1,87) = 2.631$, $p = 0.108$.

The values of R^2 and Adj-R^2 suggest a relatively low explanatory power in predicting the variation observed in the dependent variable, as well as a poor fit to the data. Thus, this model has low predictive ability in that, it would be unlikely to provide accurate predictions of employee performance based solely on destructive leadership. These values also indicate a weak

relationship between performance and destructive leadership. And, although, destructive leadership negatively predicts employee performance, the correlation is not strong enough (as seen in Table 1) to make meaningful predictions about the relationship between the variables based solely on the correlation coefficient. Therefore, evidence suggests that the regression model as a whole is not statistically significant. Overall, the evidence does not support our hypothesis, and further analysis and model refinements may be necessary to develop a more predictive model.

The second hypothesis posits that self-efficacy has a positive effect on employee performance. The regression model of these two variables has an R^2= 0.028 and an Adjusted- R^2 of 0.017. This suggests that self-efficacy explains approximately 1-3% of variance in employee performance, in this regression model. Similar to the first model, this indicates a limited explanatory power, indicating that other factors not included in this model likely influence employee performance. Table 1 indicates a very weak, positive relationship, that is also non-significant. In this way, Hypothesis 2 is not supported by the evidence provided by this regression.

Lastly, Hypothesis 3 states that self-efficacy moderates the negative effect that destructive leadership has on employee performance, in that the relationship will become less negative with higher levels of self-efficacy. The final model regression is $\widehat{Performance} = 4.135 + 0.154x_1 + 0.192x_2 - 0.045x_3$. To investigate the moderation effect, a multiple regression analysis was utilized, as well as the PROCESS tool to corroborate findings. The final model has a R^2 value of 0.052 and Adjusted-R^2=0.019 with $F(3,85) = 1.560$, $p = 0.205$, suggesting that the interaction explained 2-5% of the variance in employee performance.

The interaction term between destructive leadership and self-efficacy as seen in Table 4 is –0.045, indicating a weak, negative moderating effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between destructive leadership and employee performance. This is further supported by the interaction variable in the PROCESS analysis of –0.0448, reiterating the relatively small impact of the moderator. Overall, the lack of a statistically significant interaction fails to support Hypothesis 3.

Table 2

Result of the Regression Analysis

Predictors	**Unstandardized B**	**SE**	***t***	***p***
Constant	4.135	0.806	5.130	< 0.001
Destructive Leadership	0.154	0.229	0.671	0.504
Self-efficacy	0.192	0.138	1.395	0.167
Interaction	–0.045	0.042	–1.057	0.293

Note. N= 89, p<.01, ** p<.05*

Discussion

In this study, we set out to investigate whether self-efficacy played a role in the relationship between destructive leadership and employee performance. The main hypothesis posited that, within an environment governed by a destructive leadership style, the performance of employees with higher levels of self-efficacy would be less affected by the latter, in comparison to employees with low self-efficacy. However, during the analysis of the data, none of the formulated hypotheses were supported by the findings. Such unexpected outcomes prompt a deeper exploration of alternative explanations. While the lack of support for the hypotheses

may challenge the initial assumptions, it also offers valuable insights into the nuances of the topic and provides further opportunities for investigation.

Theoretical implications

Contrary to the previous literature (Aydinay et al., 2021; Krasikova et al., 2013) the findings of the current study did not support the first hypothesis, positing a significant relationship between destructive leadership and employee performance. Methodological factors could have played a role in the insignificant results of the first hypothesis. According to Einarsen et al. (2007), the construct of destructive leadership being reported through the use of self-reports from employees could be a potential limitation in the methodology, in that participants are more likely to underreport or misinterpret their experience with their leaders. Furthermore, despite prior studies indicating the prevalence of destructive leadership in the Netherlands (Hubert & van Veldhoven, 2001), the findings of the current study present a significantly low mean value for this variable, indicating that such a leadership style was not particularly present in this study's sample. This discrepancy aligns with recent research, suggesting that Dutch leadership culture is consensual and egalitarian (Meyer, 2021) inferring that leaders are inclined to be facilitative and cooperative, over harmful and unfavorable. Lastly, competitive industries may be more resilient to destructive leadership (Szymanski et. al, 2001) as a result of pressures to perform, inferring a non-significant impact of the destructive leadership style on employee performance. The complexness of the relationship between leadership behavior and employee outcomes, therefore, emphasizes the need for more careful consideration of various cultural and methodological factors in research design and interpretation.

