Why, when, and how leaders‘ narcissistic rivalry relates to destructive leadership

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SUMMARY

The aim of this dissertation was to examine the potential "dark side" of leaders' narcissism, especially with regard to destructive leader behavior and its effects on followers. Leadership is highly relevant for organizational and individual outcomes (e.g., Barrick et al., 1991; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Harter et al., 2002; Wang et al., 2011) and leader personality traits are meaningful predictors for leaders' behavior and leadership styles (e.g., Dulebohn et al., 2012; Judge et al., 2002). Whereas leaders' narcissism has previously been suggested as a potentially destructive leader personality trait (e.g., Krasikova et al., 2013), empirical evidence regarding the effects of leaders' narcissism in organizations has been inconclusive to date (for overviews, see Braun, 2017 or Schyns et al., 2019). With the empirical studies conducted in the context of this dissertation, I aimed to shed light on the questions whether leaders' narcissistic rivalry is a precursor of abusive supervision, which cognitive processes might underlie this relationship and whether followers can have an influence on their leaders' potentially destructive behavior. Furthermore, I set out to examine the effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on their followers and took a closer look on how this maladaptive narcissism dimension affects followers' feelings, behavior and their mutual relationships. This dissertation expands and contributes to the literature at the intersection of personality and leadership research in several ways.

For one, I based my research on a two-dimensional conceptualization of subclinical narcissism. Previous studies mainly framed or at least measured leaders' narcissism as a unidimensional construct (see Back & Morf, 2018), thereby potentially intermingling adaptive and maladaptive aspects. In this dissertation, in contrast, I used the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013) as a theoretical foundation and focused on the relevance of narcissistic rivalry, the

antagonistic narcissism dimension, in a leadership context. Narcissistic rivalry in the framework of the NARC is characterized by self-defensive strategies aimed at protecting the narcissists' inflated ego from potential threats. It is associated with devaluation of others in order to elevate oneself, with aggressive and manipulative behavior and social conflicts (Back et al., 2013). In consequence, I examined whether leaders' narcissistic rivalry predicted abusive supervision or abusive supervision intentions as one instantiation of destructive leadership.

Second, I aimed to shed light on the mechanisms connecting leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision. The NARC proposes that narcissistic rivalry is associated with derogative cognitions about others (Back et al., 2013). By belittling their followers and evaluating them negatively, leaders high in narcissistic rivalry could bolster their own egos. Furthermore, based on ego threat theory (Baumeister et al., 1996) and the NARC, one could assume that leaders act abusively towards their followers in reaction to perceived ego threats. Individuals high in narcissism react aggressively to negative feedback (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Ferriday et al., 2011; Kernis & Sun, 1994) and abusive behavior towards one's followers could be used as a means to regain status and reassert one's authority over others (Grapsas et al., 2019). Thus, I aimed to understand whether leaders' devaluing cognitions about their followers and perceived ego threats could explain the assumed positive relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and destructive leadership.

Third, leadership of course does not happen in a vacuum but is a dyadic phenomenon, shaped by both leaders and followers (e.g., Shamir, 2007). It has been shown that how followers behave and are perceived by their leaders can contribute to destructive leadership (e.g., Mawritz et al., 2017; Neves, 2014). However, studies on the interplay between leaders' "dark" personality traits and follower behavior are still scarce, even though the NARC proposes that self-defensive strategies are potentially

triggered in social situations where narcissistic individuals do not receive the admiration they feel they are entitled to and their grandiose, but fragile egos are threatened (Back et al., 2013; Geukes et al., 2017). Consequently, I also scrutinized follower behavior as a potential trigger for abusive leader behavior and for underlying mechanisms that might promote such behavior.

Fourth, and lastly, I took a closer look at how followers are affected by leaders' narcissistic rivalry as a potentially harmful leader trait. The NARC proposes that individuals high in narcissistic rivalry tend to show destructive behavior in interpersonal situations (Back et al., 2013). Based on social exchange theories (e.g., Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) one would expect that followers reciprocate with negative attitudes and behavior in the workplace when they perceive their leaders to be unsupportive or even abusive. Thus, I asked whether followers of leaders high in narcissistic rivalry felt supported by their leaders and how they evaluated their mutual relationships. Also, I examined whether leaders' narcissistic rivalry had an influence on followers' job engagement and performance-based self-esteem, both of which are predictors for important organizational and individual outcomes such as motivation, well-being and performance (e.g., Dulebohn et al., 2012; Judge et al., 2007).

These research questions were examined in four empirical studies applying different research designs, which are reported in the three manuscripts that compile this dissertation (Chapters 2-4).

In the first manuscript (Chapter 2), I hypothesized that leaders' narcissistic rivalry would predict abusive supervision intentions and that this positive relationship would be moderated by follower behavior. Based on theoretical assumptions drawn from ego threat theory (Baumeister et al., 1996) and the dominance complementary model (Grijalva & Harms, 2014), I assumed this relationship to be stronger when followers behaved dominantly compared to constructive or submissive behavior.

Furthermore, I examined potential cognitive mechanisms underlying the association between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions. Specifically, I proposed that the assumed positive relationship would be mediated by leaders' evaluations of their followers as unlikeable and incompetent. The assumptions were tested in an experimental vignette study with a real-life leader sample. Leaders' narcissistic rivalry positively predicted abusive supervision intentions in response to submissive, constructive and dominant follower behavior. The relationship was strongest when followers in the experimental vignettes behaved dominantly. Concerning the underlying cognitive mechanisms, I found preliminary evidence that leaders' evaluations of followers as unlikeable, but not as incompetent, mediated the association between narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions.

In the second manuscript (Chapter 3), I again hypothesized that leaders' narcissistic rivalry would predict abusive supervision intentions (Study 1) or abusive supervision (Study 2). Assuming that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry easily perceive their grandiose, but fragile egos to be threatened in social interactions (Back et al., 2013; Geukes et al., 2017), I posited an indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions or abusive supervision via perceived ego threat, and a moderation of this indirect effect by followers' supervisor-directed deviance. I predicted that this indirect effect would be stronger, the more supervisor-directed deviance followers showed, as such behavior could be perceived as undermining a leader's status and thus challenge their grandiose self-view. These assumptions were tested in an experimental vignette study with leaders (Study 1) and in a field study with leader-follower dyads (Study 2). Across both studies, leaders' narcissistic rivalry was positively related to abusive supervision intentions and abusive supervision, respectively. I did not find empirical evidence for the assumed moderating effect of follower behavior, implying that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry intended to treat or

treated their followers abusively irrespective of their deviant behavior. The indirect effect via perceived ego threats was only evident in the vignette study, but not in the field study.

The third manuscript (Chapter 4) focused on negative effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on followers. Based on social exchange theories (e.g., Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), I proposed a model where leaders' narcissistic rivalry negatively predicted perceived supervisor support. Furthermore, I expected negative indirect effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on leader-member-exchange, followers' performance-based self-esteem and job engagement via perceived supervisor support. The model was tested in a field study with matched leaders and followers. I found support for the proposed model when using follower-rated, but not when using self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry as a predictor. This suggests that the actual perception of leaders' destructive tendencies by their followers is more relevant for follower-related outcomes than leaders' self-assessment.

Overall, the findings of the studies reported in this dissertation substantiate the assumption that leaders' narcissistic rivalry predicts abusive supervision and intentions to lead abusively and that it affects followers negatively and thus represents the "dark side" of leader narcissism. The studies further show that this relationship seems to be independent of followers' actual behavior such that followers are treated abusively no matter how they behave; however, dominant follower behavior seems to be an especially strong trigger for abusive leader behavior. Concerning leaders' cognitions as underlying mechanisms explaining the relationship between their narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision (intentions), it seems that perceived threats to one's grandiose ego in response to deviant follower behavior and the devaluation of followers in certain aspects play a role. However, further research into these complex and interwoven processes is necessary. Real-life implications of these results are drawn regarding leader

selection, promotion and development, resources for affected followers and, on a larger scale, structural organizational countermeasures.

MANUSCRIPTS INCLUDED IN THIS DISSERTATION

This dissertation is based on three manuscripts that have been published in different high-ranked journals. The manuscripts are embedded in the text and can be read independently (Chapters 2-4).

Manuscript 1:

Fehn, T., & Schütz, A. (2022). How to deal with a difficult boss: The roles of leaders' narcissistic rivalry and followers' behavior in abusive supervision intentions. *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*, *230*(4), 300–310. https://doi.org/10.1027/2151-2604/a000503.

Manuscript 2:

Gauglitz, I.-K., Schyns, B., Fehn, T., & Schütz, A. (2022). The dark side of leader narcissism: The relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision. *Journal of Business Ethics*.[1] https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05146-6

Manuscript 3:

Fehn, T., & Schütz, A. (2020). What you get is what you see: Other-rated but not self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry affects followers negatively. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04604-3

[1] I contributed substantially with respect to conceptualization, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, writing of the original draft as well as to revising and editing the article.

In addition to these three manuscripts that compile the dissertation, the following publications resulted from my PhD phase:

Degro, G. M., Fehn, T., Schneider, S., & Schütz, A. (2021). How many close friends do you (think you) have? Representative panel data on narcissists' self-reported number of close friends. *Personality and Individual Differences, 178*, 110865. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.110865

Fehn, T. & Schütz, A. (2019). Ich liebe nur: Mich. Die modernen Gesichter des Narzissmus sind vielfältig. *uni.vers Forschung*, 32–35. Universität Bamberg.

Fehn, T. & Schütz, A. (2021). Steigerung von Emotionswahrnehmung und Emotionsregulation bei Führungskräften – Vorstellung eines Trainingsprogramms. *Report Psychologie, 46*, 16–23.

Fehn, T. & Schütz, A. (2021). Rezension des Work Design Questionnaire. *Zeitschrift für Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie A&O, 65*(1), 42–47. https://doi.org/10.1026/0932-4089/a000347

Geßler, S., Köppe, C., Fehn, T. & Schütz, A. (2019). *Training emotionaler Kompetenzen (EmoTrain). Ein Gruppentraining zur Förderung von Emotionswahrnehmung und Emotionsregulation bei Führungskräften*. Hogrefe.

Koydemir, S., Varol, M., Fehn, T., Bilgiç, I. D., Gauglitz, I. & Schütz, A. (2022). A multilevel analysis of the relationship between leaders' experiential avoidance and followers' well-being. *Current Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03865-7

Schütz, A., Fehn, T. & Baumeister, R. (2018). Self. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T. Shackelford (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28099-8_1998-1

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CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Leadership is one of the central themes of organizational psychology and research has traditionally focused on who becomes a leader, i.e. leader emergence, and what characterizes a good leader, i.e. leader effectiveness (e.g., Yukl & Gardner, 2019). Various leadership styles, such as transactional or transformational leadership, have been shown to be especially effective in eliciting desirable individual and organizational outcomes (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). However, organizational reality often paints a grimmer picture, where such positive leadership styles do not seem to be as common as one would wish: Many employees report being treated abusively or being dissatisfied with their leaders (e.g., Aasland et al., 2010; Tepper et al., 2017). This can entail negative consequences for employees, for example in respect to their well-being, health, or commitment, and in turn negatively affect organizations, for instance regarding performance or turnover (e.g., Martinko et al, 2013; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Reports of managerial misconduct on a large scale have shifted the focus from positive leadership styles to the "dark side" of leadership in recent years (e.g., Krasikova et al., 2013; Schyns et al., 2019). In this dissertation, I focused on one leader trait that is positively related to leader emergence, but not clearly to leader effectiveness, and that has indeed been suggested as a potentially destructive leader trait: leaders' narcissism (e.g., Braun, 2017; Krasikova et al., 2013). Specifically, I concentrated on leaders' narcissistic rivalry as the maladaptive narcissism dimension according to the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013) and its predictiveness for abusive supervision and abusive supervision intentions. Adopting a process perspective, I also examined leaders' cognitions as mediators in this relationship. In line with contingency and trait activation theories (e.g., Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Gutermann, 2000), I acknowledge that followers also shape leadership and influence their leaders (e.g., Shamir, 2007) and thus examined whether follower behavior acts as a trigger for abusive behavior and self-esteem threats in leaders high in narcissistic rivalry.

Furthermore, drawing on social exchange theories (e.g., Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), I not only investigated how this antagonistic narcissism dimension influences leaders' abusive behavior or intentions but also its imminent recipients, i.e. followers, and examined the effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on followers' feelings and behaviors and evaluations of the leader-follower relationship.

The general introduction is divided into the following parts: First, I define the focal leader trait this dissertation is concerned with, narcissism, and introduce the theoretical model underlying this work, the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013). Subsequently, I present the current state of the literature concerning narcissism and leadership and derive the key assumptions and research questions examined in the studies presented in this dissertation. The general introduction closes with an outline of the dissertation's further structure.

NARCISSISM

The Greek mythological figure of Narcissus, who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool of water and died because he could not break away from this sight, symbolizes central aspects that are relevant to contemporary definitions of narcissism. In clinical psychology, Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is defined by a grandiose sense of the self, feelings of entitlement and envy, the need for admiration and a lack of empathy according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In line with the prevalent view in personality and organizational psychology, this dissertation focuses on narcissism as a normally distributed dimensional personality trait existing to a varying degree in all individuals, characterized by the central goal to construe and uphold a grandiose self-view (e.g., Campbell et al., 2011). This overarching goal influences which situations an individual seeks out, how they interpret their surroundings and how

they interact with others. Specifically, individuals high in narcissism are attracted to situations that offer them a stage to shine (Nevicka, De Hoogh, et al., 2011), they attribute success internally (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998) and blame others for their mistakes (Kernis & Sun, 1994), they react aggressively to negative feedback (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), and use relationships for gaining admiration, not interpersonal intimacy (Back & Morf, 2018). The narcissistic self can be viewed as a self-regulatory system that includes a grandiose self-view, i.e. the belief that one is special and better than others, as well as intra- and interpersonal strategies aimed at enhancing and upholding this self-view (e.g., self-serving bias, grandiose fantasies, self-promotion) (Campbell & Foster, 2007).

Narcissism is a paradoxical trait associated with adaptive and maladaptive outcomes. For example, individuals high in narcissism are often perceived as charming and attractive in social interactions (e.g., Back et al., 2010; Holtzmann & Strube, 2010), but also as cold and manipulative (e.g., Back et al., 2013; Lavner et al., 2016). This led theorists to distinguish between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. *Grandiose narcissism* is associated with inflated self-esteem, extraversion, arrogance, entitlement, exploitativeness and an excessive need for admiration (Back & Morf, 2018; Miller et al., 2011). *Vulnerable narcissism*, in turn, is characterized by fragile self-esteem, defensiveness, emotional instability, anxiety, shame, and internalizing pathology (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010; Wink, 1991).

