

**How Despotic Leadership Moderates the Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Job  
Performance**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance between employees and their leader, focusing on the moderating role of despotic leadership. Using a multi-source, cross-sectional field study, this research used a questionnaire to collect data from a sample of 90 dyads, each consisting of a leader and an employee. Contrary to expectations, the results indicated non-significant correlations between self-efficacy and job performance, suggesting that there is no direct relationship between one's assessment of one's ability to achieve a goal and job performance. Furthermore, the relationship between despotic leadership and performance was also non-significant. Similarly, the moderating effect of despotic leadership was non-significant, indicating that despotic leadership did not significantly influence the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance. These findings challenge the common perception that self-efficacy positively influences job performance, as well as the negative effect of despotic leadership. Future research is recommended to develop a more nuanced coding system, test the generalizability of the findings and extend the model to find significant relationships.

*keywords: self-efficacy, despotic leadership, job performance, leader, employee, working dynamics, dyads*

## **How despotic leadership moderates the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance**

Job performance is a crucial aspect of today's working environment. It is important for an organization to foster a conducive and productive work environment that includes knowledge diversity and innovative solutions in order to achieve high job performance (Van Der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005). In order to remain competitive, companies are constantly trying to increase their performance while reducing their costs (Van Der Voordt, 2004). An important aspect of employee performance is self-efficacy (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). How well an employee performs depends to some extent on his or her perception of what he or she can achieve (Rigotti et al., 2008). In addition to this internal belief, a leader can influence an employee's performance externally. A leader can further enhance performance by organizing employees into groups based on their expertise (Van Der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005). Another factor that increases job performance is the implementation of workplace innovations (Van Der Voordt, 2004). According to Davis (2023), job performance is the employee's belief that they have control over their performance. In addition, Davis confirmed that leadership influences job performance. Therefore, leaders will focus on ways to improve performance or mitigate factors that may hinder it. Characteristics of a despotic leader, such as being oppressive and acting out of self-interest, typically counteract efforts to improve job performance (Raja et al., 2020).

As Davis (2023) notes, leadership has a profound effect on the performance of an organization. However, despotic leadership has not been researched as extensively as destructive leadership. Consequently, this study aims to extend the existing knowledge on the impact of despotic leadership on job performance. In addition, we seek to contribute to the current understanding of the positive relationship between self-efficacy and job performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Although the effects of self-efficacy on job performance are

positive (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998) and the effects of despotic leadership are negative (Schilling, 2009), it is reasonable to assume that despotic leadership might weaken the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance. This is because despotic leadership tends to create a negative work environment, which is likely to affect self-efficacy (Raja et al., 2020). Therefore, it is important to investigate how despotic leadership affects the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance.

In this study, we aim to contribute to the existing research on the relationships between self-efficacy, despotic leadership and job performance in various Dutch companies. The relationship between self-efficacy and job performance has been extensively analyzed in the meta-analysis by Stajkovic and Luthans (1998), and we seek to confirm their findings. The negative impact of despotic leadership on job performance has already been investigated by De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008), who found that despotic leadership negatively affects job performance. In addition, various authors have suggested that despotic leadership may not only directly affect performance, but also indirectly affect self-efficacy, thereby affecting the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance (Bushra et al., 2011; House & Howell, 1992; Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

Our study aims to confirm these findings, in particular that despotic leadership negatively affects job performance. In addition, we examined the moderating effect of despotic leadership on the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance. Our methodology involved administering a questionnaire to both leaders and followers. Analyzing the responses provided us with insights into the moderating effect of despotic leadership on the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance.

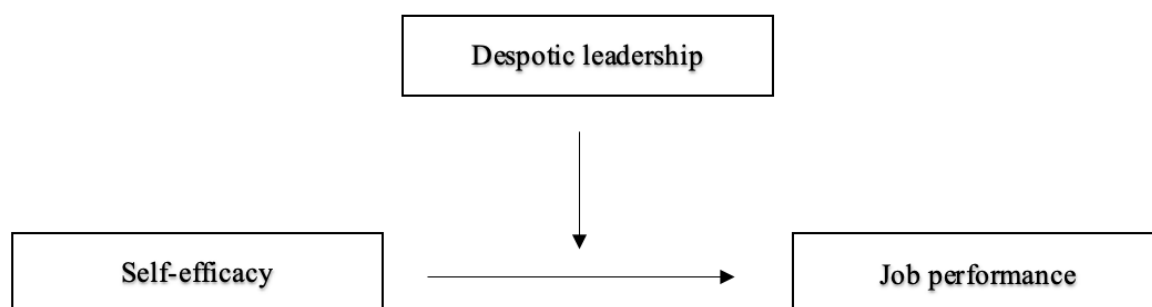
Studying a group in a laboratory setting is different from studying a group in a real-life setting (Foels et al., 2000). Conducting this research as a field study rather than a laboratory