Similarly, the findings from this study failed to support the second hypothesis which theorized that self-efficacy would have a positive effect on employee performance. Bandura

(1977) posits that one's level of self-efficacy is dictated by an individual's past successes and experiences. However, environmental factors may play a role in how individuals perceive themselves as efficacious, which may impact levels of performance, as a result. Additionally, although self-efficacy is an established predictor of performance (Graham & Weiner, 1996; Hadi, 2023), there may be a few moderating factors that dictate how self-efficacy influences employee performance. These include task complexity, and social support, both of which may have influenced the hypothesized positive relationship between the two variables (Farr, 2013), potentially leading to insignificant findings in this report. Moreover, the high mean of the self-efficacy measure may indicate a ceiling effect, suggesting that although participants may have high levels of self-efficacy, the measure may lack the acuity to capture meaningful nuances in self-efficacy. The non-findings may also indicate the presence of a response bias phenomenon (Rosenman et al., 2011) often seen in self-reported measures, which could explain the overrepresentation of self-efficacy and hence hinder the ability to detect a significant positive relationship with employee performance.

Lastly, the third hypothesis, proposing that self-efficacy has a moderating role in the relationship between destructive leadership and employee performance, was not supported by the results of this study. The lack of a significant moderation effect could result from several factors. The relationship between all three variables may be influenced by factors such as individual differences (Florko et. al, 2023), and organizational contexts, indicating the complex interconnectedness of factors. Hence, the moderating effect of self-efficacy may be contingent on the interaction between these factors, making it difficult to alienate and identify its impact on its own. Additionally, people may underestimate or misreport their levels of self-efficacy in coping with the effects of destructive leadership as this leadership style often leaves followers

completely powerless (Tourish, 2015). Lastly, it is noteworthy to consider the potential role of self-efficacy not only as a moderator but also as a plausible mediator in the relationship between destructive leadership and employee performance. Research (Bakker and Demerouti, 2023) has demonstrated that self-efficacy is intricately linked to both variables, suggesting that it may serve as a pathway through which the effects of destructive leadership are transmitted to employee performance.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

One notable strength of this research is the use of dyadic research methodology, which allowed for a holistic examination of leader-employee dynamics within an organizational context. Dyadic qualitative research "consists of 2 participants together, led by a moderator" (Kuhn, 2024). By collecting data from both leader and follower, the study highlighted the interdependencies that encapsulated leader-follower relationships. Furthermore, the use of dyads recognizes that behavior is often shaped by social interactions in work settings accounting for communication patterns (Rogelberg, 2004), relational processes (Buchanan and Bryman, 2011), and mutual perceptions (Sanders et al., 2014). The aforementioned research style provides a more objective assessment of the variables of interest in this study, offering a richer understanding of organizational relationships.

Another valuable asset of the current study involves exploring the Dutch work environment. This research recruited participants from various Dutch workplaces in different industries, with diverse educational backgrounds, and age ranges. In this way, results gathered from this study provide us with generalizable insights into Dutch business landscapes as well as inform us about the potential factors influencing work-related outcomes. This increases this research's external validity, deeming it more versatile across several organizational contexts.