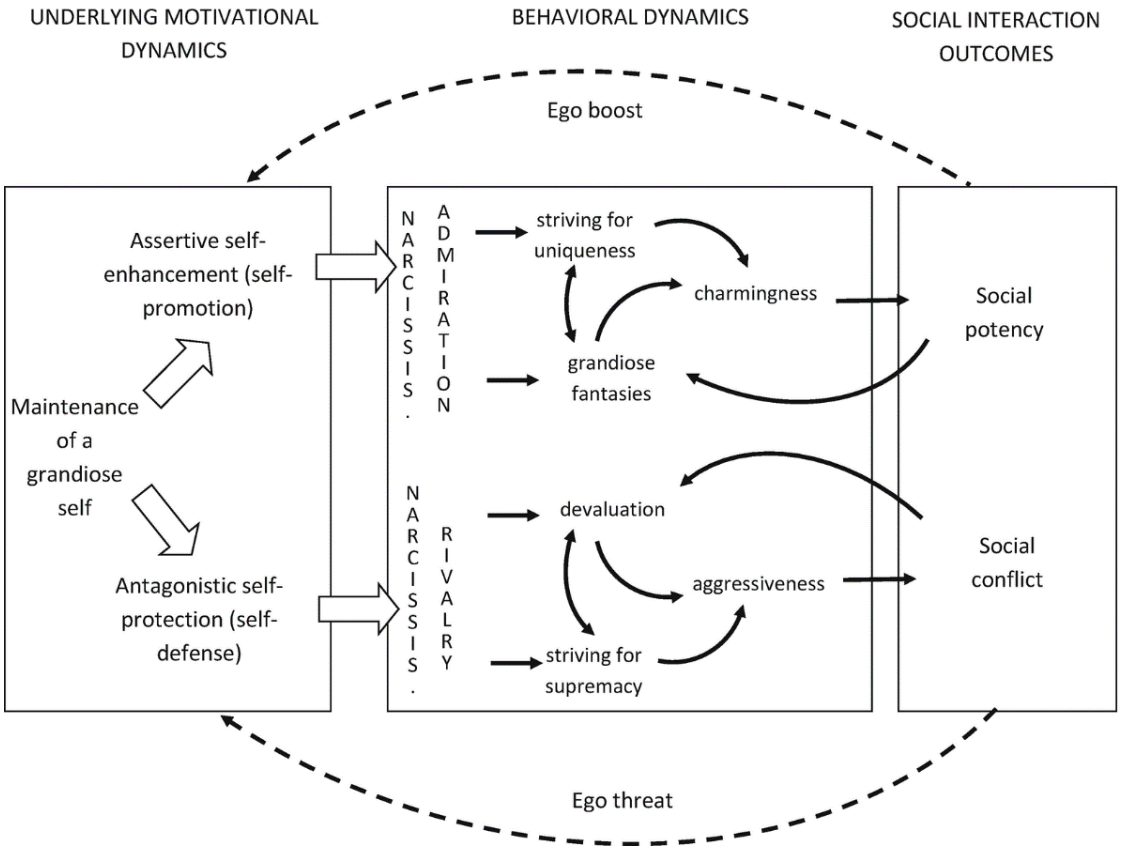
In recent years, several multidimensional models of narcissism have been developed in order to better explain its seemingly paradoxical correlates (e.g., Back et al., 2013; Krizan & Herlache, 2018; Miller et al., 2016). These models distinguish between antagonistic, agentic and neurotic aspects of narcissism. Whereas both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism are characterized by self-centered antagonism (e.g., low agreeableness, arrogance, entitlement), grandiose narcissism in addition contains

agentic aspects (e.g., extraversion, dominance, leadership) and vulnerable narcissism contains neurotic aspects (e.g., defensiveness, anxiety) (Rogoza et al., 2019). As grandiose narcissism is especially relevant in leadership research (Braun, 2017; Campbell et al., 2011), due to its relation to prototypical leader traits and leader emergence (e.g., De Hoogh et al., 2015; Grijalva et al., 2015), my dissertation focuses on this narcissism dimension. Thus, when writing about „narcissism“ in the following, I refer to subclinical, grandiose narcissism. Aiming at disentangling previous equivocal results by differentiating between “bright” and “dark” sides of grandiose narcissism, this dissertation is based on the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013), a theoretical model of narcissism that distinguishes the abovementioned agentic and antagonistic aspects central to grandiose narcissism.

The NARC suggests two positively related, but distinct dimensions of narcissism (see Figure 1; Back, 2018, p. 60). Similar to other theories (e.g., Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), the NARC posits that the central goal of individuals high in narcissism is to build up and maintain exaggeratedly positive self-views. However, going beyond unidimensional models of narcissism, the NARC describes two pathways characterized by different intra- and interpersonal strategies that aim at achieving that goal. The agentic dimension, *narcissistic admiration*, is characterized by striving for uniqueness, entertaining fantasies of one’s grandiosity and seeking social admiration through self-presentational tactics and charming behavior. This leads to positive social outcomes such as being perceived as assertive and sociable. The antagonistic dimension, *narcissistic rivalry*, on the other hand, is associated with striving for supremacy, devaluation of others and derogating and aggressive behavior, resulting in negative social outcomes such as being perceived as unlikeable.

Figure 1

The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept



Note. From "The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept" by M. D. Back, 2018, in A. D. Hermann, A. B. Brunell, and J. D. Foster (Eds.), *Handbook of Trait Narcissism: Key Advances, Research Methods, and Controversies*, p. 60, Springer. Copyright 2018 by Springer International Publishing AG, part of Springer Nature.

Ultimately, narcissistic admiration reflects self-enhancement strategies, whereas narcissistic rivalry entails self-defensive strategies—both with the overarching goal of creating and upholding grandiose self-views, either by elevating oneself or by downgrading others. In a feedback loop, the perception of the positive and negative social outcomes associated with each dimension either strengthens the grandiose self-view or further threatens it, leading to more self-enhancement or self-protection (Back et al., 2013). In the nomological network, narcissistic admiration is strongly related to extraversion and high, stable self-esteem; narcissistic rivalry is strongly related to disagreeableness and low, fragile self-esteem (Geukes et al., 2017; Rogoza et al., 2016).

Applying the NARC and distinguishing antagonistic and agentic aspects of grandiose narcissism is central to disentangling seemingly paradoxical findings from previous studies. For example, it has been shown that the temporal trajectory of relationships with individuals high in narcissism, characterized by initial attraction and long-term conflicts, can be traced back to the two pathways outlined in the NARC: Narcissistic admiration is related to being perceived as attractive and likeable in the short term, whereas narcissistic rivalry is associated with being perceived as untrustworthy, cold and manipulative, leading to conflicts and dissatisfaction in personal relationships over the course of time (Lavner et al., 2016; Leckelt et al., 2015; Wurst et al., 2017). Undisputedly, building and upholding relationships with one's followers is a crucial, irreplaceable aspect of leadership (e.g., Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; Dulebohn et al., 2012; Higgs, 2009). Previous research on leaders' narcissism, however, has rarely distinguished between antagonistic and agentic dimensions of this trait, leading to inconclusive findings outlined in the following section.

In consequence, I use the two-dimensional conceptualization of narcissism as proposed in the NARC as a theoretical framework in this dissertation. As I focus on the potential dark side of leaders' narcissism, I predominantly address the antagonistic dimension of narcissism, narcissistic rivalry, in the following. However, to not convey a one-sided picture, I also report and discuss exploratory findings concerning the effects of narcissistic admiration in the leadership context in the general discussion (Chapter 5). In the following section, I outline the current state of the literature concerning narcissism and leadership, leading up to this dissertations' research questions. The chapter closes with an outline of the dissertation.

NARCISSISM AND LEADERSHIP

Individuals high in narcissism show high levels of motivation to lead (Chen, 2016), they strive for leadership positions (Abeyta et al., 2017; Nevicka, De Hoogh, et al., 2011) and highly value status and power (Grapsas et al., 2019). Apart from this self-selection aspect regarding leader emergence, other-selection also plays a role: Narcissism is positively related to being perceived as a suitable leader in zero-acquaintance contexts (Brunell et al., 2008; Ong et al., 2016) and irrespective of actual performance (Nevicka, De Hoogh, et al., 2011). It is assumed that implicit leadership theories play a key role here, as individuals high in narcissism are characterized by various attributes that are perceived as typically "leader-like", such as dominance, an air of authority, extraversion and confidence (De Hoogh et al., 2015). Meta-analytic findings quite clearly show a positive relationship between narcissism and leader emergence, which can be explained by high levels of extraversion (Grijalva et al., 2015). Furthermore, Wille et al. (2019) showed in a longitudinal study that over a 22-year period, narcissism at stage one predicted later upward career mobility.

Regarding the role of leaders' narcissism for leader effectiveness, however, the picture is less clear. The results of a meta-analysis by Grijalva and colleagues (2015) show that leader narcissism is only related to self-rated leader effectiveness, but not to supervisor-, peer- or subordinate-rated effectiveness. Hence, individuals high in narcissism seem to self-enhance on agentic aspects related to leadership, but they are not perceived as effective leaders by others (see also Judge et al., 2006). Some authors suggest a curvilinear relationship between leaders' narcissism and effectiveness, implying an optimal middle range of leaders' narcissism (e.g., Braun, 2017; Grijalva et al., 2015), but evidence for that proposition is still lacking. Importantly, research that

distinguishes between agentic and antagonistic dimension of narcissism in the work context is still scarce.

Effective leadership goes beyond allocating tasks or giving instructions and largely relies on the creation of positive relationships with one's followers, as these relationships are crucial for elevating and upholding followers' commitment, satisfaction, well-being and performance (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002; Dulebohn et al., 2012; Higgs, 2009). Whereas their motivation to get ahead helps individuals high in narcissism to attain leader positions, their lack of motivation to get along with others and egocentric interpersonal strategies can be assumed to negatively impact their effectiveness as leaders (Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Paulhus & John, 1998).

Indeed, while interpersonal skills can be seen as a key competency for leaders, leaders high in narcissism are rated as lacking in that respect by their supervisors (Blair et al., 2008). Narcissism is related to low levels of relational-, task- and change-oriented behavior, meaning that leaders high in narcissism do not communicate effectively or encourage innovative thinking in followers (Martin et al., 2016). They also inhibit transparent exchange of information among others, which in turn can impair team performance (Nevicka, Ten Velden, et al., 2011). As outlined above, individuals high in narcissism are focused on their own goals, lack concern for others, act selfishly and dominantly and do not care about others' needs. In the organizational context, this leads to followers reporting low-quality relationships with their leaders, feeling less satisfied, committed and engaged and more emotionally exhausted and depressed compared to followers who work for leaders lower on narcissism. These negative effects in turn lead to decreases in citizenship behavior and performance and are especially pronounced when employees have low resource management abilities (Bernerth, 2020; Ellen et al., 2017; Hochwarter & Thompson, 2012; Owens et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2021). Furthermore, followers of leaders high in narcissism perceive these leaders as

untrustworthy, which increases employee silence, further hampering organizational functioning (Hamstra et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2020; Milliken & Morrison, 2003). The majority of the findings reported in the literature suggests negative effects of leaders' narcissism on their followers[2] (e.g., Ellen et al., 2017; Hochwarter & Thompson, 2012; Nevicka, De Hoogh, et al., 2018; Owens et al., 2015). Indeed, leaders' narcissism has been suggested to predict abusive supervision, a form of destructive leadership, but results have been not been conclusive so far (Nevicka, De Hoogh, et al., 2018; Waldman et al., 2018; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). Examining leaders' narcissism as an antecedent of abusive supervision might be especially relevant due to the relation between narcissism and leader emergence (Grijalva et al., 2015). In the following, I review the current state of the literature concerning the relation between narcissism and abusive supervision, outline research gaps and present how I addressed these in my dissertation.

ABUSIVE SUPERVISION AS A BEHAVIORAL EXPRESSION OF NARCISSISTIC LEADERS' DESTRUCTIVE TENDENCIES

Abusive supervision is commonly defined as leaders' "sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178). It is associated with a myriad of negative outcomes for followers and organizations, such as reduced well-being, low levels of job and life satisfaction and decreased productivity (for overviews, see Martinko et al., 2013; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Tepper, 2000). Unfortunately, abusive supervision seems to be a more

[2] One notable exception is the study by Volmer et al. (2016), who did not find negative effects of leaders' narcissism on employee well-being or job satisfaction. This unexpected finding may be attributed to the measurement of narcissism with the four items from the Dirty Dozen Scale (Jonason & Webster, 2012), which strongly focus on the entitlement aspect, but neglect antagonistic aspects.

widespread phenomenon than desirable and prevalence rates vary between 10% and 30% (Aasland et al., 2010; Hubert & van Veldhoven, 2001; Tepper et al., 2017).

The self-centered and often destructive cognitions, motivations and behaviors associated with narcissism suggest that individuals with high narcissism levels might be inclined towards abusive supervision (e.g., Krasikova et al., 2013). Previous research examining this assumption has, however, been inconclusive so far and has revealed positive (Nevicka, De Hoogh, et al., 2018; Waldman et al., 2018) as well as insubstantial (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016) associations between leaders' narcissism and abusive supervision. One reason for that might be that in those studies, narcissism was treated as a unidimensional construct and operationalized with the total score of the multidimensional Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Nevicka, De Hoogh, et al., 2018; Waldman et al., 2018) or four items of the Dirty Dozen scale that strongly focus on the entitlement aspect of narcissism (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). This approach neglects the differentiation between agentic and antagonistic aspects of narcissism that the NARC emphasizes (Back et al., 2013). Thus, in Manuscripts 1 and 2 of this dissertation, I examined the relevance of leaders' narcissism as an antecedent of abusive supervision using the two-dimensional conceptualization of narcissism proposed in the NARC. Based on the differential intra- and interpersonal dynamics associated with the two narcissism dimensions proposed in the model, I assumed that it is the antagonistic dimension, narcissistic rivalry, that is relevant for leaders' propensity to show abusive supervision.

Furthermore, previous studies on abusive supervision typically relied on follower reports of abusive supervision (Tepper, et al., 2017), which is in line with the concept's definition as subordinates' perception of hostile behaviors (Tepper, 2000). In the present dissertation, this follower-centric perspective was complemented by a leader-centric approach (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014) in that I did not only measure follower-

reported abusive supervision (Manuscript 2, Study 2), but also leaders' reports of their abusive supervision intentions, i.e. the extent to which they intended to treat their followers abusively (Manuscript 1; Manuscript 2, Study 1). Based on the assumption that intentions accurately predict future behavior (Ajzen, 1991), I used this as a proxy measure to examine whether leaders high in narcissistic rivalry admitted to their abusive tendencies towards their followers. In that, I followed suggestions by Schyns et al. (2018), who argued that, when predicting destructive leadership via leaders' personality traits, measuring actual behavior may be more relevant than followers' potentially biased perceptions of leader behavior.

Apart from establishing the association between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision (intentions), this dissertation also aimed at examining the "why", "when" and "how" of narcissistic leaders' destructive tendencies in more detail. Hence, the following parts are concerned with a) mediating processes in the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision or intentions to lead abusively, b) the role of follower behavior as a potential trigger for abusive supervision (intentions) and perceived self-esteem threats promoting abusive supervision, and c) the effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on followers' feelings and behavior and on their mutual relationships.

THE EXPLANATORY ROLE OF LEADERS' COGNITIONS

A central aspect of grandiose narcissism is the sense of grandiosity and superiority over others, which can for example be achieved by cognitive strategies such as internal attribution of success (Rhodewalt & Morf, 1998) or downward comparisons (Krizan & Bushman, 2011). That is, cognitive strategies contribute to the overarching goal of individuals high in narcissism, upholding one's grandiose self-view by overvaluing oneself and devaluing others. Specifically, the NARC proposes that in

order to protect one's grandiose self-view, the rivalry pathway is associated with devaluing cognitions about others and derogative behavior (Back et al., 2013). Thus, assuming that others are less worthy, competent or likeable could serve as an internal justification for treating them negatively. Indeed, it has been shown that hostile cognitions increase the likelihood of leaders treating their followers badly (Garcia et al., 2014) and it has been proposed that leaders high in narcissism have negative implicit follower theories, i.e. they assume that followers are incompetent or insubordinate (Keller Hansbrough & Jones, 2014). Implicit follower theories, in turn, predict relationship quality between leaders and followers (Sy, 2010). Consequently, I examined whether leaders' negative evaluations of followers' competence and likeability mediated the presumed positive effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions in Manuscript 1.