experiment gave us the opportunity to better generalize the findings. Laboratory experiments often fail to capture the complexity of real-life situations, and people's reactions in the lab may differ from those in everyday life. Therefore, results from a field study, such as the one we conducted, provide a more robust basis for conclusions that are applicable to everyday life. In support of this perspective, Chatman (1989) also suggests that the real world is more complex than laboratory environments and requires more comprehensive study.

Consequently, we designed a study that would allow us to implement our findings directly within a company.

### **Figure 1:**

*Research model*



### **Self-efficacy and job performance**

Self-efficacy is a person's belief that they have the ability to cope with a situation and successfully achieve their goals (Bandura, 1977; Judge & Bono, 2001). According to Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, individuals with high self-efficacy are more proactive and can persevere through challenges. Successfully completing a task reinforces their self-efficacy, leading to greater effort and therefore more successful outcomes (Bushra et al., 2011). Previous research has suggested that self-efficacy and job performance are related, with self-efficacy potentially serving as a predictor of job performance (Stajkovic & Luthans,

1998). Perceived judgments of one's own abilities are influenced by the nature of the task, the work environment and social encounters (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Self-efficacy can be enhanced as individuals become more routine in their tasks (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). In line with theory and previous research, we aim to extend this knowledge.

*Hypothesis 1: Self-efficacy is positively related to job performance.*

### **Despotic leadership and job performance**

Despotic leadership is a form of unethical leadership in which the leader is motivated by self-interest and personal dominance (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Raja et. al, 2020). Despotic leaders exhibit authoritarian, status-oriented behavior and demand obedience and submission (Schilling, 2009). These self-serving behaviors reduce employees' motivation to work (De Cremer, 2006) and often fail to align with the conditions and interests of their company (Raja et. al, 2020).

The framework proposed by Bolman and Deal (1991) suggests that an effective leader must possess multifaceted qualities and fulfil four distinct frames: structural, human resource, political and symbolic. These frames guide effective leaders in their interactions with subordinates. A despotic leader, by virtue of his or her characteristics, is unable to fulfil all four frames, indicating ineffectiveness. Previous research has shown that despotic leaders create feelings of discomfort among employees, which in turn has a detrimental effect on productivity (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Raja et al., 2020). Teams led by despotic leaders have been observed to be less productive and less optimistic (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008). Furthermore, despotic leadership inhibits the formation of positive attitudes and behaviors, thereby creating an overall negative work environment (Raja et al., 2020; Schilling, 2009).

In a negative work environment, the behavior of a leader who is also negative is often replicated by employees, perpetuating a vicious cycle (Schilling, 2009). This environment impedes employees from performing at their full potential (Chatman, 1989). In addition to these individual effects, despotic leaders can also affect team performance by disrupting the processes that determine performance (Yukl, 2012). Such leaders inhibit task-oriented behaviors, which are essential for guiding people to successfully complete their tasks (Yukl, 2012). They also fail at relationship-oriented behaviors, such as support and recognition, and change-oriented behaviors, such as innovation (Yukl, 2012). The absence of these behaviors can prevent high performance. A company can only be successful if both the leader and the employees are engaged (Bushra et al., 2011).

Furthermore, despotic leaders have a negative impact on job performance by discouraging employees (Davis, 2023). Employees show reduced work motivation when their leader displays negative emotions towards them (De Cremer, 2006). In addition, Schilling (2009) posits that the destructive behavior of despotic leaders leads to a decline in the leader's reputation, reduced contact with followers and, consequently, employee dissatisfaction and reduced motivation. Furthermore, Schilling asserts that negative leadership leads to a lack of commitment and performance. In light of the aforementioned evidence, it is reasonable to assume that the overall impact of despotic leadership on job performance will be negative.

*Hypothesis 2: Despotic leadership is negatively related to job performance.*

### **The Moderating Role of Despotic Leadership**

The framework by Bolman and Deal (1991) argues that an effective leader relies on four frames: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. A leader's effectiveness depends on how well he or she can utilize these frames. If leaders can positively influence their followers' self-efficacy, this effectiveness will be reflected in their success and



performance. Because despotic leadership fails in all four frames, it can have a direct and indirect impact on self-efficacy and therefore on job performance.