However, there are limitations when it comes to using dyadic analyses, in that there may not be enough dyads used in this research for sufficient power, and data is only examined from dyads in which both members complete their respective questionnaires (Columbia University, 2023). Because both parties within the dyad need to respond to provide a complete response, logistical complications and an increased likelihood of incomplete responses, posed a certain challenge during data collection. This difficulty led to the exploration of alternative approaches to enrich the dataset, by which data from various prior research was combined with our current data. Although this allowed for the inclusion of a broader range of responses and improved the effective sample size, it also increased the potential for limitations associated with data aggregation across different sources and time points (Creswell and Creswell, 2023), such as variability and heterogeneity (Cooper et. al, 2009). As a result, the research's findings may have been compromised in terms of reliability results. Further research endeavors should consider the logistical challenges associated with dyadic research and explore techniques to improve response rates with dyadic samples.

Furthermore, the lack of a universal definition for destructive leadership may have posed a limitation in this study. Various sources (Tepper, 2000; Einarsen et al., 2017; Schyns & Schilling, 2013) discuss the challenges in defining and operationalizing the term 'destructive leadership' as a result of its multifaceted nature. This lack of unanimity can lead to ambiguity in the measurement of the variable, making it difficult to assess its impact on employee performance accurately. In addition, a lack of clear definitions can lead to subjective perception, in that, what one individual considers as destructive leadership, another may consider as necessary disciplinary behaviors within a workplace environment. This discrepancy can influence the accuracy and reliability of self-reported measures of destructive leadership,

potentially impacting the results of the moderation analysis. To address such a limitation, the defining of the term ‘destructive leadership’ should be contracted, to avoid measurement errors, and threats to validity.

Nevertheless, given the complexity of leadership-organizational processes and their impact on employee outcomes, future research could adopt a mixed approach to examine the moderating factors of destructive leadership and employee performance more extensively. Mixed-methods approaches integrate both qualitative and quantitative measures at different phases of the research process (Tashakkori & Teedlie, 2010). Adopting such an approach in the outline of the current study can provide a better understanding of elaborate phenomena such as self-efficacy and destructive leadership (Clark & Creswell, 2008). Whilst quantitative data can provide statistical insights into relationships within an organization, qualitative measures, such as covert observations and interviews, could provide a more thorough understanding of individual perceptions and experiences. This addresses the methodological and contextual shortcomings of the current study, in which terminology ambiguity and report bias are present, by further investigating the underlying processes that shape leader-employee relationships. Furthermore, Currall and Towler (2003) posit that the combined use of quantitative and qualitative research can be influential in the realm of management and organizational studies, although, is rarely used. In this way, investigating the current studies' hypotheses using a mixed method may enhance the overall reliability and validity of findings by sustaining evidence from different perspectives, while lending itself to the development of such a technique in the organizational psychology field.

Future studies investigating the role of self-efficacy as a moderator to the relationship between restrictive leadership and employee performance should also investigate the role of

contextual factors influencing organizations. Contextual factors are features of a company, including organization size, industry, or years of existence, that may have implications on performance at the leader and employee levels (Asikhia, 2020). The current study used sample participants from various industries and organizational contexts. Although, such a sample can lead to more generalizable findings, taking into consideration organization size, industry, and cultural contexts, allows for a more contextualized understanding of leadership dynamics and how these, in turn, affect employees and their performance. All around, tailoring the investigation to specific organizational contexts can enhance the relevance and practical implications of the research.

Overall, although the findings of the study did not support the hypothesized moderating role of self-efficacy, the results highlight the need for continued research into the dynamics of destructive leadership and employee performance. By exploring alternative explanations and addressing identified limitations, future research can advance our understanding of what factors aid in mitigating the potential negative effects of destructive leadership and how to promote positive employee outcomes.