The grandiose self-view of individuals high in narcissism is often not rooted in reality (e.g., Judge et al., 2006; Zajenkowski et al., 2019) and thus subject to being threatened by external feedback. Ego threat theory posits that aggression towards the source of an ego threat (i.e., the perception of a mismatch between desired self-views and conflicting external feedback) can help rebuilding one's positive self-views (Baumeister et al., 1996). People high in narcissistic rivalry are extremely sensitive to loss of status and potential threats to their grandiose self-views (Back et al., 2013; Grapsas et al., 2019). However, these self-views are, per definition, highly inflated and do not necessarily correspond to others' perceptions or to objective facts. For example, individuals high in narcissism overestimate their leadership skills (Judge et al., 2006) or their intelligence (Zajenkowski et al., 2019). Whereas individuals high in narcissistic admiration focus on self-promotional strategies, which often result in social potency, individuals high in narcissistic rivalry are particularly attentive to cues that signal social failure (Back et al., 2013) and their self-esteem is fragile and contingent on social

feedback (Geukes et al., 2017). Thus, one might expect that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry regularly are confronted with individuals who do not support or reinforce their inflated, favorable self-views and, as a consequence, perceive ego threats. Aggressive behavior towards the source of the threat can then be used to rebuild one's self-view and regain status (Grapsas et al., 2019). Indeed, narcissistic individuals in general react aggressively towards the source of negative feedback, mediated by ego threats (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Ferriday et al., 2011). In cases where the initiators of such threats are one's followers, aggressive behaviors towards the source of the perceived threat, i.e. followers, in the form of abusive supervision could result. Thus, in Manuscript 2, I examined whether perceived self-esteem threats mediated the presumed positive relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions (Study 1) and abusive supervision (Study 2). Furthermore, I scrutinized the role of followers' supervisor-directed deviance in triggering these perceived self-esteem threats. The rationale for that assumption will be presented in the next part.

THE ROLE OF FOLLOWER BEHAVIOR

The previous paragraphs have focused on leaders' narcissistic rivalry as a potential antecedent of abusive supervision (intentions) and on the role of leaders' cognitions in explaining this relationship. Leadership, however, is co-created by leaders and followers and under an interactionist perspective, one needs to take into account the interplay between leader and follower behavior and its mutual perception (Shamir, 2007; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Generally, trait activation theory posits that the manifestation of a personality trait is dependent on contextual factors and others' behavior (Tett & Burnett, 2003). Regarding destructive leadership specifically, Aquino and Thau (2009) in their workplace victimization theory propose that follower characteristics can influence the probability of them being treated negatively by their

leaders. Specifically, these authors propose that provocative as well as submissive behavior makes followers probable targets of leader aggression. In line with this assumption, Aquino and Byron (2002) found a curvilinear relationship between follower dominance and victimization. Several studies have shown that followers who are perceived as "easy targets" or as provocative are likely victims of abusive supervision (Lian et al., 2014; Mawritz et al., 2017; Neves, 2014; Wang et al., 2015).

However, these studies have not yet addressed the intra- and interpersonal peculiarities of leaders' narcissism and the distinction between agentic and antagonistic aspects. The NARC outlines the differential intra- and interpersonal strategies related to these distinctive dimensions. Specifically, narcissistic rivalry is coined by self-defensive strategies aimed at protecting inflated self-views (Back et al., 2013). Individuals high in narcissistic rivalry place a lot of importance on status and superiority over others (Grapsas et al., 2019)—which could be threatened especially by dominant followers, who openly disagree with them and do not show the respect and deference the leaders think they are entitled to. Indeed, Back (2018) proposes that while narcissistic self-defense can be chronically activated in individuals high in narcissistic rivalry, this strategy can further be reinforced when perceived social outcomes—such as criticism or deviant behavior from followers—do not match the desired outcomes, i.e. being admired and praised. In that vein, Grijalva and Harms (2014) in their dominance complementary model suggest that dominant followers should have worse relationships with their narcissistic leaders than submissive followers. Supervisor-directed deviance, for example expressed in making fun of or being rude towards the leader, can be understood as one instantiation of dominant follower behavior, as it directly challenges leaders' authority and undermines their status (Bennett & Robinson, 2003; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007).

Ego threat theory posits that individuals high in narcissism react with aggressive behavior when their grandiose egos are threatened, for example when they receive negative feedback (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Aggressive acts toward the source of the threat can then be used to restore one's status. Consequently, I assumed that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry who perceived their grandiose egos to be threatened by dominant or deviant follower behavior would use abusive supervision as a means to reassert their superior status and restore their inflated self-views. Thus, I examined the supposition that leaders' narcissistic rivalry results in abusive supervision contingent on follower behavior in two experimental vignette studies. In Manuscript 1, I manipulated follower behavior in a conflict situation and hypothesized that leaders would react with stronger intentions to abuse their followers in reaction to dominant follower behavior as opposed to submissive or constructive follower behavior. In Manuscript 2, I scrutinized whether leaders high in narcissistic rivalry perceived stronger self-esteem threats when their followers showed high (as opposed to low) supervisor-directed deviance and whether this resulted in stronger abusive supervision intentions.

LEADERS' NARCISSISTIC RIVALRY AND FOLLOWER OUTCOMES

The focus on leaders' behavior, intentions and cognitions needs to be supplemented by insights on how followers' feelings, attitudes and behaviors are affected by their leaders' narcissistic rivalry in order to create specific and useful countermeasures on the individual and organizational level. Working for individuals high in narcissistic rivalry and building high-quality relationships with them might be difficult, as theory and empirical evidence suggest that such leaders do not treat their followers with respect or provide them with any support. For example, individuals high in narcissistic rivalry do not care about others' needs, they devalue others, and act in cold, manipulative and uncaring ways (Back et al., 2013; Lavner et al., 2016). Also, in a

romantic context, partners of individuals high in narcissism do not feel supported by their spouses (Lavner et al., 2016), which is an important factor influencing relationship quality (Clark & Mills, 2011; Sue-Chan et al., 2012). Even though romantic relationships arguably differ from leader-follower relationships, core aspects such as trust, mutual support and respect are central to the functioning of both types of relationships (e.g., Clark & Mills, 2011; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Similar to private or romantic relationships, relationships between leaders and followers are dynamic and reciprocal: According to social exchange theories, leaders provide task-related information, support and resources and followers reciprocate with motivation, commitment and performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Specifically, leader-member-exchange theory posits that positive relationships between leaders and followers are characterized by mutual respect, trust, and loyalty (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). If such positive relationships develop, this has substantial favorable effects on organizational outcomes such as in- and extra-role performance and turnover (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2010). Even though leader-follower relationships are dyadic and also influenced by environmental factors, there is meta-analytical evidence that leaders' personality is the strongest predictor for the quality of leader-follower relationships (Dulebohn et al., 2012), which leads to the assumption that leader-follower relationships might be influenced by leaders' narcissism.

Applying the insights concerning the interpersonally destructive attitudes and behavior of individuals high in narcissistic rivalry to the work context, I adopted a follower-centric approach in Manuscript 3 and examined in more detail how followers of leaders high in narcissistic rivalry evaluate the relationship with their leaders and what role their perceptions of lacking support by their leaders play in that regard. I predicted leaders high in narcissistic rivalry to be perceived as not providing support to their followers, resulting in negative evaluations of the leader-follower relationship.

Apart from focusing on the dyadic aspect of leader-follower relationships, I aimed at zoning in more closely on followers' feelings and behavior. Specifically, I was interested in how leaders' narcissistic rivalry affects followers' self-evaluations regarding their job-related skills. Part of our self-evaluation is based on the presumed evaluations of others, which we infer from our interactions with them (Leary & Baumeister, 2000) and our self-esteem is influenced by social relationships (Harris & Orth, 2020). That is, if followers infer from their leaders' behavior that they are seen as incompetent and unworthy, this likely influences followers' self-evaluations regarding their own competencies. As leaders high in narcissistic rivalry can be expected to express devaluing cognitions and show derogative behavior (Back et al., 2013), I hypothesized that this would affect followers' performance-based self-esteem negatively. I further expected that perceptions of low perceived support would mediate this relationship.

Lastly, to use a more proximal antecedent of follower task- and extra-role performance, I examined follower behavior in the form of job engagement (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010), i.e. the full investment of emotional, physical and cognitive resources into one's work role. Referring back to social exchange theories, being highly engaged is one of the ways followers can reciprocate in an organizational context: If they receive support and resources, they return motivation, engagement and, ultimately, high performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Dulebohn et al., 2012). Again, assuming that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry do not provide resources such as information, support or appreciation, I expected that followers of such leaders would feel unsupported and, in turn, show low levels of job engagement.

OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

The present dissertation contains three manuscripts that examine leaders' narcissistic rivalry and its consequences on different levels. Each manuscript stands on its own and can be read independently. The manuscripts are presented in Chapters 2 to 4. The studies presented in the manuscripts combine different perspectives and research designs. An overview is given in Table 1.

All studies are based on the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013) as a theoretical foundation and focus on the maladaptive narcissism dimension presented in that model, narcissistic rivalry, as an antecedent of various leader- and follower-related outcomes: First, the three studies presented in Manuscripts 1 and 2 examined how leaders' narcissistic rivalry is expressed in destructive leader behavior and behavioral intentions, in the form of abusive supervision. In Manuscript 1 and Manuscript 2, Study 1, I adopted a leader perspective and examined leaders' abusive supervision intentions in reaction to follower behavior in experimental vignette studies. In Manuscript 2, Study 2, I combined leader and follower perspectives and examined the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision in a cross-sectional field study with leader-follower dyads. Similarly, Manuscript 3 compared leader and follower perspectives in a field study. Here, I did not focus on leaders' behavior in the form of abusive supervision as an outcome, but more closely examined the effect of leaders' self- and follower-reported narcissistic rivalry on followers. Specifically, I focused on the levels of supervisor support followers of leaders high in narcissistic rivalry perceived and how these perceptions translated to evaluations of the leader-follower relationship, as well as to followers' self-evaluations (performance-based self-esteem) and their job engagement.

Second, I explored potential underlying mechanisms concerning the abovementioned relationships in Manuscripts 1 and 2. Concretely, I proposed an indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions via leaders' devaluing cognitions about followers in Manuscript 1. In Manuscript 2, I proposed an indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision (intentions) via perceived self-esteem threat, which I expected to be moderated by followers' supervisor-directed deviance.

Third, I examined the role of follower behavior as a potential trigger for abusive supervision in Manuscript 1 and for perceived self-esteem threats in Manuscript 2. In Manuscript 1, I manipulated follower behavior in three experimental vignettes to be either submissive, constructive or dominant. In Manuscript 2, Study 1, I manipulated followers' supervisor-directed deviance to be either high, medium or low and in Study 2, I used followers' reports of supervisor-directed deviance as indicators of follower behavior that might elicit self-esteem threats in leaders high in narcissistic rivalry.

After presenting the manuscripts in Chapters 2-4, I summarize and discuss the findings of the studies presented in the dissertation with respect to the broader literature in Chapter 5. I present implications for theory and practice and outline the limitations of the studies and derive ideas for further research. This dissertation ends with a brief overarching conclusion.

Table 1

Overview of the Studies Presented in Manuscripts 1-3

	Perspective	**Design**	**Outcomes**	**Mediator**	**Moderator**
Manuscript 1	Leader perspective	Experimental vignette study (*N* = 140 leaders)	Abusive supervision intentions	Devaluing cognitions	Follower behavior (dominant, constructive, submissive)
Manuscript 2, Study 1	Leader perspective	Experimental vignette study (*N* = 313 leaders)	Abusive supervision intentions	Perceived self-esteem threat	Follower behavior (supervisor-directed deviance)
Manuscript 2, Study 2	Leader and follower perspectives	Cross-sectional field study with leader-follower dyads (*N* = 123 dyads)	Abusive supervision	Perceived self-esteem threat	Follower behavior (supervisor-directed deviance)
Manuscript 3	Leader and follower perspectives	Cross-sectional field study with matched leaders and followers (*N* = 122 followers, 68 leaders)	Leader-member-exchange, performance-based self-esteem, job engagement	Perceived supervisor support	-

2

CHAPTER 2: HOW TO DEAL WITH A DIFFICULT BOSS: THE ROLES OF LEADERS' NARCISSISTIC RIVALRY AND FOLLOWERS' BEHAVIOR IN ABUSIVE SUPERVISION INTENTIONS

(Manuscript 1)

Fehn, T., & Schütz, A. (2022). How to deal with a difficult boss: The roles of leaders' narcissistic rivalry and followers' behavior in abusive supervision intentions. *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*, *230*(4), 300–310. https://doi.org/10.1027/2151-2604/a000503.

Original Article

How to Deal With a Difficult Boss

The Roles of Leaders' Narcissistic Rivalry and Followers' Behavior in Abusive Supervision Intentions

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Abstract: As abusive supervision entails negative outcomes for individuals and organizations, a better understanding of leader- and follower-related antecedents of abusive supervision can help organizations prevent destructive leadership. In an experimental vignette study with 140 leaders, we tested an integrative model that includes leaders' narcissism as an antecedent of their abusive supervision intentions. We also tested for the moderating role of followers' behavior and indirect effects via leaders' evaluations of followers. We employed the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC) to distinguish between adaptive and maladaptive dimensions of grandiose narcissism and found that the maladaptive dimension, narcissistic rivalry, predicted abusive supervision intentions. This effect was strongest when followers behaved dominantly. Finally, we found preliminary evidence that leaders' evaluations of followers' likeability, but not of followers' competence, mediated the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions. These indirect effects were not conditional on followers' behavior. We discuss these findings in light of theoretical and practical implications for individuals and organizations.

Keywords: leadership, narcissism, narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept, abusive supervision intentions, followers' behavior

In recent years, interest in research (see Schyns et al., 2019) and public discourse concerning the so-called "dark side" of leadership has increased. Abusive supervision, which describes "the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178), is the construct that is typically studied in this context (Tepper et al., 2017). It entails severe negative outcomes for individuals and organizations: In comprehensive meta-analyses, destructive leadership in general (Schyns & Schilling, 2013) and specifically abusive supervision (Mackey et al., 2017) were found to be negatively related to followers' attitudes toward leaders, well-being, job satisfaction, commitment, and performance but positively related to counterproductive work behavior and turnover intentions. Importantly, abusive supervision is widespread in organizations, with prevalence rates ranging from 10% to 30% (e.g., Aasland et al., 2010; Tepper et al., 2017).