Despotic leadership negatively affects self-efficacy (Solomon, 2023). At a basic level, a despotic leader can reduce an employee's level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Even if an employee initially has high self-efficacy, a despotic leader can undermine it by assigning overly complex tasks, causing stress or anxiety (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). In addition, if a leader fosters a competitive environment where employees are constantly comparing themselves to higher performing peers, their self-efficacy may decrease (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). High stress levels at work can only be managed by employees with high self-efficacy (Gumbau et al., 2001), creating a vicious cycle where decreasing self-efficacy reduces stress resistance, further diminishing self-efficacy. A supportive climate typically enhances stress resistance, but this is disrupted by despotic leadership (Gumbau et al., 2001). Thus, we expect despotic leadership to weaken the relationship between self-efficacy and performance.

Conversely, the positive relationship between self-efficacy and job performance is expected to be maintained for employees with leaders who do not exhibit despotic traits such as dominance or selfish behavior (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Raja et. al., 2020). In such an environment, leaders encourage a creative work atmosphere and foster a confident and stable organizational climate, which forms the basis for effective employees (Mabel, 2014). Leaders who do not exhibit despotic traits are likely to be sensitive to employees' feelings and needs (Mabel, 2014), which, according to Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, can enhance self-efficacy and improve performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). In addition, such leaders motivate employees, which increases their performance (Boyatzis et al., 2002). Increased motivation can lead to increased self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, Solomon, 2023), resulting in more engaged employees who put more effort into behaviors aimed at better performance (Davis, 2023).

*Hypothesis 3:* Despotic leadership moderates the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance, insofar as that this relationship is weaker or even reversed under the influence of despotic leadership.

## **Methodology**

### **Data Collection and Sample**

We recruited dyads of supervisors and employees through personal networks of bachelor students. Additionally, companies in the Netherlands were approached in person, via email, and by phone. The recruitment targeted working adults over 18 years of age. Data collection took place between February and April 2024, conducted by several student groups, each comprising six students. This data was then combined with data from 2023. Participants who did not meet the study criteria were excluded from the sample. In total, we sampled 180 Dutch-speaking managers and employees, forming 90 dyads. Our effective sample size is therefore  $N = 90$ , with a total of 135 dyads excluded. Participants were excluded if they did not complete the questionnaire, if they could not form a complete dyad due to coding errors, or if they did not work the required 17 hours per week.

The age of the employees ranged from 18 to 63 years, and that of the leaders from 22 to 65 years. There was generally an age difference between the leaders and the employees. The mean age of the employees was 33.69 years ( $SD = 12.28$ ), while the mean age of the leaders was 41.9 years ( $SD = 12.59$ ). Leaders worked an average of 37.3 hours per week ( $SD = 7.54$ ), with a range of 18 to 60 hours per week. Employees worked an average of 31.99 hours per week ( $SD = 7.32$ ), with a range of 15 to 40 hours per week. This also indicates a difference in working hours between leaders and employees, showing that leaders on average

work more than employees. Similarly, the leaders were also on average older than their employees.

The final sample consisted of 97 men (39 employees and 58 managers) and 83 women (51 employees and 32 managers). These figures mean that 54% of the sample were men; 46% of the sample were women. Most people worked in small companies (no more than 50 employees; 43% of participants). 34% of the participants worked in large enterprises (more than 250 employees). Finally, only 23% of the sample worked in medium-sized enterprises (50-250 employees). About 80% of the participants worked at least one year in their company. Around 80% of participants met at least a few times a week. The sector in which most respondents reported working was health (13%), followed by hotels and restaurants (11%) and construction, retail and wholesale (8%). Around 80% of respondents had completed tertiary education.

### **Research Design and Procedure**

We conducted a multi-sourced cross-sectional field study. One participant of each dyad (leader or employee) was contacted via phone, email, or in person and received either a link or a QR code to access the questionnaire. The questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete. After giving informed consent, in which participants were told that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be confidential, participants were asked to enter a four-digit code consisting of a combination of the names of the manager and employee in the dyad. Following this, they answered questions regarding their relationship and provided a professional evaluation of the other person, as well as some demographic information. At the end they received a contact email where they could send their questions or concerns.

A total of 458 participants started the survey. Of these, 135 leader responses and 143 employee responses were excluded because they did not meet the research criteria aforementioned. The effective sample size from 2024 was 130, which when combined with the 2023 data gave a total of 180, or 90 dyads.