Practical Implications

Although the study conjured insignificant findings, several practical implications can be derived. Firstly, the findings of the study depict a low mean score for the destructive leadership variable. This indicates that although the overall perception of destructive leadership is low, some level of adverse behavior from leaders may still exist within an organization. As a result, organizations may use the findings from this study to restate and encourage a positive and healthy leadership style, in efforts to lower the inverse effect. Leaders could also utilize the findings of the study to motivate open communication and feedback from employees to address

potential leadership style concerns to prevent the escalation of such behaviors in future instances. Additionally, a lack of significant moderation found in the study, suggests that there may be factors besides self-efficacy that are more influential in determining how employees respond to adverse leadership behavior. Furthermore, the insignificant findings highlight the importance of considering methodological and contextual factors that may be linked to sample characteristics or the measuring of predictor variables. This could prompt leaders and organizations to review their current work environment, to identify areas that may contribute to the adverse effects of leadership on employee performance.

Addressing such concerns could enhance our understanding of the intricate relationship between destructive leadership, self-efficacy, and employee performance, as well as the complex dynamics shaping workplace experiences and employee efficiency.

Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to investigate the moderating role of self-efficacy on the relationship between destructive leadership and employee performance. Although the initial hypotheses were not supported, the insights gained from this study offer practical contributions to prior literature on leadership behaviors and employee outcomes as well as play a facilitative role in outlining potential future research. One of the main findings suggests that self-efficacy may not play a significant moderating role in easing the adverse effects of destructive leadership on employee performance. This contests prior research and underscores the need for a more diverse understanding of the mechanisms underlying leadership behavior and its impact on employee performance.

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Appendix A

Translated Destructive Leadership Scale

Mijn leidinggevende:

1. reageert vaak zonder na te denken.
2. heeft geen idee wat er zich in ons team afspeelt.
3. is onwetend over zaken die zich afspelen in zijn/haar directe omgeving.
4. reageert impulsief.
5. heeft niet genoeg aandacht voor wat werkelijk belangrijk is.
6. controleert mij continu.
7. wil totale controle over mij uitoefenen.
8. is autoritair.
9. vertrouwt er niet op dat ik mijn werk op een correcte manier uitvoer.
10. wil controle over mij uitoefenen.
11. geeft mij geen belangrijke taken omdat hij/zij mij niet vertrouwt.
12. deelt geen macht met mij.
13. is zeer streng, heeft geen medelijden en toont geen medeleven
14. is de baas en duldt geen tegenspraak, geeft bevelen
15. treedt op als tiran of despoot; is dwingend
16. vindt het moeilijk of onplezierig om de controle over projecten en taken aan anderen over te laten.
17. verwacht onvoorwaardelijke gehoorzaamheid van degenen die aan hem of haar rapporteren.
18. is wraakzuchtig; neemt wraak als hij/zij zich tekort gedaan voelt.

Appendix B

Original Employee Performance Scale (Van der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005)

How does your employee score on ...

1. achieving goals?
2. meeting deadlines?
3. work speed?
4. the quality of work?
5. productivity?
6. effectiveness?

Translated Employee Performance scale

Hoe scoort *uw medewerker* op…:

1. het bereiken van doelen?
2. het behalen van deadlines?
3. werksnelheid?
4. de kwaliteit van het werk?
5. productiviteit?
6. effectiviteit?

Appendix C

Original Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale (Williams & Anderson, 1991)

1. Adequately completes assigned duties.
2. Fulfills responsibilities specified in job description.
3. Performs tasks that are expected of him/her.
4. Meets formal performance requirements of the job.
5. Engages in activities that will directly affect his/her performance evaluation.
6. Neglects aspects of the job he/she is obligated to perform. (R)
7. Fails to perform essential duties. (R)
8. Helps others who have been absent.
9. Helps others who have heavy work loads.
10. Assists supervisor with his/her work (when not asked).
11. Takes time to listen to co-workers' problems and worries.
12. Goes out of way to help new employees.
13. Takes a personal interest in other employees.
14. Passes along information to co-workers.
15. Attendance at work is above the norm.
16. Gives advance notice when unable to come to work.
17. Takes undeserved work breaks. (R)
18. Great deal of time spent with personal phone conversations. (R)
19. Complains about insignificant things at work. (R)
20. Conserves and protects organizational property.
21. Adheres to informal rules devised to maintain order.