Undoubtedly, knowing the antecedents of abusive supervision and the circumstances under which it is likely to occur can improve the implementation of preventive measures and interventions (Schilling & Schyns, 2014). Much research has focused on revealing leader-, follower-, and organization-related antecedents of abusive supervision (e.g., Tepper et al., 2017). For instance, leaders' agreeableness, conscientiousness, and honesty-humility have shown negative relationships with abusive supervision (Breevaart & de Vries, 2017; Camps et al., 2016; Mawritz et al., 2014), whereas neuroticism (Eissa & Lester, 2017) and Machiavellianism (Kiazad et al., 2010) have shown positive ones. However, the relevance of leaders' narcissism, which is positively related to leadership emergence (Grijalva et al., 2015), is not yet clear as results have been equivocal (Waldman et al., 2018; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). We aimed to clarify the evidence in three ways. First, we argue that the inconclusive evidence may be due to the fact that previous studies have largely studied narcissism as a unidimensional construct. In contrast, we based our study on the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013), which distinguishes between antagonistic and agentic dimensions of narcissism, in an attempt to reveal that these two dimensions may have different relationships with abusive supervision. Second, we aimed to shed light on the mechanisms that may underlie the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions and, putting theoretical assumptions of the NARC to the test in a leadership context, explored whether the effects can be explained by leaders' devaluation of their followers. Third, we aimed to better understand the role of followers in abusive supervision. From an interactionist perspective, we investigated the role of followers as co-producers of abusive supervision (e.g., Padilla et al., 2007; Shamir, 2007). Whereas several studies have revealed characteristics that make followers more likely to fall victim to abusive supervision (e.g., Mackey et al.,

2017; Martinko et al., 2013), to our knowledge, only one study focused on the interaction between leaders' narcissism and followers' characteristics in the context of abusive supervision (Nevicka et al., 2018). That study took a follower-centric approach and showed that followers with low self-esteem and low core self-evaluations perceived their leaders as more abusive.

The current study aimed to provide insights on leader- and follower-related antecedents of abusive supervision. From a theoretical perspective, distinguishing antagonistic and agentic narcissism dimensions and focusing explicitly on the antagonistic dimension of narcissistic rivalry and the associated cognitive processes can help disentangle previously inconclusive findings on the relation between leaders' narcissism and abusive supervision. In addition, examining how followers' behavior can be a trigger for abusive supervision yields theoretical insights concerning the relative importance of others' behavior in trait expression. Furthermore, knowing whether followers can influence how they are treated by narcissistic leaders can be helpful for organizations that want to avoid or reduce the occurrence of abusive supervision.

Theoretical Background and Derivation of Hypotheses

Narcissism and Leadership

Individuals high on grandiose narcissism tend to strive for leadership positions (e.g., Chen, 2016) and often attain them because of their extraverted and dominant behavior (Grijalva et al., 2015). Leaders' narcissism has been suggested as an antecedent of destructive leadership (Krasikova et al., 2013), but results have been inconclusive so far: Whereas some authors found that leaders' narcissism predicted abusive supervision (Waldman et al., 2018; Whitman et al., 2013), others found no such association (Nevicka et al., 2018; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016).

One reason for these inconclusive results might be that previous studies have relied on unidimensional measures of narcissism (e.g., Braun, 2017) and have not tested whether distinct dimensions of narcissism influence outcomes in opposite ways. We aimed to resolve this situation by applying the NARC (Back et al., 2013), which distinguishes between two dimensions. The agentic dimension, narcissistic admiration, is related to positive social outcomes. Individuals scoring high on this dimension tend to use charm and self-presentation to bolster their grandiose self-views. Narcissistic rivalry, the antagonistic dimension, is related to protecting one's grandiose self-view by devaluing and derogating others, resulting in negative social outcomes. For example, Küfner and colleagues (2013) and Leckelt and colleagues (2015) found that people high on narcissistic rivalry were prone to showing aggressive and competitive behavior (e.g., by insulting others). They are very sensitive to a loss of status and potential threats to their inflated egos (Grapsas et al., 2019), which, according to ego threat theory, should result in aggression as an attempt to restore positive self-views (Baumeister et al., 1996). Thus, we propose that, whereas narcissistic admiration should be unrelated to abusive supervision, leaders high on narcissistic rivalry should show a greater propensity for abusive supervision.

> *Hypothesis 1 (H1)*: Leaders' narcissistic rivalry, but not admiration, is positively associated with abusive supervision intentions.

Typically, studies on abusive supervision measure followers' perceptions of leaders' behavior. In order to complement this follower-centric approach, we focused on leaders' intentions to act abusively. In using this approach, we followed Schyns and colleagues' (2018) recommendation to avoid relying on followers' potentially biased perceptions of leaders. As abusive behavior is difficult to observe in everyday contexts due to its low base rates, reactivity, and social desirability, we relied on behavioral intentions as predictors of behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Underlying Mechanisms – Leaders' (D)Evaluations of Followers

As a second research question, we focused on the mechanisms underlying the expected positive relationship between narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions. Narcissists generally see themselves as superior to others and engage in downward comparisons (Krizan & Bushman, 2011). Grapsas and colleagues (2019) argue that this belief in one's superiority is inevitably linked to the belief that others are inferior (see also Schütz, 2001). According to the NARC (Back et al., 2013), people high on narcissistic rivalry devalue and derogate others to support a grandiose self-view, and this is related to aggressive behavior. In the same vein, Keller Hansbrough and Jones (2014) proposed that narcissistic leaders evaluate followers as incompetent and less valuable as a way to justify their abusive behaviors. Indeed, it has been shown that hostile cognitions increase the likelihood that leaders will treat their followers badly (Garcia et al., 2014) and that implicit followership theories predict the quality of relationships between leaders and followers (Sy, 2010). Hence, we expected that the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions would at least partially be due to leaders' devaluation of their subordinates. To disentangle whether negative evaluations occur at both an interpersonal and a professional level, we looked at leaders' evaluations of followers' likeability and competence separately (e.g., Abele et al., 2021). This led us to propose:

Hypothesis 2a (H2a): Leaders' evaluations of followers' likeability mediate the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions.

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): Leaders' evaluations of followers' competence mediate the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions.

The Moderating Role of Followers' Behavior

As outlined in the introduction, leaders' behavior is determined not only by their own personality but also by their subordinates' characteristics and behaviors (e.g., Shamir, 2007). In line with extant research (e.g., May et al., 2014), we presume that followers actively contribute to abusive supervision. Specifically, we expect that apart from generally devaluing others, leaders high on narcissistic rivalry are especially reactive to followers who threaten their status. We base this assumption on ego threat theory, which posits that aggression directed toward the source of an ego threat can be used to rebuild one's positive self-view (Baumeister et al., 1996). In line with this reasoning, studies have found that when narcissists receive negative feedback from others, they perceive the evaluators as less competent and less likeable (Kernis & Sun, 1994). Similarly, the NARC posits that the self-defensive strategies typical of narcissistic rivalry are triggered by self-esteem threats (Back et al., 2013). Due to their fragile self-esteem, individuals high on narcissistic rivalry can be expected to be extremely sensitive to potential ego threats (e.g., Geukes et al., 2017). The tendency to devalue others should be strongest when others behave dominantly, as followers who openly confront their supervisors and behave in a dominant fashion should be perceived as a challenge to their leaders' status and authority (Grapsas et al., 2019). Hence, we propose that leaders high on narcissistic rivalry should be particularly likely to devalue their followers, especially when a follower behaves in a dominant fashion and thus threatens the leader's status.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Followers' behavior moderates the negative relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and their evaluations of followers such that the relationship is stronger when followers behave dominantly than when they behave submissively or constructively.

According to ego threat theory, not only do individuals high on narcissism devalue others who threaten their status, but they also tend to direct aggression toward the source of negative feedback (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Thus, we propose that the indirect effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions via leaders' evaluations of followers' likeability and competence should be strongest when followers behave dominantly, as such behavior should trigger ego threat in leaders and thus spark efforts to restore their grandiose self-views by devaluing and mistreating the source of the threat. Integrating H2a/H2b and H3, we propose a moderated mediation hypothesis (Edwards & Lambert, 2007):

Hypothesis 4 (H4): The indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions via leaders' evaluations of followers is conditional on followers' behavior such that it is strongest when followers behave dominantly.

The theoretical model of our research is depicted in Figure 1.

Method

Sample and Procedure

We conducted our study in a real-life sample of German leaders from different fields. We contacted participants via the quarterly newsletter of the authors' competence center, the university's press department, personal contacts, and online platforms. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity and confidential treatment of data were ensured. At the beginning of the survey, participants indicated their position in the hierarchy (low/medium/high leadership position), specified how many followers they had, and answered demographic questions. Then, they completed the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire and afterwards read the experimental vignettes described below. The initial sample consisted of 141 leaders, one of whom was excluded due to missing data. Our final sample consisted of 140 participants (35% women). Participants were between 24 and 63 years old (M = 45.74, SD = 10.46) and came from nine industries, with public services being the most frequent (21%). Leaders directly supervised between 1 and 200 followers (M = 15.04, SD = 25.98).

Heeding calls for more transparency in psychological research, the theoretical model and the main hypotheses were preregistered on the Open Science Framework (OSF; see https://osf.io/q4ahw/). We also preregistered other variables and hypotheses that are reported in a separate manuscript (Fehn & Schütz, 2020).

Experimental Manipulation

We employed an experimental vignette design and manipulated followers' behavior to portray submissive, constructive, and dominant behavior (see H3). We followed

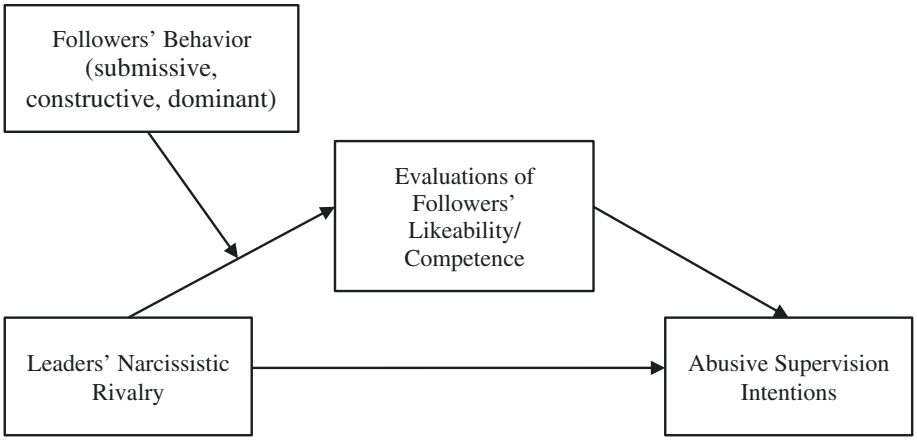

Figure 1. Proposed theoretical model

Aguinis and Bradley's (2014) recommendations in designing three experimental vignettes. The detailed development process and the full text of the vignettes can be found in the Electronic Supplementary Material, ESM 1.

We used a within-subjects design (i.e., each participant read all three vignettes in a randomized order; Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). Participants were asked to imagine that a follower showed the described behavior in the given situation (e.g., apologizing for a mistake vs. blaming the leader for it). Then, they rated the follower's behavior on dominance and submissiveness (manipulation check) and indicated how likeable and competent they thought the follower was on separate 5-point Likert scales. Afterwards, they indicated their abusive supervision intentions toward this follower on the scale described below.

The manipulation checks showed that participants perceived that the vignettes differed as intended: The submissive vignette was rated highest in submissiveness (M = 3.86) and lowest in dominance (M = 1.10), the dominant vignette was rated lowest in submissiveness (M = 1.25) and highest in dominance (M = 4.35), and the constructive vignette was in between on both dimensions ($M_{\text{submissive}}$ = 1.65; M_{dominant} = 2.63). All differences on dominance, $F(2, 417) = 468.93$, $p < .001$, and submissiveness, $F(2, 417) = 310.76$, $p < .001$, were significant.

Measures

Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry

We assessed narcissistic admiration and rivalry with the 18-item German version of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ; Back et al., 2013). Sample items are "I want my rivals to fail" (*rivalry*) or "I show others how special I am" (*admiration*). Internal consistency was good with Cronbach's α = .83 for admiration and α = .77 for rivalry.

Abusive Supervision Intentions

Abusive supervision intentions were measured with an adapted form of the German version of Tepper's 15-item scale (2000; German version by Schilling & May, 2015). We asked participants how likely they would be to show the described actions. For example, they rated how likely they would be to "ridicule Alex" or "put him/her down in front of others" on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (= *very unlikely*) to 5 (= *very likely*). Cronbach's α ranged from .80 to .85 in the three experimental conditions.

Leaders' Evaluations of Followers' Likeability and Competence

To assess leaders' evaluations of followers, we asked participants to indicate how likeable and competent they found the follower described in each respective vignette with one item each on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (= *not at all*) to 5 (= *very much*).

Control Variable

As leaders' intentions and their evaluations of followers could be influenced by negative affect, we controlled for this variable in all analyses. We measured participants' negative affect with the German version of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Krohne et al., 1996; α = .87), where participants indicated the extent to which they experienced negative affective states (e.g., "nervous" or "upset") on a 5-point Likert scale.

Results

Primary Analyses

Data management and preliminary analyses were carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, version 25 (IBM Corp., 2017). Table 1 presents descriptive statistics.

Table 1. Means (*M*s), standard deviations (*SD*s), correlations, and internal consistency estimates

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Narcissistic rivalry	1.96	0.65	(.77)						
2. Evaluations of followers' likeability	2.90	1.23	−.07	–					
3. Evaluations of followers' competence	2.83	1.19	−.08	.80***	–				
4. Abusive supervision intentions	1.27	0.39	.30***	−.43***	−.39***	(.80[1]/.84[2]/.85[3])[a]			
5. Followers' behavior[a]	2.00	0.82	.00	−.46***	−.33***	.32***	–		
6. Narcissistic admiration	3.16	0.75	.31***	.02	−.02	.04	.00	(.83)	
7. Negative affectivity	1.33	0.46	.17**	−.04	−.06	.22***	.00	.04	(.87)

Note. N = 140. Alpha coefficients are given in parentheses along the diagonal. [a]Categorical variable, dummy-coded: 1 = submissive behavior, 2 = constructive behavior, 3 = dominant behavior. **p < .01; ***p < .001.

For hypothesis testing, we used Mplus, version 7.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2012). Our within-subjects design yielded a hierarchical data structure: We measured the independent and control variables at Level 2 and the dependent and mediator variables at Level 1, as we expected them to vary across the conditions. The moderator was manipulated within-subjects (i.e., on Level 1) and dummy-coded in the analyses with dominant behavior as the reference category. We accounted for the hierarchical data structure using Mplus' *type = complex* analysis strategy, which adjusts the standard errors for the nonindependence of observations.

To test H1, we regressed abusive supervision intentions on leaders' narcissistic rivalry and found a significant effect (b = 0.17, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [0.10, 0.24], p < .001). Narcissistic admiration did not predict abusive supervision intentions (b = −0.03, SE = 0.03, 95% CI [−0.08, 0.03], p = .371).

To test whether the effect of narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions was mediated by leaders' evaluations of followers' likeability or competence as predicted in Hypotheses 2a/2b, we tested the indirect effects in a path model (see Table 2) and found a small significant indirect effect of narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions via leaders' evaluations of followers' likeability that just missed conventional levels of significance (b = 0.02, SE = 0.01, 95% CI [0.00, 0.03], p = .051). The effect via evaluations of followers' competence was not significant (b = 0.00, SE = 0.00, 95% CI [−0.00, 0.01], p = .181).[1] Specifically, narcissistic rivalry predicted evaluations of likeability (b = −0.16, SE = 0.07, 95% CI [−0.29, −0.02], p = .028) but not of competence (b = −0.13, SE = 0.07, 95% CI [−0.26, 0.01], p = .060). Conversely, evaluations of likeability (b = −0.10, SE = 0.02, 95% CI [−0.14, −0.05], p < .001), but not of competence predicted abusive supervision intentions (b = −0.04, SE = 0.02, 95% CI [−0.08, 0.01], p = .110). Again, narcissistic rivalry predicted abusive supervision intentions (b = 0.15, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [0.08, 0.22], p < .001).