The questionnaires for employees and leaders differed in certain aspects while also sharing some similarities. Both participants responded to items such as trust, psychological safety, and task interdependence. However, some items were exclusive to one participant: shared leadership, self-efficacy, and legitimacy were addressed only by the employees, whereas performance and innovative behavior were evaluated solely by the leaders. Each concept consisted of multiple questions, with the number of questions varying across concepts. For instance, job satisfaction was assessed using 4 items, whereas performance was measured with 21 items.

## **Measures**

### ***Self-Efficacy (Independent Variable)***

Self-efficacy was measured using six items in the employee survey based on the paper by Rigotti et al. (2008). Employees were asked how well they can handle problems and stress. Furthermore, they were asked how well they think they can achieve their goals. A sample item is “Whatever comes my way in my job. I can usually handle it.”. Another example is the following: “I feel prepared for most of the demands in my job.”. Participants had to respond using a 7-point scale (from 1= *totally disagree* to 7= *totally agree*). Higher scores indicate that they are high in self-efficacy. The reliability of the self-efficacy scale was Cronbach's alpha = .91, indicating that the items in the questionnaire effectively represented self-efficacy.

### ***Job Performance (Dependent Variable)***

Job performance was also measured using six items in the questionnaire. It was answered only by the leader and is based on Van Der Vegt and Bunderson (2005). Leaders were asked about the performance of their employees in general as well as based on their job description. In addition to that, the leader was asked to indicate how responsible the employee was. Finally, the leader also had to indicate how motivated the employee is. A sample item is “How does your employee score on quality of work”. Participants had to respond using a 7-point scale (from 1= *totally disagree* to 7= *totally agree*). This indicated a score for the employee. A high score shows that the leader thinks that the employee is performing on a high level. The reliability of the job performance scale was Cronbach's alpha = .93, indicating excellent representation of the scale.

### ***Despotic Leadership (Moderator)***

Despotic leadership was measured using six items in the questionnaire. The questions based on the paper by De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008), were answered only by the employee. The employee was asked to evaluate the behavior of the leader. This indicated how controlling and unresponsive the leader was. Furthermore, it was asked whether the leader displays vengeful behavior. In addition to that, they had to report whether the leader expected unconditional obedience. A sample item is “Expects unquestioning obedience of those who report to him/her.”. Another example is: “Is vengeful; seeks revenge when wronged.”. A high score in the questionnaire indicates despotic behaviour of the leader. The reliability of the despotic leadership scale was Cronbach's alpha = .89.

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

On average, employees reported moderately high levels of self-efficacy, with some variability in their responses yet most scores close to the mean (Table 1). Similarly, leaders generally rated the job performance of their employees moderately high, though there was considerable variability in their responses (Table 1). The low mean score suggests that participants generally perceived low levels of despotic leadership in their environment. The relatively small standard deviation indicates that there was little variability in participants' perceptions of despotic leadership (Table 1). The explained variance of job performance by self-efficacy and despotic leadership was very low with only 4% ( $R^2 = .04$ ). However, this value was not significant, besides its very low  $R^2$  value, which would indicate that the model does not account for a lot of the variance in job performance ( $F(3,86) = 1.18, p = .321$ ). In addition to that, the correlation between job performance and its predictors was also low ( $R = .2$ ).

There was a significant, moderately strong negative correlation between self-efficacy and despotic leadership (Table 1). This indicates that higher levels of self-efficacy were associated with lower perceptions of despotic leadership. In other words, despotic leadership had a significant and detrimental impact on employees' self-efficacy. The correlation between self-efficacy and job performance was slightly positive but not statistically significant (Table 1). This suggests that there was no significant linear relationship between self-efficacy and job performance in this sample. Similarly, the correlation between despotic leadership and job performance was negative and not statistically significant (Table 1). This indicates that, in this sample, higher perceptions of despotic leadership were not significantly associated with lower

job performance. These p-values suggest that we cannot conclude that there is a true correlation between self-efficacy or despotic leadership and performance.

Overall, the data indicates a significant negative relationship between self-efficacy and despotic leadership, suggesting that higher levels of despotic leadership were associated with lower levels of self-efficacy among employees. However, the relationships between self-efficacy and job performance, and between despotic leadership and job performance, were not statistically significant. These findings imply that while despotic leadership clearly impacts employees' self-efficacy, its direct impact on job performance is less. In summary, the data indicates moderately high levels of self-efficacy among employees and moderately high perceived job performance of employees among their leaders. Furthermore, employees perceived low levels of despotic leadership. While self-efficacy is significantly negatively correlated with despotic leadership, it is not significantly related to job performance. Similarly, despotic leadership is not significantly related to job performance. These findings provide insight into the relationships between self-efficacy, despotic leadership, and job performance within this sample.