*Note: Items marked with (R) are reverse-coded

Translated Employee Performance Scale

Mijn medewerker:……

1. Voert de opgedragen taken naar behoren uit
2. Voldoet aan de verantwoordelijkheden vermeld in de functiebeschrijving
3. Voert de taken uit die van hem/haar verwacht worden
4. Voldoet aan de formele prestatie-eisen van de functie
5. Houdt zich/haar bezig met activiteiten die rechtstreeks van invloed zijn op zijn/haar prestatiebeoordeling
6. Verwaarloost aspecten van het werk dat hij/zij verplicht is uit te voeren
7. Faalt in het uitvoeren van essentiële taken
8. Helpt anderen die afwezig zijn geweest
9. Helpt anderen die een zware werklast hebben
10. Assisteert mij bij mijn werkzaamheden (wanneer niet gevraagd)
11. Neemt de tijd om te luisteren naar problemen en zorgen van collega's
12. Doet zijn/haar uiterste best om nieuwe medewerkers te helpen
13. Heeft persoonlijke belangstelling voor andere werknemers
14. Geeft informatie door aan collega’s
15. Aanwezigheid op werk is boven de norm
16. Geeft van te voren aan wanneer hij/zij niet kan komen werken
17. Neemt te veel werkpauzes
18. Besteed veel tijd aan persoonlijke telefoongesprekken
19. Klaagt over onbelangrijke dingen op het werk
20. Bewaart en beschermt eigendommen van de organisatie

21. Houdt zich aan informele regels die zijn opgesteld om de orde te handhaven

Appendix D

Original Occupational Self-efficacy Scale (Rigotti, 2008)

1. I can remain calm when facing difficulties in my job because I can rely on my abilities.
2. When I am confronted with a problem in my job, I can usually find several solutions.
3. Whatever comes my way in my job, I can usually handle it.
4. My past experiences in my job have prepared me well for my occupational future.
5. I meet the goals that I set for myself in my job.
6. I feel prepared for most of the demands in my job.

Translated Self-efficacy scale

1. Ik kan kalm blijven wanneer ik geconfronteerd word met moeilijkheden in mijn werk, omdat ik kan terugvallen op mijn vaardigheden
2. Wanneer ik geconfronteerd word met een probleem in mijn werk, dan vind ik meestal meerdere oplossingen
3. Wat er ook gebeurt in mijn werk, ik kan het meestal wel aan
4. De ervaringen die ik in het verleden in mijn werk heb opgedaan, hebben me goed voorbereid op mijn werk in de toekomst
5. Ik haal de doelstellingen die ik aan mezelf stel in mijn werk
6. Ik voel me in staat om de eisen van mijn werk het hoofd te bieden