In H3, we had predicted that the negative effect from leaders' narcissistic rivalry to their evaluations of followers would be moderated by followers' behavior. However, the interaction between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and followers' behavior did not predict evaluations of followers' likeability (b = −0.01, SE = 0.09, 95% CI [−0.18, 0.16], p = .923) or competence (b = 0.09, SE = 0.07, 95% CI [−0.04, 0.23], p = .183).

In order to test whether the presumed indirect effect of narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions via leaders' evaluations of followers' likeability and competence was conditional on followers' behavior, as predicted in H4, we calculated conditional indirect effects. The indirect effects via evaluations of likeability and competence were not significant in any of the conditions (all ps > .15). By contrast, the direct effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions were significant in all three conditions (all ps < .001).

Post Hoc Analysis

We conducted a post hoc analysis to examine whether the *direct* effect from narcissistic rivalry to abusive supervision was moderated by followers' behavior. As the interaction between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and followers' behavior was significant (b = 0.07, SE = 0.02, 95% CI [0.02, 0.12], p = .011), we examined the relationship for the three conditions by calculating simple slopes. The effect of narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions was stronger when

[1] This tendency was corroborated by post hoc analyses with only one mediator each: In the model with evaluations of followers' likeability, we found a small significant indirect effect (b = 0.02, SE = 0.01, 95% CI [0.00, 0.04], p = .028). In the model with evaluations of competence as the mediator, the indirect effect was nonsignificant (b = 0.02, SE = 0.01, 95% CI [−0.00, 0.03], p = .060). As evaluations of likeability and competence were strongly correlated, we conducted another analysis in which we aggregated these evaluations to form a single mediator. In this analysis, the indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions via leaders' overall evaluations of followers was significant (b = .02, SE = 0.01, 95% CI [0.00, 0.04], p = .028).

Table 2. Results of the mediation analysis

	Evaluations of followers' likeability			Evaluations of followers' competence			Abusive supervision intentions		
Variable	*b*	*SE*	95% CI	*b*	*SE*	95% CI	*b*	*SE*	95% CI
Narcissistic rivalry	−0.16*	0.07	[−0.27, −0.04]	−0.13	0.07	[−0.24, 0.02]	0.15***	0.04	[0.09, 0.21]
Narcissistic admiration	0.08	0.07	[−0.03, 0.20]	0.01	0.07	[−0.10, 0.12]	−0.02	0.03	[−0.06, 0.03]
Evaluations of followers' likeability							−0.10***	0.02	[−0.14, −0.06]
Evaluations of followers' competence							−0.04	0.02	[−0.07, 0.01]
Negative affectivity	−0.08	0.11	[−0.25, 0.10]	−0.12	0.12	[−0.32, 0.07]	0.14*	0.05	[0.05, 0.23]

Note. $N = 140$. *$p < .05$; ***$p < .001$.

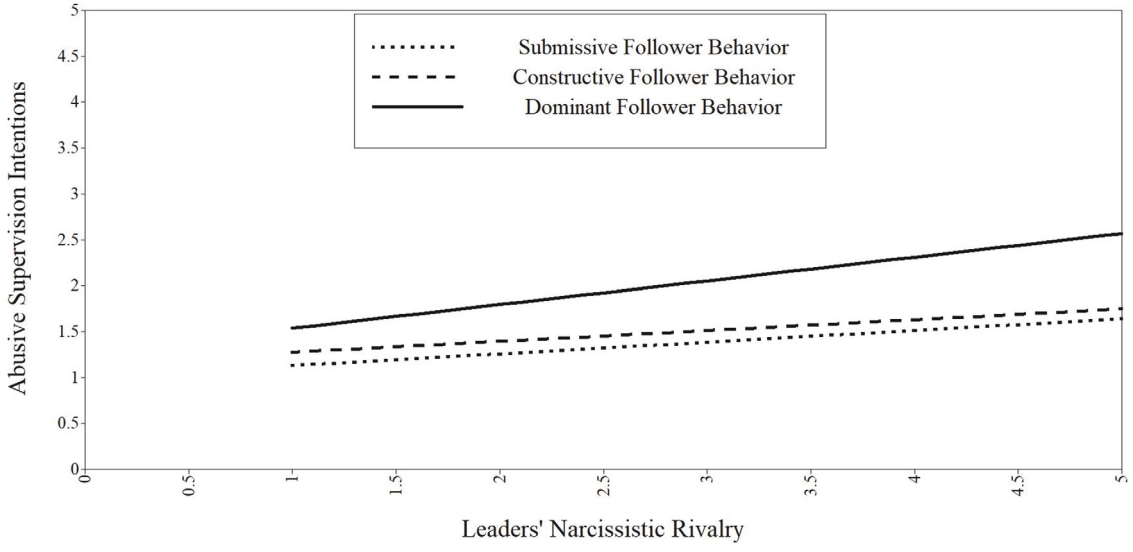

Figure 2. Simple slopes interaction plot showing the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions in three experimental conditions

followers behaved dominantly ($b = 0.26$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI [0.14, 0.37], $p < .001$) than when they behaved submissively ($b = -0.13$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.23], $p = .011$) or constructively ($b = -0.14$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.25], $p = .012$; see Figure 2). The effect did not differ significantly between constructive and submissive behavior ($b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [−0.09, 0.07], $p = .810$).

Discussion

Key Findings and Theoretical Implications

This study aimed to provide theoretical insights on leader narcissism as a potential antecedent of abusive supervision. Using a two-dimensional conceptualization of narcissism, we were able to disentangle previous inconclusive findings: In line with theoretical assumptions, we showed that narcissistic rivalry is the narcissism dimension that is crucial for leaders' abusive supervision intentions and that narcissistic admiration is unrelated to destructive leader intentions.

Furthermore, we took an interactionist approach and, in line with trait activation theory, asked whether followers could influence how their narcissistic leaders evaluate and treat them. Ego threat theory (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998) would suggest that especially dominant followers threaten their supervisors' egos and elicit negative evaluations and that this would result in abusive supervision intentions. The results of our moderated mediation analysis imply that, contrary to our expectations, the cognitive devaluation of followers might not play a crucial role in supervisors' behavioral intentions. However, followers' behavior impacts the *direct* effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry to abusive supervision intentions: Leaders' narcissistic rivalry was positively related to abusive supervision intentions in all three experimental conditions (i.e., whether followers behaved submissively, constructively, or dominantly). This relationship was strongest when followers behaved dominantly. The finding is in line with our argument concerning the role of threatened egotism in narcissistic self-defense. However, it seems that leaders' narcissistic rivalry is so strongly related to destructive

behavioral tendencies that it partly overrides the effects of followers' behavior.

Contrary to our expectations, leaders' devaluation of followers concerning competence was not a relevant mechanism that explained the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions. This result differs from Kong's (2015), who found that narcissistic negotiators evaluated their counterparts as incompetent. One explanation may be differences in the measurement of narcissism: Kong (2015) used the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979), which includes a strong preference for agentic aspects (e.g., competence). Narcissistic rivalry, by contrast, is characterized by self-protection and the disregard of communal or interpersonal aspects. Thus, for individuals high on narcissistic rivalry, likeability may be the typical dimension for (d)evaluating others. Furthermore, differences in the samples (undergraduates vs. leaders) and the role of the counterparts in the described scenarios (opponents in negotiations vs. followers) may have played a role. However, we recommend a cautious interpretation of the indirect effects via likeability and competence because the confidence intervals either barely contained zero or just missed containing zero. Methodological aspects discussed in the Limitations section might have been a reason we did not find the predicted mediation effect.

Relating our findings to the theoretical assumptions of the narcissistic leaders and dominance complementarity model (Grijalva & Harms, 2014), our results support the notion that followers' submissive or constructive behavior may work *better* with narcissistic leaders than followers' dominant behavior, but on the basis of our results, one cannot expect any group to have *good* working relationships with leaders who are high on narcissistic rivalry. Indeed, in our study, such leaders reported intentions to behave abusively no matter how their fictional followers behaved. This paints a rather grim picture concerning the framework proposed by May and colleagues (2014), who thought that followers' behavior could mitigate destructive leadership: Our findings suggest that followers' behavior – no matter whether it is submissive, constructive, or dominant – will not prevent leaders from engaging in abusive behavior, even though dominant behavior may make it even worse.

An option for future studies is to test the consequences of active ingratiation as a strategy with narcissistic leaders. For example, Harvey and colleagues (2007) showed that employees who refrained from ingratiation suffered more from abusive supervision than others. Thus, we would expect that when followers provide an ego boost to their narcissistic leaders, this may reduce their leaders' antagonistic tendencies. This reasoning would be in line with the arguments offered by Grapsas and colleagues (2019), who claimed that self-enhancement is the "default" for narcissists and that they only derogate others when their status is threatened.

Limitations

The use of an experimental vignette design and a sample of real-life leaders were strengths of our study. Experimental vignettes allow researchers to examine sensitive topics and manipulate relevant variables in a controlled fashion. Using a real-life sample instead of the typical student sample also alleviated threats to external validity (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; Steiner et al., 2016). Still, our findings need to be validated in field studies and should be complemented by further data on, for example, time in a leadership position. Future studies should ideally supplement leaders' and followers' reports of followers' behavior and leaders' abusive supervision (intentions) with objective, third-party reports of abuse. This would also alleviate concerns about common method bias, which could also be reduced by separating measures in time in future studies (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

Due to obstacles in observing actual abusive behavior in the workplace and our reliance on an experimental vignette design, we measured leaders' intentions rather than followers' reports of leaders' behavior. This poses two challenges: First, whereas intentions are valid predictors of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991), of course, this approach does not yield conclusive insights into how narcissistic leaders' intentions actually play out in the organizational context and how followers perceive such behavior. However, Martinko and colleagues (2013) questioned the viability of using only followers' perceptions as a proxy for actual leader behavior, and we agree that future studies should incorporate followers' perceptions, leaders' intentions, and actual behavior. Also, self-reports of behavioral intentions may be biased by social desirability. However, in previous studies that used self-reports of abusive supervision, the means did not deviate significantly from followers' reports (Johnson et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2016), thus implying that social desirability might not be an issue in this domain.

Lastly, there might be methodological reasons for why we did not find the expected indirect effects. We used one-item measures of leaders' evaluations of their followers' likeability and competence for pragmatic reasons. We also wanted to capture rather global evaluations (e.g., Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2009) and did not want to overburden participants. However, this approach can impair construct validity. We suggest that future studies use more comprehensive measures of devaluation to examine its role in the rivalry-abusive supervision link.

Practical Implications

Our findings yield implications for organizations and individuals in several respects. First, concerning the leaders themselves, the positive relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions suggests that organizations should not hire or promote leaders who are high on this trait. Keeping in mind that narcissists easily acquire leadership positions due to the overlap of their behavior with what is considered "leader-like" (De Hoogh et al., 2015), selection and promotion processes need to be adapted. Decisions should be based on objective, performance-based criteria or on results from conditional reasoning tests, which could limit the influence of self-presentational strategies (LeBreton et al., 2007). Furthermore, it may also be helpful to use selection strategies that focus on desirable leader traits that typically do not coincide with narcissistic rivalry (e.g., integrity or empathy; Back et al., 2013; Rogoza et al., 2016; Wetzel et al., 2016).

Once individuals high on narcissistic rivalry have acquired leadership positions, our findings suggest that organizations should try to prevent these leaders' negative cognitions about followers' likeability from translating into abusive behavior. Considering that narcissists rarely see reasons for changing their ways (Brunell & Campbell, 2011), such preventative strategies will be challenging. We propose that organizations explicitly sanction destructive leadership and endorse positive (i.e., supportive and respectful) leadership, thus conveying the idea that in order to get ahead in the organization, one also needs to establish positive relationships with subordinates. If narcissistic leaders realize that treating their followers damages their own status (Grapsas et al., 2019), they might be more inclined to at least not act out their abusive tendencies. Organizations could thus counteract abusive supervision by adapting performance ratings and providing training opportunities that foster supportive leadership (Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2018).

Second, concerning the influence of followers on destructive leadership, our findings paint a rather grim picture as they imply that followers cannot do much to influence how leaders high on narcissistic rivalry treat them. Apart from the suggestions we made above regarding ingratiation as a possible strategy for stroking a leader's ego and thus being spared abusive supervision, we suggest that followers who are suffering under their leaders should activate additional resources that alleviate the negative effects of abusive supervision, such as peer support (e.g., Hobman et al., 2009).

Third, organizations should try to create an environment that convincingly establishes employee well-being, mutual respect, and trust as core values, instead of promoting a getting-ahead-at-all-costs mentality. Effective complaint systems and disciplinary procedures have to be in place, and employees should be encouraged to use these without fear of reprisal (e.g., Schyns et al., 2022).

Conclusion

We showed that leaders' narcissistic rivalry, but not admiration, was positively related to their abusive supervision intentions. This relationship was strongest when followers in our experimental vignettes behaved dominantly, but it did not disappear when they behaved submissively or constructively. We found preliminary evidence that leaders' negative evaluations of followers' likeability, but not their competence, mediated the relationship between narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions; however, the indirect effects were not conditional on followers' behavior. We suggest that our findings be further validated in field studies and that active ingratiation be included as an additional strategy that followers might use to cope with narcissistic leaders. Organizations should (a) use objective criteria for leader selection and promotion in order to prevent people high on narcissistic rivalry from acquiring leadership positions, (b) sanction destructive and promote positive leadership, and (c) empower employees to make use of support structures.

Electronic Supplementary Material

The electronic supplementary material is available with the online version of the article at https://doi.org/10.1027/2151-2604/a000503

ESM 1. Development and Content of Experimental Vignettes: The document contains a detailed description of the development of the experimental vignettes and the full text of the vignettes.

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CHAPTER 3: THE DARK SIDE OF LEADER NARCISSISM: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERS' NARCISSISTIC RIVALRY AND ABUSIVE SUPERVISION

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ORIGINAL PAPER

The Dark Side of Leader Narcissism: The Relationship Between Leaders' Narcissistic Rivalry and Abusive Supervision

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Abstract

Narcissists often attain leadership positions, but at the same time do not care for others and often engage in unethical behaviors. We therefore explored the role of leader narcissism as an antecedent of abusive supervision, a form of unethical leadership. We based our study on the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC) and proposed a direct positive effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry—the maladaptive narcissism dimension—on abusive supervision. In line with trait activation and threatened egotism theory, we also proposed a moderated mediation assuming that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry would be particularly prone to showing abusive supervision in reaction to followers' supervisor-directed deviance, as this form of follower behavior would threaten their self-esteem. We conducted a field study with leader–follower dyads (Study 1) and an experimental vignette study with leaders (Study 2). Leaders' narcissistic rivalry was positively related to abusive supervision (intentions) in both studies. This effect was independent of followers' supervisor-directed deviance and leaders' perceived self-esteem threat. We discuss our findings in light of the NARC, as well as threatened egotism theory, and offer directions for future research. Finally, we make practical recommendations for organizations.

Keywords Abusive supervision · Narcissism · Threatened egotism · Perceived self-esteem threat · Supervisor-directed deviance

Over the last two decades, research has shown that followers and organizations as a whole suffer from abusive supervision, a form of unethical leadership defined as leaders' "sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000). Abusive supervision includes morally unacceptable behaviors, such as lying to followers, talking badly about them, or making them responsible for the leader's own mistakes. Extant research has shown that abusive supervision is associated with a wide range of harmful outcomes in followers, such as lower levels of life satisfaction, diminished well-being, and less productivity (for overviews, see e.g., Martinko et al., 2013; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). These findings highlight that abusive supervision is a serious problem for organizations and individuals and make it all the more important to study its antecedents (for reviews, see Martinko et al., 2013; Tepper et al., 2017; Zhang & Bednall, 2016).