**Table 1**

*Mean, Standard deviation and Correlations of core variables*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>1.</b>	<b>2.</b>	<b>3.</b>
1. self-efficacy	4.56	1.10	–		
2. despotic leadership	1.19	0.47	-.515*	–	
3. performance	4.78	1.45	.085	-.167	–

*Note.*  $N = 6$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

### **Regression assumptions**

We tested the regression assumptions of homoscedasticity, normality, linearity, and multicollinearity. The residual plot for self-efficacy indicated that the residuals were normally distributed (Appendix B, Figure 1). The scatterplot showed no violations of the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity for self-efficacy (Appendix B, Figure 2). The points were scattered randomly which indicates that the assumption of homoscedasticity was not violated. In addition to that, the points also did not follow a curve, which indicates that the assumption of linearity is not violated. Multicollinearity was not a concern as the variance inflation factor (VIF) was below 4. However, some outliers were present in the scatterplot, necessitating careful examination as these were not excluded.

The residual plot for despotic leadership also showed a normal distribution (Appendix B, Figure 3). The assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were not violated, as evidenced by the scatterplot of standardized residuals and predicted standardized residuals. The points were scattered randomly and not shaped like a curve. Given the sample size, although despotic leadership was likely to be skewed, this was acceptable. Though not ideal, it fits the assumptions and both assumptions were overall met (Appendix B, Figure 4). Additionally, the VIF was below 4, indicating that multicollinearity was not an issue.

### **Hypothesis testing**

The first hypothesis was that self-efficacy would be positively related to job performance. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a regression analysis with self-efficacy as the predictor and job performance as the outcome, including despotic leadership as a moderator. According to the results (Table 2), self-efficacy was slightly positively related to job performance, which would indicate a small but positive relationship between self-efficacy



and performance. However, this relationship was not statistically significant. This non-significance was indicated by a p-value  $> 0.05$  as well as a confidence interval that included the value '0', which also indicates non-significance.

The second hypothesis was that despotic leadership would be negatively related to job performance. This hypothesis was not confirmed. The regression coefficient was slightly positive, indicating a positive rather than negative relationship. However, this value was also not significant (Table 2). This was indicated by a moderately high p-value as well as a confidence interval that included the value '0', also indicating non-significance.

The third hypothesis proposed that despotic leadership moderates the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance, insofar as that this relationship is weaker or even reversed under the influence of despotic leadership. This very low regression coefficient would indicate a very low relationship; however, it was not significant (Table 2). The p-value was low to moderate as well as a confidence interval that included the value '0'.

**Table 2**

*Results of PROCESS Moderation analysis*

Hypothesis	Relationship	Estimate	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1	SE $\rightarrow$ JP	0.18	0.21	0.85	0.399	-0.24	0.61
2	DL $\rightarrow$ JP	0.17	0.39	0.45	0.655	-0.60	0.94
3	SE x DL $\rightarrow$ JP	-0.07	0.07	-1.03	0.307	-0.22	0.07

*Note: N = 90. CI = 95%*

*SE = self-efficacy, JP = job performance, DL = despotic leadership*

## **Discussion**

### **Summary of Findings**

This study investigated the impact of self-efficacy on job performance of employees, with despotic leadership as a moderator. Besides being non-significant, our model did not explain a large amount of variance in job performance. Furthermore, the results did not indicate a significant positive relation between self-efficacy and job performance, suggesting that there is no direct relationship between self-efficacy and job performance. The findings further showed that the anticipated negative impact of despotic leadership on job performance was also non-significant. Similarly, the moderating effect of despotic leadership was found to be non-significant, indicating that despotic leadership does not significantly alter the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance. The only significant relationship that we found was between self-efficacy and despotic leadership. This indicates that when there is an increase in despotic leadership behavior, self-efficacy decreases. While there may be trends in the expected directions, the data did not provide sufficient evidence to confirm the hypothesized relationships.

### **Theoretical implications**

The theoretical findings of this study added to our knowledge of the complex dynamics between employees and leaders. Contrary to the findings of Stajkovic and Luthans (1998), which suggested that self-efficacy significantly increased job performance, our results did not support this relationship. The study by Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) was a meta-analysis that compared many papers and gathered several different results in order to make a conclusion based on several different sources. We took a different approach by conducting a field study on a Dutch population with a dyadic approach, rather than reviewing existing

research as in a meta-analysis. These differences may mean that our results are not significant and differ from the meta-analysis.