Appendix E

Figure 1

Histogram of Employee Perfromance: Assumption of Normality

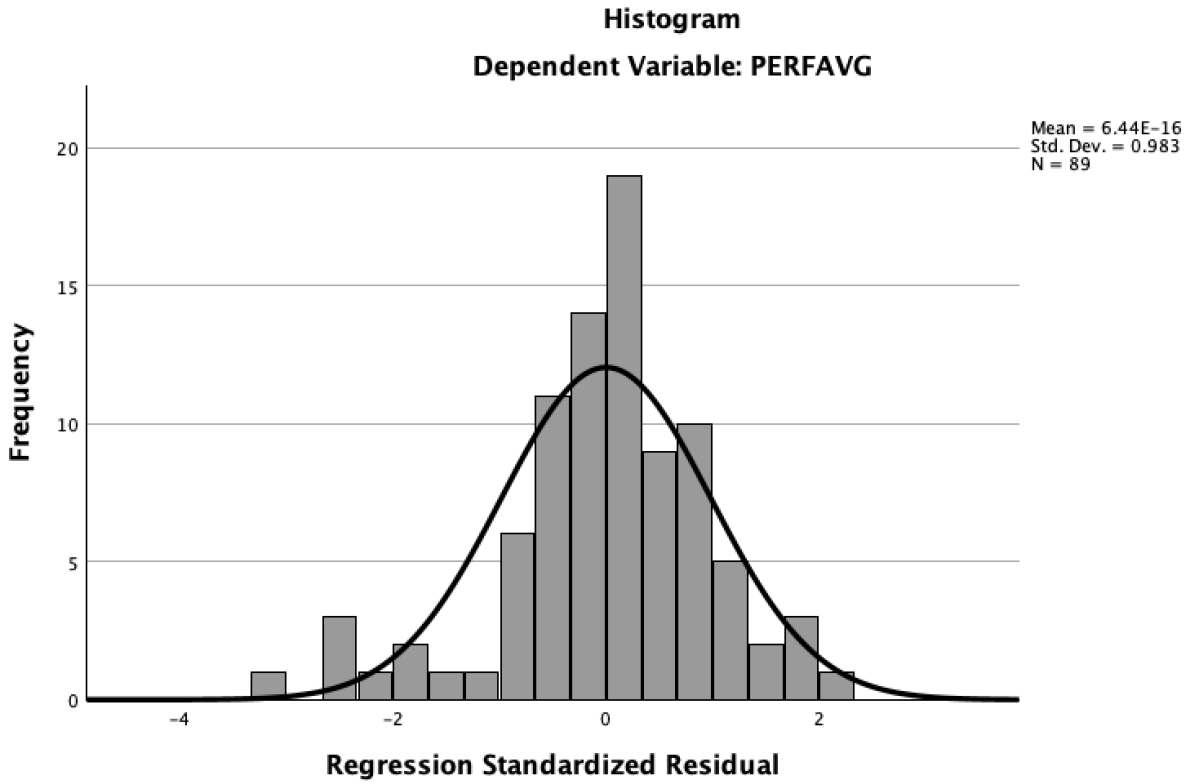

Figure 2

Normal P-P Plot of Employee Performance: Assumption of Linearity

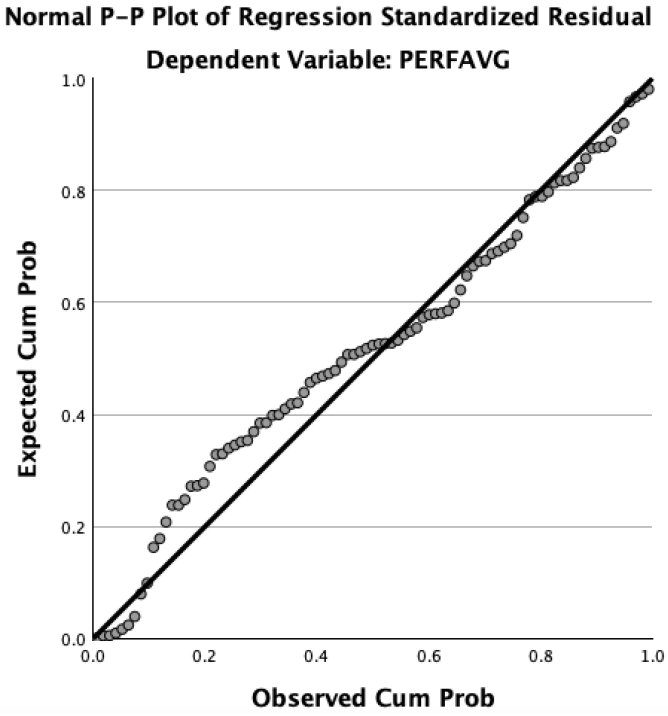

Figure 3

Scatter plot of Employee Performance: Assumption of Homoscedasticity