In our study, we strive to complement prior research on the antecedents of abusive supervision and provide new theoretical insights using existing theory to identify factors associated with this specific form of destructive leadership. As abusive supervision refers to leader behaviors, investigating leader-related antecedents is key. Business ethics scholars have been particularly concerned with the role of leader narcissism as an antecedent of abusive supervision, as narcissism is linked to unethical and self-serving behaviors (e.g., Harrison et al., 2018). Narcissism is defined as "a relatively stable individual difference consisting of grandiosity, self-love and inflated self-views" (Campbell et al., 2011). It is particularly relevant in the study of leadership because narcissists are highly motivated to get ahead and often attain leadership positions (e.g., Grijalva et al., 2015). This is even more important, as narcissists are interpersonally difficult (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), which may be reflected in the way narcissistic leaders behave toward their followers (Hansbrough & Jones, 2014).

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However, empirical findings have been ambiguous, with some studies reporting a direct association between leader narcissism and abusive supervision (e.g., Waldman et al., 2018; Whitman et al., 2013) and others reporting none (Nevicka et al., 2018; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). On the one hand, these inconclusive findings are problematic because they still leave open the question of whether narcissism is good or bad for organizations (e.g., Campbell et al., 2011). On the other hand, previous ambiguous results also highlight the need to theoretically rethink the role of narcissism in negative leadership. This is especially relevant in light of robust evidence connecting narcissism to leader emergence (Grijalva et al., 2015). Hence, we build our study on the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013) and aim to provide theoretical insights into how narcissism and abusive supervision interrelate in order to clarify previous, inconclusive findings on narcissism and abusive supervision (Nevicka et al., 2018; Waldman et al., 2018; Whitman et al., 2013; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016).

Unlike prior research, which has neglected the facet structure of narcissism (Nevicka et al., 2018; Waldman et al., 2018; Whitman et al., 2013; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016), the NARC differentiates between agentic and antagonistic sides of narcissism, which each have distinct social consequences (Back et al., 2013; Helfrich & Dietl, 2019). Prior research employing the NARC in an organizational setting has shown, for instance, that the agentic side of narcissism (called narcissistic admiration) is positively associated with empowerment, whereas the antagonistic side of narcissism (called narcissistic rivalry) is negatively associated with empowerment (Helfrich & Dietl, 2019). Overall, according to the NARC, the negative consequences of narcissism (i.e., aggressive, immoral, and manipulative behaviors) can be traced back to narcissistic rivalry, whereas narcissistic admiration should be unrelated to social conflict (Back et al., 2013). Therefore, we assume that only leaders' narcissistic rivalry (but not their narcissistic admiration) is positively related to abusive supervision. By building our study on the two-dimensional narcissism model of the NARC, we extend prior research on leader narcissism and abusive supervision, which has not differentiated between dimensions of narcissism.

Furthermore, from an ethics perspective, it would be one-sided to look for causes of abusive supervision only in the leader. Hence, we turned to relevant theory to derive antecedents for abusive supervision relating to the situation as, according to trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000), traits are triggered by situational cues. In line with this reasoning, we do not expect leadership to occur in a vacuum, and consider the role of followers as situational triggers of abusive supervision (Padilla et al., 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2018). For instance, prior research has shown that followers are likely to experience more abusive supervision when they behave in deviant ways (Mawritz et al., 2017; Simon et al., 2015), show avoidant behaviors (Simon et al., 2015), or perform poorly (Liang et al., 2016), supporting the notion that followers might trigger abusive supervision, at least in some leaders. We wondered whether narcissistic leaders would behave abusively, particularly in response to certain follower behaviors. Hence, we took an integrative approach and examined the interactive effects of leader narcissism and follower behaviors as possible antecedents of abusive supervision, attempting to examine *when* and *why* leaders high in narcissistic rivalry show abusive supervision.

Based on threatened egotism theory (Baumeister et al., 1996; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), we propose that followers' supervisor-directed deviance constitutes a self-esteem threat for leaders high in narcissistic rivalry. We argue that such leaders are especially likely to perceive that these followers evaluate them negatively and in a way that contradicts their grandiose self-views, thus threatening their inflated, but fragile, self-esteem. In response, we expect those leaders to show abusive supervision in order to reaffirm their superiority. In sum, we assume that followers' supervisor-directed deviance (moderator) triggers narcissistic leaders' abusive supervision via perceived self-esteem threat (mediator). We show the theoretical model of our research in Fig. 1.

Prior research on abusive supervision has relied mainly on follower ratings of abusive supervision by asking followers how often their leaders showed abusive behaviors (see Mackey et al., 2017; Tepper et al., 2017). However, it is also important to examine abusive supervision from the leaders' perspective, as self-awareness of negative leadership is an important prerequisite for leader development (Day, 2000). In the current research project, we combine both perspectives by examining follower ratings of abusive supervision in Study 1, and leader ratings of abusive supervision intentions in Study 2. By doing so, we enhance prior research in an important way by combining both follower and leader perspectives on abusive supervision.

Narcissism and Leadership

Whereas narcissists are motivated to get ahead and often emerge as leaders (e.g., Grijalva et al., 2015; Nevicka et al., 2011), they are not motivated to get along with others (Bradlee & Emmons, 1992). Furthermore, in interpersonal contexts, narcissists are not interested in, and indeed have problems building and maintaining, positive relationships with others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), including in the workplace (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Narcissists are selfish, put their own interests above others', derogate others (Park & Colvin, 2015), and tend to behave aggressively

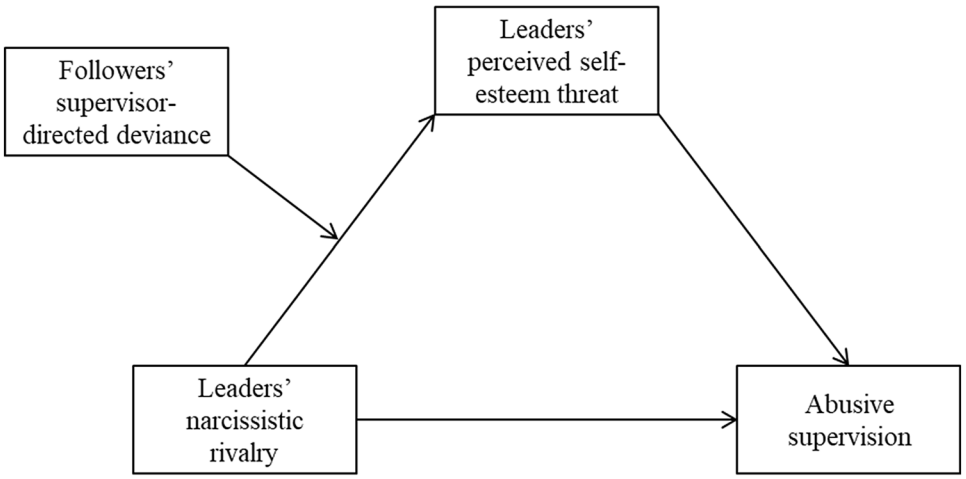

Fig. 1 Proposed theoretical model

(Seah & Ang, 2008), all of which makes it likely that narcissistic leaders will show abusive supervisory behaviors (e.g., Krasikova et al., 2013; Tepper, 2007).

However, despite these theoretical assumptions, the empirical results have been ambiguous. Whereas some authors did not find a direct association between leader narcissism and abusive supervision (Nevicka et al., 2018; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016), others did (Waldman et al., 2018; Whitman et al., 2013). One reason for these mixed findings could be the previous use of unidimensional narcissism measures, which reflect different aspects of narcissism but do not differentiate between assertive and antagonistic aspects of narcissism. In particular, Wisse and Sleebos (2016) employed the four narcissism items from the Dirty Dozen scale (Jonason & Webster, 2010), which has been criticized for not capturing the unique features of narcissism (Lee et al., 2013). By contrast, Nevicka et al. (2018) and Waldman et al. (2018) used different short versions of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Hall, 1979), calculating total NPI scores that combine different dimensions of narcissism. Thus, the potential differential effects of antagonistic and agentic aspects of narcissism on abusive supervision might have cancelled each other out in these studies. Finally, Whitman et al. (2013) used Campbell et al.'s (2004) Psychological Entitlement Scale, and thus captured only one core feature of leader narcissism (i.e., leaders' psychological entitlement), while neglecting other, more antagonistic, aspects. In sum, it seems there is a potential association between leader narcissism and abusive supervision. However, it is unclear which dimensions of narcissism are relevant as previous research has used unidimensional measures combining both assertive (e.g., extraversion, self-assurance, charmingness) and antagonistic (e.g., hostility, malicious envy, aggression) aspects.

Narcissism includes both a bright (assertiveness) and a dark side (antagonism), each relating differently to leadership (Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005), and it would seem important to employ a narcissism measure to differentiate both. Thus, we base our study on a theoretical model that explicitly takes this differentiation into account, namely, the NARC (Back et al., 2013). The NARC differentiates between agentic and antagonistic sides of narcissism, that is, narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry. These two dimensions of narcissism are associated with distinct behavioral strategies (i.e., assertiveness versus antagonism) related to opposing interpersonal outcomes (e.g., social success vs social conflict, respectively). Therefore, the NARC is a potentially useful theoretical approach to clarify previously inconclusive findings on narcissism and abusive supervision as it (1) differentiates between narcissism dimensions (different from previous research treating narcissism as an unidimensional construct), and as (2) the behavioral dynamics associated with these two dimensions are related to opposing interpersonal outcomes, thus potentially revealing which aspects of narcissism are related to abusive supervision and which are not. More precisely, we argue that only the antagonistic side of narcissism (narcissistic rivalry) is associated with abusive supervision, while the agentic side (narcissistic admiration) is not. In the next section, we outline the NARC in more detail.

The Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC)

The NARC posits that narcissists' central goal is to build and maintain highly positive self-views, an idea that is in line with other models of narcissism (e.g., Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). However, according to Back et al. (2013), narcissists differ in the social strategies they adopt to achieve and maintain their grandiose self-views. Narcissistic admiration describes a self-enhancing interpersonal strategy associated with striving for uniqueness, grandiose fantasies, and charming behaviors. These

behavioral dynamics lead to social success (e.g., being perceived as assertive or sociable; Back et al., 2013), and consequently strengthen the narcissist's grandiose self-view. In contrast, narcissistic rivalry describes a defensive interpersonal strategy associated with striving for supremacy and devaluing others, and includes aggression. The strategy is likely to lead to social failure (e.g., being perceived as untrustworthy or unlikeable; Back et al., 2013), and consequently perpetuates the narcissist's negative views of others. Narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry correlate moderately to strongly with each other (Back et al., 2013; Leckelt et al., 2015; Wurst et al., 2017), meaning that the two dimensions can co-occur, but do not have to. In sum, this two-dimensional approach describes how narcissists behave toward others and is therefore relevant for leadership contexts, which typically rely heavily on interactions between leaders and followers. As narcissistic rivalry reflects the antagonistic side of narcissism, which is supposed to lead to social conflict (Back et al., 2013), we argue that leaders' narcissistic rivalry will be related to abusive supervision. In contrast, narcissistic admiration reflects the agentic side of narcissism, entailing charismatic, charming behavior. The latter is related to popularity and social status and is not supposed to be associated with dysfunctional interpersonal orientation and relationship outcomes (Back et al., 2013). Thus, we assume that this narcissism dimension plays a minor role in abusive supervision. In the next section, we outline our argument in detail and summarize the relevant research.

Leaders' Narcissistic Rivalry and Abusive Supervision

According to the NARC, only narcissistic rivalry (but not narcissistic admiration) is related to problematic behaviors and negative interpersonal outcomes. For instance, narcissistic rivalry (but not narcissistic admiration) has consistently negative associations with empathy, trust, forgiveness, and gratitude (Back et al., 2013). Furthermore, in romantic relationships, only narcissistic rivalry (but not narcissistic admiration) is related to lower relationship quality and a higher occurrence of conflict (Wurst et al., 2017). Additionally, individuals high in narcissistic rivalry (but not those high in narcissistic admiration) show arrogant and aggressive behaviors and are perceived as untrustworthy, which results in a decrease in popularity over time (Leckelt et al., 2015). In sum, individuals high in narcissistic rivalry have little interest in others, are unable to maintain close relationships, and are likely to engage in aggressive behaviors toward others. Accordingly, we expect that the behavioral dynamics associated with narcissistic rivalry in interpersonal contexts (e.g., conflicts or aggressiveness; Leckelt et al., 2015; Wurst et al., 2017) will also be relevant for leadership contexts.

More precisely, we propose that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry try to protect their grandiose self-views by behaving in hostile ways and by putting others down (Back et al., 2013). We argue that it is likely that the propensity of leaders high in narcissistic rivalry to aggress will translate into aggression against their followers because followers are relatively safe targets. Due to the power imbalance, followers will probably not retaliate. In addition, research on the characteristic intra- and interpersonal dynamics of the antagonistic narcissism dimension suggests that individuals with high narcissistic rivalry maintain and defend their self-view by derogating and devaluing others (Back et al., 2013). Their belief in their own superiority is inextricably linked to the belief in others' inferiority and justifies the mistreatment of others (Grapsas et al., 2019). Thus, we assume that individuals high in narcissistic rivalry see their abusive behavior as justified. By showing abusive supervision, leaders high in narcissistic rivalry can act out their aggressive tendencies. A few examples of abusive supervision can help illustrate this process. For instance, by putting followers down and ridiculing them, leaders high in narcissistic rivalry may feel superior and thus strengthen their own status. Furthermore, by not giving followers credit for their work and by reminding them of past mistakes, leaders high in narcissistic rivalry can make their followers feel small and prevent them from growing professionally. Also, blaming followers for the leader's own mistakes can be seen as the self-protective strategy of a leader high in narcissistic rivalry, and this can help the leader defend their grandiose self-views. In sum, leaders high in narcissistic rivalry might use abusive supervision as a means to protect their superior status as a leader. Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 1 Leaders' narcissistic rivalry will be positively associated with abusive supervision.

Followers' Supervisor-Directed Deviance and Perceived Self-Esteem Threat

Beyond a general predisposition to behave aggressively and show abusive supervision, we wondered *when* and *why* leaders high in narcissistic rivalry would show abusive supervision. According to the NARC, individuals high in narcissistic rivalry are particularly likely to aggress when their grandiose, but fragile self-views are threatened (Back et al., 2013). This assumption is rooted both in trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000) and threatened egotism theory (Baumeister et al., 1996; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998).

Trait activation theory takes an interactionist approach and highlights the role of trait-relevant situational cues, which trigger the expression of traits (Tett & Burnett, 2003;

Tett & Guterman, 2000). This means that the behavioral expression of a trait (i.e., leaders' narcissistic rivalry) depends at least in part on the situational circumstances. According to threatened egotism theory, the most important trait-relevant cue that might explain aggressive behavior in narcissists is "threatened egotism, particularly when it consists of favorable self-appraisals that may be inflated or ill-founded and that are confronted with an external evaluation that disputes them" (Baumeister et al., 1996). Thus, ego threats can be seen as threats to self-esteem (e.g., Stucke & Sporer, 2002; Vohs & Heatherton, 2001). When narcissists have the impression that their inflated self-views are not validated, or are challenged by others, their self-esteem is threatened, and they are likely to react to that threat with aggression (e.g., Bushman & Baumeister, 1998).