Finding non-significant results for the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance is not new to research. Existing research by Judge and Bono (2001) has already shown that research on self-efficacy and job performance is inconsistent. They also conducted a meta-analysis. In addition to their findings and the findings of our study, the impact of self-efficacy on job performance is not as straightforward as previously thought and other factors may be involved.

Furthermore, we hypothesized that despotic leadership would negatively affect job performance, aligning with Bolman and Deal (1991) theory that effective leadership encompasses multiple facets. According to their theory, the effectiveness of a leader is predicted by how well they utilize the four frames. A leader needs to solve organizational problems, has to focus on the needs of their employees, has to be networking and finally also has to encourage and motivate other employees (Bolman & Deal, 1991). The characteristics that a despotic leader displays are not in line with the frames posited by Bolman and Deal (1991), which might indicate that a despotic leader is not managing successfully. However, our findings did not support a significant relationship between despotic leadership and job performance, contrary to previous research highlighting the detrimental effects of leaders (Chatman, 1989; Davis, 2023; De Cremer, 2006; Yukl, 2012). The discrepancy may be attributed to our sampling process, which predominantly recruited participants through personal networks. This method might bias results toward more satisfied employees, as those dissatisfied with despotic leadership may opt not to participate in such studies voluntarily. Furthermore, we established results only at one point in time. Despotic leadership can also influence an employee over time (Gumbau et al., 2001; House & Howell, 1992).

According to Yukl (2012), a leader can guide people to perform well. They influence both task-oriented behaviors, such as planning, and relationship-oriented behaviors, such as supporting. Due to their characteristics, they don't improve either of these behaviors (Raja et al., 2020; Schilling, 2009) and therefore don't improve performance. In our study, we found no theoretical support for that claim. Our findings may be at odds with previous research because we measured the influence of despotic leadership differently than Yukl (2012). His assessment of what a leader must do to achieve success was more in-depth compared to our definition. We did not measure the specific behaviors mentioned by Yukl (2012).

Similarly, our investigation into despotic leadership as a moderator between self-efficacy and job performance did not yield significant findings. This non-significance does not contribute to our understanding of the relationship between despotic leadership and self-efficacy and job performance beyond existing research (Bandura, 1977; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Gumbau et al., 2001; Judge & Bono, 2001). One reason for non-significant findings might be the way we measured performance. According to Ancona and Caldwell (1992), performance is measured differently depending on the individual, culture or company. This extends also to manager and employee. They might rate their performance differently. Depending on how you measure performance and also the impact of despotic leadership, you might find significant findings.

### **Practical implications**

In our research we explored the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance which we found to be non-significant, with and without the moderator despotic leadership. The relationship between self-efficacy and job performance might be found to be significant if we include motivation as a moderator or mediator. This would be in line with the paper by Solomon (2023). Based on that idea a leader who would push the motivation of their

employees rather than decreasing it with their negative behavior might increase the job performance.

As organizational climate is based on the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of other members of the organization, it can be influenced by a leader (Denison, 1996; Momeni, 2009). Organizational climate has been shown to improve the efficiency of an organization's employees (Momeni, 2009). Effective leadership is necessary for an organization to have a good climate (Mabel, 2014). As self-efficacy is positively related to job performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998), self-efficacy could also benefit from a good organizational climate. In a nurturing work environment, employees are more effective (Mabel, 2014). Effective leaders promote this type of environment (Mabel, 2014). To develop and improve the organizational climate and therefore performance, a leader might need to motivate their employees (Mabel, 2014). The difference in results between Mabel's (2014) study and our study might be due to cultural differences. We sampled Dutch participants, while in Mabel's study, participants were sampled at the University of Malaysia.

Although the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance is not moderated by despotic leadership, based on the results presented in this study, despotic leadership may have a partial moderating effect on self-efficacy, which in turn may affect job performance. Self-efficacy has been shown to include motivation (Solomon, 2023). A leader who has a positive attitude can have a positive effect on employee motivation (Boyatzis et al., 2002). Thus, adding motivation to the model might yield significant results.

The general idea of Bandura (1977) that higher self-efficacy is associated with greater success. was not supported by our study, leaders could still build on it. Including other factors, such as a positive first encounter with a task (Gist & Mitchell, 1992), that increase self-

efficacy could still lead to higher job performance by increasing self-efficacy as Bandura suggests.

Despite the fact that we did not find significant results for the relationship between despotic leadership and job performance, a leader's behavior could still influence employee performance. Expanding on the idea of Gist and Mitchell (1992). A leader can influence an employee's perceptions in a number of ways. The leader influences how familiar a person is with a task, how they first encounter the task, and how many other things the employee has to do, so their mental and physical capacities may already be overwhelmed and they may not have the capacity to deal with complex tasks. The more familiar a person becomes with a task, the higher their self-efficacy will be (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). People's perceptions of how well they can perform a task are based on their environment, tasks and social contacts, all of which can be influenced by a leader. Based on Gist's idea, a despotic leader could influence self-efficacy by influencing one of these factors. Thus, extending the model we studied to include either social factors or task familiarity could lead to significant results.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The main strength of our study is the well-designed cross-sectional field study with multiple sources. The questionnaire showed high internal validity and reliability, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha values and previous successful applications. The diversity of the Dutch sample in terms of age, working hours and professional fields provided a comprehensive overview with the aim of generalizing the findings to Dutch organizational settings.

However, the study faced several limitations. A significant portion of participants (over 50%) did not meet the participation requirements. The large number of participants that had to be excluded based on that can potentially bias the results towards more compliant and satisfied employees. Future studies could address this by refining the questionnaire coding

process for dyads and offering bilingual options to expand participant inclusivity.

Additionally, increasing the accessibility and promotion of the questionnaire could diversify the participant pool and enhance the study's generalizability. Although the aim of this study was to generalize findings to Dutch companies, given that we yielded only non-significant findings, expanding the model to other national contexts and demographics might be an option to be considered in future research.

### **Directions for Future Research**

One possible explanation for the non-significant results could be our focus on Dutch companies and a relatively small sample size. Future research might expand the methods to acquire participants as well as changing the coding process. To enhance the robustness and significance of future research findings, gathering a larger sample size may be beneficial. Furthermore, potential moderator or mediator such as task familiarity or stress could be explored. Exploring potential confounding variables such as stress or task complexity might also enhance the significance.

Longitudinal study designs and alternative questionnaire methods could provide deeper insights into the effects of self-efficacy and despotic leadership on job performance, similar to House and Howell (1992). Addressing these methodological improvements could contribute to more conclusive and applicable findings in organizational research. In order to test whether self-efficacy could be influenced over time, we would recommend a longitudinal design, as we only conducted a one-time analysis. This would allow us to better measure the influence of self-efficacy on performance over time. It could also show that self-efficacy may not be directly influenced at one point in time, but may be influenced over time, similar to House and Howell (1992). Based on the work of Solomon (2023), the inclusion of motivation could help a company to influence self-efficacy and also improve performance. His idea of

the interplay between motivation, self-efficacy and performance is another area for further research.

Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) established certain moderators, which were not measured in our study. According to their research, task complexity as well as the work environment influences the effect of self-efficacy on performance. Adding to that, in alignment with the theoretical framework proposed by Gist and Mitchell (1992), the nature of a task can impact an employee's self-efficacy. If they focus on a task that they consider to be within their capabilities, their self-efficacy will increase and thus also their performance. Therefore, including task familiarity instead of despotic leadership might lead to significant results.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, our study did not indicate any significant findings for the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance, despotic leadership and job performance and for the moderating effect of despotic leadership on the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance. This suggests that within our sample and the context of this study, employees' sense of self-efficacy was not affected by a leader's perceived despotic behavior. Even though this study didn't yield statistically significant results, its findings contribute to the broader research agenda and previous studies on the interplay between leadership styles, self-efficacy, and job performance, which is crucial for organizations aiming to enhance employee outcomes and overall productivity. Future research should therefore expand on these results, address the aforementioned limitations and explore potential correlations more in depth.



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## Appendix A

Figure 1:

### *Self-efficacy scale Dutch*

**De volgende vragen gaan over uw werk.**

*Geef alstublieft aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de stellingen.*

[1 Helemaal mee oneens; 7 Helemaal mee eens; 4 niet mee eens, niet mee oneens]

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

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### *Self-efficacy scale English*

The following questions are about your work. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements. [1 Strongly disagree; 7 Strongly agree; 4 Neither agree nor disagree]

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.

Figure 2:

*Performance scale Dutch*

**De volgende vragen gaan over uw medewerker.**

(1=zeer slechte prestatie, 7=zeer goede prestatie)

Hoe scoort *uw medewerker* op...:

... het bereiken van doelen?

... het behalen van deadlines?

... werksnelheid?

... de kwaliteit van het werk?

... productiviteit?

... effectiviteit?

*Performance scale English*

The following questions are about your employee.