According to the NARC, individuals high in narcissistic rivalry are particularly attentive to cues that signal social failure (Back et al., 2013) or loss in status (Grapsas et al., 2019), and their self-esteem is fragile and highly contingent on external validation (Geukes et al., 2017). Consequently, individuals high in narcissistic rivalry are likely to perceive a mismatch between their own inflated self-esteem and any external evaluations of the self (e.g., indicated by cues signaling social failure or loss in status) and feel threatened by this mismatch. Whenever individuals high in narcissistic rivalry perceive self-esteem threats, their self-protection strategy is activated and triggers aggressive responses (Back et al., 2013). In support of this assumption, Back et al. (2013) found that individuals high in narcissistic rivalry engage in revenge-oriented behaviors in reaction to relationship transgressions.

A typical example of follower behavior that may threaten the grandiose self-esteem of leaders high in narcissistic rivalry is supervisor-directed deviance (Simon et al., 2015), as it consists of undesirable behaviors aimed at harming the leader (Bennett & Robinson, 2003), and may humiliate the leader. It encompasses behaviors such as making fun of, being rude toward, or making negative comments about the leader (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). We assume that supervisor-directed deviance challenges the grandiose, but fragile self-esteem of leaders high in narcissistic rivalry, as it undermines their status, provoking the impression that they are unable to control the follower, and signals that the follower does not respect them. We expect that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry will respond with abusive supervision toward the source of the self-esteem threat (i.e., the follower who showed supervisor-directed deviance) in order to punish the follower, re-establish leader status, and ultimately restore their grandiose self-views. They respond in such a way because they see their behavior as justified (Back et al., 2013; Baumeister et al., 1996; Grapsas et al., 2019). For instance, by putting down their followers, leaders high in narcissistic rivalry will aim to re-establish the impression that they are powerful and superior to their followers. We thus expect that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry will react with abusive supervision in response to perceived self-esteem threats induced by followers who showed supervisor-directed deviance. In sum, we propose:

Hypothesis 2 Supervisor-directed deviance will moderate the indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision via perceived self-esteem threat. The indirect effect will be stronger when supervisor-directed deviance is high than when it is low.

Study 1

In order to examine the hypothesized relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision in a field setting, we conducted an online study with leader–follower dyads.

Method

Sample and Procedure

Study participants were recruited via personal and professional contacts, online platforms and the first author's university's press department and website. In the course of the survey, participants were asked to indicate the e-mail address of either their direct leader or one of their followers. These dyadic partners were then automatically invited to take part in the survey. We stressed anonymity and confidential treatment of the data in order to minimize concerns about the dyadic partners having insight into the data. Overall, 164 leaders and 192 followers completed the questionnaire. After matching the leaders and followers, the final sample consisted of 123 dyads because some participants could not be matched. A total of 35% of the leaders and 61% of the followers were women. Leaders were on average 46.84 years old ($SD = 11.02$) and followers were 38.32 years old ($SD = 13.46$). Leaders and followers had worked together for 4.91 years ($SD = 5.83$) on average. Leaders and followers came from diverse industries and most often worked in public administration, education, health, and social services (26.8%); trade, traffic, storage, and the catering industry (15.4%); and the service sector (13%).

Measures

Narcissistic Rivalry

We measured leaders' narcissistic rivalry with the respective nine items of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ; Back et al., 2013). Leaders indicated

Table 1 Means, standard deviations, correlations, and internal consistency estimates

Variable	$M_{\text{Study 1}}/M_{\text{Study 2}}$	$SD_{\text{Study 1}}/SD_{\text{Study 2}}$	1	2	3	4	5
1. Narcissistic rivalry	1.91/1.99	0.52/0.85	(0.78/0.88/)	0.24***	0.40***	0.07	0.40***
2. Perceived self-esteem threat	2.18/2.55	0.61/1.11	0.10	(0.75/0.89)	0.48***	0.31***	0.00
3. Abusive supervision	1.27/1.62	0.31/0.74	0.20*	0.16	(0.81/0.95)	0.35***	0.14*
4. Supervisor-directed deviance[a]	1.11/1.96	0.26/0.80	0.19*	0.26**	0.37***	(0.75/–)	0.10
5. Narcissistic admiration	3.11/3.30	0.79/0.93	0.30**	− 0.38***	− 0.10	− 0.00	(0.87/0.86)

$N = 123$ (for Study 1) and $N = 313$ (for Study 2). Alpha coefficients are given in parentheses along the diagonal with Study 1 appearing first and Study 2 appearing second. Correlations from Study 1 appear below the diagonal, and correlations from Study 2 appear above the diagonal

[a]Study 2: 1 = low supervisor-directed deviance, 2 = medium/high supervisor-directed deviance

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$

how much they agreed with the respective items on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *do not agree at all*, 6 = *agree completely*). A sample item is "Most people won't achieve anything". Cronbach's alpha was 0.78.

Supervisor-Directed Deviance

Supervisor-directed deviance was measured with five items from Bennett and Robinson (2000). A sample item is "My follower says something hurtful to me" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.75$). Leaders were asked to think about their matched follower and indicate on a 5-point Likert scale how frequently the respective follower exhibited the described behaviors (1 = *never* to 5 = *always*).

Perceived Self-Esteem Threat

In line with previous research (Leary et al., 2009; Stucke & Sporer, 2002), we measured perceived self-esteem threat with a German version of Rosenberg's self-esteem scale (RSE; von Collani & Herzberg, 2003). In general, the RSE assesses a person's self-esteem and thus a person's view of themselves. We employed the state version of the RSE to examine participants' self-esteem in reaction to past interactions with their followers assuming that their self-esteem would be threatened when followers behaved in ways that challenge the leaders' grandiose self-views (i.e., when they display supervisor-directed deviance). Prior research has shown that state self-esteem is sensitive to threatening events such as status threats (Mahadevan et al., 2016; Rudolph et al., 2020). When calculating the scale mean, we inverted the original items so that high values indicated high perceived self-esteem threat and low values indicated low perceived self-esteem threat. The items were put into the appropriate context by asking leaders to think about past interactions with their matched follower and indicate how often this follower elicited the described thoughts or feelings. A sample item is "I felt useless" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.75$). Participants indicated their agreement with the 10 items on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*almost always*).

Abusive Supervision

We measured abusive supervision using the 15 items of the German version of Tepper's (2000) abusive supervision scale (Schilling & May, 2015). Followers indicated how often their leader showed the respective abusive behaviors (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.81$). A sample item is "My leader ridicules me". We used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*).

Control Variable

As narcissistic rivalry and admiration are moderately correlated (Back et al., 2013) and in line with prior research (e.g., Wurst et al., 2017), we controlled for leaders' narcissistic admiration in order to make sure that effects could be traced back to the maladaptive dimension of narcissism only. We measured narcissistic admiration with the nine items from the NARQ (Back et al., 2013; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$). Participants indicated their agreement with items such as "Being a very special person gives me a lot of strength" on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *do not agree at all*, 6 = *agree completely*). We additionally ran all analyses without narcissistic admiration as a control variable. The results can be found in Online Appendix A.

Results

We present the means, standard deviations, correlations, and internal consistency estimates for the study variables in Table 1. To test Hypothesis 1, we conducted a linear regression analysis examining followers' ratings of abusive supervision as the outcome, leaders' narcissistic rivalry as the predictor, and leaders' narcissistic admiration as the covariate. Leaders' narcissistic rivalry was significantly and

Table 2 Results multiple regression analyses (Study 1)

Variable	Abusive supervision						Perceived self-esteem threat		
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*
Narcissistic admiration	− 0.07	0.04	-.18	− 0.06	0.04	− 1.43	− 0.34	0.06	− 5.20***
Narcissistic rivalry	0.15	0.06	.26*	0.14	0.06	2.49*	− 0.43	0.35	− 1.21
Supervisor-directed deviance							− 0.84	0.74	− 1.14
Narcissistic rivalry × supervisor-directed deviance							0.58	0.30	1.92
Perceived self-esteem threat				0.04	0.05	0.78			
R^2	0.07			0.07*			0.26***		

$N = 123$

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

positively associated with follower-reported abusive supervision ($\beta = 0.26$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = 0.007$), thus providing support for Hypothesis 1. In contrast, leaders' narcissistic admiration was unrelated to follower-reported abusive supervision ($\beta = -0.18$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.052$). Results are presented in Table 2 (see model 1). Without leaders' narcissistic admiration as a covariate, we also found a direct positive association between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and followers' reported abusive supervision ($\beta = 0.20$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.026$; see Online Appendix A), which renders further support for Hypothesis 1.

To test the moderated mediation posited in Hypothesis 2, we used the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018). The results revealed that followers' supervisor-directed deviance did not moderate the indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision via perceived self-esteem threat (index of moderated mediation: $B = 0.02$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [− 0.07, 0.12]). This means that leaders' narcissistic rivalry was unrelated to perceived self-esteem threat, irrespective of followers' supervisor-directed deviance, and perceived self-esteem threat was unrelated to followers' ratings of abusive supervision. The direct effect from leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision was still evident here ($B = 0.14$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = 0.014$). Leaders' narcissistic admiration was unrelated to follower-rated abusive supervision ($B = -0.06$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.155$) and was negatively related to perceived self-esteem threat ($B = -0.34$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < 0.001$). This model explained 7.5% of the variance in abusive supervision ratings ($p < 0.05$). The results are presented in Table 2 (see models 2 and 3). In all, we could not find support for Hypothesis 2. The results without leaders' narcissistic admiration as control variable were similar: the index of moderated mediation was also insignificant ($B = 0.04$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [− 0.03, 0.16]; see also Online Appendix A).

A closer look at the results reveals that the direct effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on perceived self-esteem threat was not significant in the low and medium values of the moderator, but was significant in the high value of the moderator ($B = 0.27$, $SE = 0.10$; $p = 0.009$). The indirect effects, however, were not significant in any value of the moderator because perceived self-esteem threat did not predict abusive supervision. Importantly, as the variance of supervisor-directed deviance was extremely low, both the low and medium values of the moderator were set at 1.00 by the PROCESS macro, and the "high" value was set at 1.20. Thus, these results have to be interpreted cautiously as being restricted by a potential floor effect and will be addressed in the discussion section. Furthermore, we decided to use an experiment in Study 2, as this allowed us to systematically manipulate followers' supervisor-directed deviance.

Study 2

In Study 2, we tested all hypotheses using experimental vignettes, which allowed us to assess leaders' perceptions of self-esteem threat, together with their intentions regarding abusive supervision in response to followers' supervisor-directed deviance (which was systematically manipulated in the experimental vignettes). We chose this methodological approach, as we were interested in the leaders' internal processes (i.e., perceived self-esteem threats) and their own intent to show abusive supervision. Experimental vignettes offer the possibility of capturing short-term dynamics and direct reactions. In addition, we used behavioral intention as the most proximate predictor of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991).

Method

Sample and Procedure

Participants were recruited via a German panel service (respondi) and were paid €1.25 for their participation.

Eligible participants had to be currently employed in a leadership position, work at least 20 h per week, and have at least three months of work experience. The study was conducted online and consisted of two measurement points. A total of 331 participants took part in the study.[1] We excluded nine participants, who stated that they did not consider the described vignettes credible at all, or who could not imagine themselves in the situation described in the experimental vignette. Furthermore, we excluded six participants who reported substantially different ages at the two measurement points, and three participants who had participated twice at T2. Our final sample consisted of 313 participants (low supervisor-directed deviance condition: $N = 107$; medium supervisor-directed deviance condition: $N = 112$; and high supervisor-directed deviance condition: $N = 94$). Participants had a mean age of 47.66 ($SD = 9.9$), and 31% were women. On average, participants worked 42 h per week ($SD = 8.5$); 14.7% held a low, 45.4% a medium, and 39.9% a high leadership position. Participants worked in diverse industries, most often in the service sector (12.8%), manufacturing sector (11.2%), and public administration (9.9%).

In order to reduce method bias, we separated the measurements in time (Podsakoff et al., 2012). At the first measurement point, we assessed our independent variable (narcissistic rivalry) and our control variable (narcissistic admiration), and collected sociodemographic information. At the second measurement point (one week later), participants read one of three experimental vignettes in which we manipulated supervisor-directed deviance. Participants were randomly assigned to read either a low, medium, or high supervisor-directed deviance vignette. Subsequently, participants indicated how threatened they felt by the followers' behavior (perceived self-esteem threat, mediator) and their abusive supervision intentions (dependent variable).

Development and Content of Experimental Vignettes

Following recommendations by Lapierre et al. (2009), we developed three experimental vignettes that described low, medium, and high supervisor-directed deviance, respectively. In line with best practice recommendations (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014; Lapierre et al., 2009), we chose three levels of supervisor-directed deviance in an attempt to represent various interactions in the workplace where supervisor-directed deviance can also vary. By doing so, we not only tested whether it makes a difference if a follower shows low or high supervisor-directed deviance, but also what happens in-between (when a follower shows a medium level of supervisor-directed deviance). Thus, distinguishing between three levels of supervisor-directed deviance is a more conservative test of our hypothesis than when comparing only low and high conditions.

Each experimental vignette included an introduction followed by a specific description of a follower's supervisor-directed deviant behavior. First, all participants were instructed to put themselves in the role of a leader and read the scenarios carefully. Next, all participants received the same background information so that they could embed their responses contextually (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). They were told to imagine that they were working for a software company and were asked to read information about the company and their job duties. In the vignettes, participants' duties were described as consisting of delegating work to followers, monitoring the followers' work progress, and evaluating the followers' performance. Participants were then told that they had to evaluate the work and interpersonal behavior of a follower named Alex while he worked on a specific project. The next paragraph in the vignette described Alex's behavior. His interpersonal behavior varied across the conditions. We based the behaviors and wording of our experimental vignettes on existing scales and studies that had previously examined workplace deviance (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Spector & Fox, 2005; Spector et al., 2006). Consequently, in the low supervisor-directed deviance condition, Alex was described as a follower who never ridiculed or verbally abused his leader; in the medium supervisor-directed deviance condition, he sometimes showed these behaviors; and in the high supervisor-directed deviance condition, he often showed these behaviors toward his leader. Afterwards, we measured our focal variables, manipulation check items, and, in addition, we asked participants how credible they found the experimental vignettes, and whether or not they could imagine themselves in the situation. The full experimental vignettes can be found in Online Appendix H.

Measures

Narcissistic Rivalry

We measured leaders' narcissistic rivalry using the same measure as in Study 1 (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$).

Perceived Self-Esteem Threat

We used the same assessment of perceived self-esteem threat as in Study 1. We adapted the original instructions of the RSE scale (von Collani & Herzberg, 2003) to fit the experimental vignettes (i.e., "Please think again about the scenario

[1] At T1, 388 participants took part in the online survey. Of these, 364 participants were invited to take part in the second online survey at T2. The other 24 participants were not invited to participate at T2 due to quality issues. As the acquisition of participants was stopped manually, we acquired slightly more participants than originally intended (331 total participants instead of the targeted number of 300 participants at T2).

you just read and put yourself in the role of Alex's leader. How did you feel on the basis of Alex's behavior?"). Participants indicated their agreement with the items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$) on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 6 (*agree completely*).