(1 = very poor performance, 7 = very good performance) How does your employee score

on...:

- ... achieving goals?
- ... meeting deadlines?
- ... work speed?
- ... quality of work?
- ... productivity?
- ... effectiveness?

Figure 3:

*Despotic leadership scale Dutch*

**De volgende vragen gaan over uw leidinggevende.**

Geef alstublieft aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de stellingen.

[1 Helemaal mee oneens; 7 Helemaal mee eens; 4 niet mee eens, niet mee oneens]

Mijn leidinggevende:

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.
-

*Despotic leadership scale English*

The following questions are about your supervisor. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements. [1 Strongly disagree; 7 Strongly agree; 4 Neither agree nor disagree]

My supervisor:

13. ... is punitive; has no pity or compassion.

14. ... is in charge and does not tolerate disagreement or questioning, gives orders.

15. ... acts like a tyrant or despot; is imperious.

16. ... tends to be unwilling or unable to relinquish control of projects or tasks.

17. ... expects unquestioning obedience of those who report to him/her.

18. ... is vengeful; seeks revenge when wronged.



## Appendix B

Figure 1:

*Residual plot of self-efficacy*

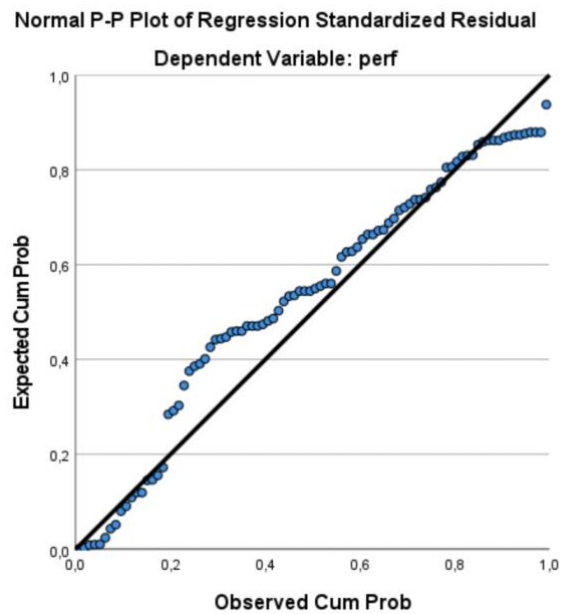


Figure 2:

*Scatterplot of standardized predicted value for self-efficacy*

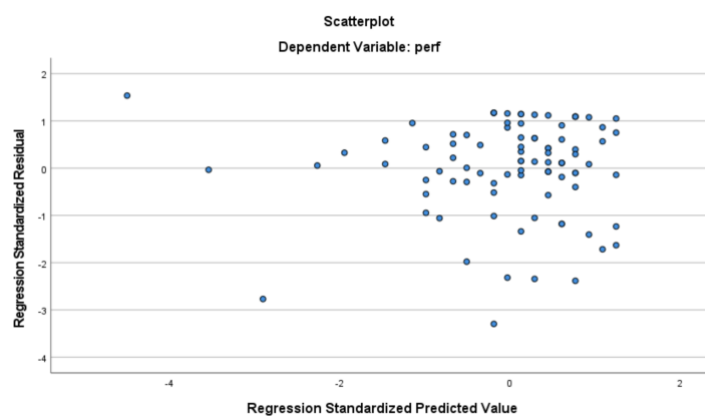


Figure 3:

*Standardized residual plot for despotic leadership*

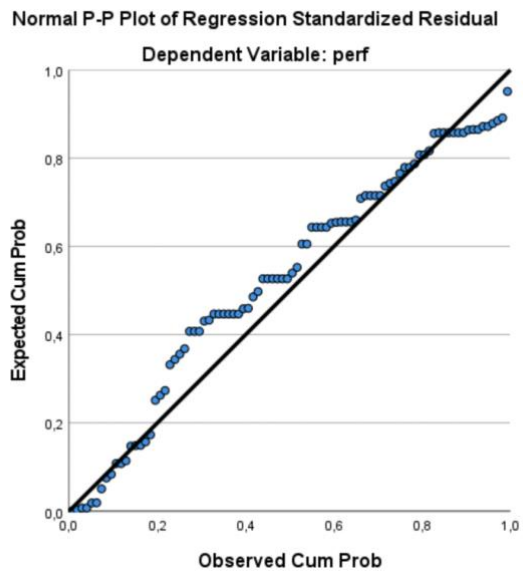


Figure 4:

*Standardized predicted residual scatterplot for despotic leadership*