Abusive Supervision Intentions

We measured abusive supervision intentions using the 15 items of the German version of Tepper's (2000) abusive supervision scale (Schilling & May, 2015). We asked participants how likely the leaders would be to show the indicated abusive supervisory behaviors in response to the follower's behaviors described in the vignettes. Therefore, participants' responses reflected specific behavioral intention indicators and not general behavioral tendencies. A sample item was "I would ridicule Alex" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.95$). Participants indicated their agreement with these items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 5 (*very likely*).

Manipulation Check

After reading the experimental vignettes and before answering the scales for measuring perceived self-esteem threat and abusive supervision intentions, participants responded to two items to rate the follower's supervisor-directed deviance. We used items from Bennett and Robinson (2001, 2005), which reflected the content of our experimental vignettes ("Alex acted rudely toward you", "Alex said something hurtful to you").

Control Variable

We controlled for leaders' narcissistic admiration (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$) using the same measure as in Study 1 and using leader ratings of their own narcissistic admiration. Additionally, we ran all analyses without narcissistic admiration as control variable. The results can be found in Online Appendix A.

Results

Before testing our hypotheses, we conducted manipulation checks to see if our experimental manipulation of followers' supervisor-directed deviance had worked. As expected, ratings of supervisor-directed deviance differed between the three conditions (low supervisor-directed deviance: $M = 1.33$, $SD = 0.65$; medium supervisor-directed deviance: $M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.20$; high supervisor-directed deviance: $M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.13$), $F(2, 310) = 244.73$, $p < 0.001$. Post hoc Bonferroni tests revealed that the participants in the low supervisor-directed deviance condition rated the follower's behavior as significantly less deviant than in the medium ($p < 0.001$) and high ($p < 0.001$) supervisor-directed conditions. Ratings of supervisor-directed deviance did not differ significantly between the medium and high supervisor-directed deviance groups ($p = 1.00$). Therefore, we decided to group the medium and high supervisor-directed deviance conditions together and test whether the indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions via perceived self-esteem threat differed between the low and medium/high group. Nevertheless, we also report results where we differentiated between the three groups as originally intended (see Online Appendix B).

We present the means, standard deviations, correlations, and internal consistency estimates for the study variables in Table 1. We tested Hypothesis 1 with a linear regression analysis, with leaders' narcissistic rivalry as the predictor and leaders' narcissistic admiration as a covariate. Supporting Hypothesis 1, leaders' narcissistic rivalry positively predicted abusive supervision intentions ($\beta = 0.41$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < 0.001$). In contrast, leaders' narcissistic admiration was unrelated to abusive supervision intentions ($\beta = -0.02$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.760$). Results are presented in Table 3 (see model 1). Without leaders' narcissistic admiration as covariate, we also found a direct positive association between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions ($\beta = 0.40$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < 0.001$; see Online Appendix A), which further supports Hypothesis 1.

To test Hypothesis 2, we also used the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018). There was no conditional indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions (index of moderated mediation: $B = 0.03$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [− 0.04, 10]). However, the indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions via perceived self-esteem threat was significant in both experimental conditions (low supervisor-directed deviance: B = 0.07 $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI [0.02, 13]; medium/high supervisor-directed deviance: B = 0.10, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI [0.05, 16]). The direct effect from leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions was still evident here ($B = 0.25$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < 0.001$). Leaders' narcissistic admiration was unrelated to abusive supervision intentions ($B = 0.02$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.602$). In all, these results did not support Hypothesis 2. This model explained 16% of the variance in abusive supervision intention ratings ($p < 0.001$). Table 3 presents the results (see models 2 and 3). In Online Appendix A, we report our results without leaders' narcissistic admiration as control variable. Again, we did not find support for a conditional indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions (index of moderation: $B = 0.02$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [− 0.04, 0.10]). Furthermore, in Online Appendix B, we report our results with a three-level moderator (distinguishing between low, medium, and high supervisor-directed deviance). Again, our

Table 3 Results multiple regression analyses (Study 2)

	Abusive supervision intentions						Perceived self-esteem threat		
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
Variable	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*
Narcissistic admiration	− 0.01	0.05	− 0.31	0.02	0.04	0.52	− 0.14	0.07	− 2.08*
Narcissistic rivalry	0.35	0.05	7.18***	0.25	0.05	5.50***	0.17	0.28	0.62
Condition[a]							0.52	0.32	1.63
Narcissistic rivalry × condition							0.10	0.15	0.62
Perceived self-esteem threat				0.27	0.03	8.31***			
R^2		0.16***			0.31***			0.16***	

$N = 313$

[a]Condition = Experimental condition (1 = low supervisor-directed deviance, 2 = medium/high supervisor-directed deviance)

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$

results remained the same. There was no conditional indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions when using the three-level moderator (index of moderated mediation: $B = 0.00$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI [− 0.05, 0.06]), which further supports that Hypothesis 2 must be rejected.

Post Hoc Analyses

We conducted several additional analyses following the reviewers' suggestions. The results of these analyses can be found in Appendix.

Analyses with Different Operationalization of Self-Esteem Threat (Online Appendix C)

First, we used a second operationalization of perceived self-esteem threat to examine whether our results replicated with a different operationalization. Using our alternative perceived self-esteem threat operationalization via three bipolar items, we replicated our results in both studies. We found no conditional indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision (intentions) in Study 1 (index of moderation: $B = 0.00$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI [− 0.08, 0.06]) and Study 2 (index of moderation: $B = -0.00$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI [− 0.05, 0.05]).

Analyses with Overall Narcissism Score (Online Appendix D)

We additionally tested Hypothesis 1 with an overall narcissism score. We used the overall narcissism score as predictor and follower-reported abusive supervision (in Study 1) and abusive supervision intentions (in Study 2) as outcome. Our results revealed a non-significant association between the overall narcissism score and the follower-reported abusive supervision in Study 1 ($\beta = 0.01$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.807$), and a significant positive association between the overall narcissism score and the abusive supervision intentions in Study 2 ($\beta = 0.32$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < 0.001$).

Simple Mediation Analysis (Online Appendix E)

Furthermore, we conducted a simple mediation analysis with leaders' narcissistic rivalry as predictor, abusive supervision (intentions) as outcome, perceived self-esteem threat as mediator, and leaders' narcissistic admiration and condition as covariates. Results of this analysis revealed a non-significant indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision via perceived self-esteem threat in Study 1 ($\beta = 0.01$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% CI [− 0.02, 0.06]) and a significant indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions in Study 2 ($\beta = 0.08$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.13].

Simple Moderation Analysis (Online Appendix F)

We also tested a simple moderation analysis, with leaders' narcissistic rivalry as predictor, followers' supervisor-directed deviance as moderator, leaders' abusive supervision (intentions) as outcome, and leaders' narcissistic admiration as covariate. For both studies, results revealed that the interaction between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and supervisor-directed deviance was not significant in either Study 1 ($\beta = 0.24$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = 0.15$) or Study 2 ($\beta = 0.18$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.055$).

Leaders' Narcissistic Admiration as Predictor (Online Appendix G)

Additionally, we ran our analyses with leaders' narcissistic admiration as predictor to examine whether there is a conditional indirect effect with leaders' narcissistic admiration as predictor, perceived self-esteem threat as mediator, followers' supervisor-directed deviance as moderator, and abusive supervision (intentions) as outcome. We conducted those analyses with leaders' narcissistic rivalry as control variable. There was no conditional indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic admiration on abusive supervision (intentions) via perceived self-esteem threat moderated by followers' supervisor-directed deviance in Study 1 (index of moderation: $B = -0.01$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI [− 0.09, 0.04]) and Study 2 (index of moderation: $B = 0.05$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [− 0.02, 0.12]).

Discussion

In our study, we strove to provide new insights on narcissism and abusive supervision to the literature. More precisely, we applied the NARC (Back et al., 2013), trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000), and threatened egotism theory (Baumeister et al., 1996; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998) to a leadership context and examined factors connected to abusive supervision in order to better understand the antecedents of abusive supervision.

Building on the NARC, we proposed and found that only leaders' narcissistic rivalry—the antagonistic dimension of narcissism—is consistently directly and positively associated with abusive supervision, while leaders' narcissistic admiration—the agentic dimension of narcissism—is not consistently related to abusive supervision (intentions), supporting the view that applying a differentiated model of narcissism to leadership is fruitful. Furthermore, building on and extending trait activation theory and threatened egotism theory, we proposed a moderated indirect effect, assuming that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry would perceive self-esteem threats in reaction to followers' supervisor-directed deviance, which in turn would lead to abusive supervision. However, while we found at least in part an indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision (intentions) via perceived self-esteem threats, this effect was not moderated by followers' supervisor-directed deviance. Thus our studies only partially supported the notion of threatened egotism theory as the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions was (partly) mediated by ego threat, but not triggered by follower behavior (also contradicting trait activation theory).

A methodological advantage of our research is that we conducted two studies with different methodological approaches (a field study and an experimental vignette study), which complement each other. By doing so, we could test our assumptions in a real work context, but also in an experimental context in which we manipulated our moderator variable systematically. In sum, our results show that leaders' narcissistic rivalry plays a pivotal role in abusive supervision, whereas follower behaviors (i.e., followers' supervisor-directed deviance) and leaders' internal processes (i.e., perceived self-esteem threats) seem to be less important to abusive supervision.

Theoretical Implications

First, we advanced the literature on leader narcissism as an antecedent of abusive supervision. We were particularly interested in leader narcissism as a precursor of abusive supervision because narcissists are likely to attain leadership positions (Grijalva et al., 2015). At the same time, they are likely to have trouble maintaining positive relationships and often behave in derogatory (Park & Colvin, 2015) or aggressive ways (Seah & Ang, 2008).

Yet interestingly, prior research on leader narcissism as an antecedent of abusive supervision has remained inconclusive and has revealed mixed results (Nevicka et al., 2018; Waldman et al., 2018; Whitman et al., 2013; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). These might be due to the use of different one-dimensional narcissism measures that consider narcissism as one global construct, or focus only on specific aspects, such as entitlement. It has been argued that narcissism is a multidimensional construct with agentic and antagonistic sides (e.g., Back et al., 2013), and that differentiating between these two sides can help identify their specific linkages with organizational outcomes (e.g., Helfrich & Dietl, 2019). We thus extended prior research using the NARC, which provides a more differentiated view on narcissism and distinguishes between the antagonistic (i.e., narcissistic rivalry) and agentic (i.e., narcissistic admiration) dimensions of narcissism, to derive theoretical assumptions about different dimensions of narcissism.

In line with theory, we found that leaders' narcissistic rivalry, but not their narcissistic admiration, was consistently positively associated with follower ratings of abusive supervision (Study 1), as well as leaders' abusive supervision intentions (Study 2). This shows that it is important to differentiate between the antagonistic and the agentic side of leader narcissism in abusive supervision research and that this differentiation can help clarify previous inconclusive findings which might be due to treating narcissism as a one-dimensional construct. Apparently, at work, narcissistic rivalry, as the antagonistic form of narcissism and a hostile self-protective strategy, leads to abusive supervision (intentions). Leaders high in narcissistic rivalry act out their hostile tendencies and strive for supremacy by putting their

followers down. In contrast, the agentic side of leader narcissism, leaders' narcissistic admiration, is not consistently positively associated with abusive supervision (intentions). Interestingly, we found those effects both when abusive supervision was rated by followers (Study 1) and when it was rated by leaders (Study 2). Thus, we complemented prior research—which has mainly studied abusive supervision from the followers' perspective (Mackey et al., 2017; Tepper et al., 2017)—by showing that some leaders (i.e., those high in narcissistic rivalry) also state explicitly that they would behave abusively toward their followers. By doing so, we can show that leaders' narcissistic rivalry is positively associated with self-views, as well as other-ratings of abusive supervision, thus further extending prior research to include self- and other views of abusive supervision.

Second, on the basis of trait activation theory and threatened egotism theory, we aimed to explain *why* and *when* leaders high in narcissistic rivalry show abusive supervision. In particular, based on threatened egotism theory, we expected that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry would perceive self-esteem threats in response to followers' supervisor-directed deviance, and that these perceived self-esteem threats would lead to abusive supervision (intentions). Contrary to our expectations, we did not find an indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions via perceived self-esteem threats that was contingent on followers' deviant behavior in both studies. That is, follower deviance did not seem to influence leaders' tendency to show abusive supervision as a response to their egos being threatened.

A closer look at the results shows that in Study 1, leaders' narcissistic rivalry predicted self-esteem threats when supervisor-directed deviance was high. However, "high" in our case meant values only slightly above the scale endpoint, as deviance was low overall. Furthermore, in Study 2, the indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions via perceived self-esteem threat was significant in all experimental conditions, but the interaction between narcissistic rivalry and condition was not significant. That is, narcissistic rivalry and supervisor-directed deviance predicted perceived ego threats independently, but they did not interact. It seems that sensitivity to self-esteem threats in leaders who are high in narcissistic rivalry (Back et al., 2013; Baumeister et al., 1996; Geukes et al., 2017) is so strong that it overshadows variations in follower behavior. This reasoning is also in line with assumptions that individuals high in narcissistic rivalry generally have negative thoughts about others (Back et al., 2013), and that narcissists generally hold negative implicit beliefs about followers (Hansbrough & Jones, 2014). Thus, it seems that situational factors (e.g., follower behavior) are less important, and that the trait itself (i.e., narcissistic rivalry) can explain best why some leaders display abusive supervision and others not. This somewhat contradicts the threatened egotism theory and trait activation theory in so far as here the situational trigger (follower behavior) was not relevant to the supervisor's behavior. In sum, we conclude that in the case of leaders who are high in narcissistic rivalry, whether or not their followers show supervisor-directed deviance is of relatively little importance as these leaders are highly prone to treating others badly, irrespective of how others behave. That is, they need little or nothing to trigger their negative behavior.

Practical Implications

Our findings also have notable implications for organizations. Given the negative outcomes of abusive supervision (Schyns & Schilling, 2013), it is important to take measures to prevent such behavior. As our study shows that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry are particularly likely to engage in abusive supervision, organizations should be cautious when hiring or promoting such leaders. In addition, organizations could train leaders high in narcissistic rivalry to display more supportive leader behaviors (e.g., Gonzalez-Morales et al., 2018), or provide coaching to help them develop their leadership skills (Kets de Vries, 2014). As narcissists seldom see reasons to change their destructive behavior, organizations should focus on self-relevant reasons for doing so (e.g., implications for performance ratings) to incentivize narcissistic leaders to take their followers' well-being into account. Leaders high in narcissistic rivalry should be made aware that healthy and productive followers reflect better on them. This should help them understand that abusive supervision does not contribute to their desired grandiose self-view. Instead, for selfish reasons, they should refrain from displaying abusive supervision and commit to ethical leadership practices. In addition, as leaders high in narcissistic rivalry strive for status (Grapsas et al., 2019), they should be made aware that productive and healthy followers can also be a means for boosting their status in organizations that uphold communal values and do not tolerate aggression.

Furthermore, we found, at least in one study that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry are prone to perceiving self-esteem threats, and that perceived self-esteem threats can translate into abusive supervision intentions (see Study 2). Therefore, firms should develop interventions aiming to mitigate perceived self-esteem threats. For instance, Grapsas et al. (2019) proposed that individuals should be trained to be less attentive to cues that hinder the pursuit of status. Accordingly, leaders high in narcissistic rivalry could be trained to focus less on followers' negative evaluations that might evoke perceptions of self-esteem threat. Instead, they should learn to direct their attention to their followers' positive aspects. In addition, leaders high in narcissistic rivalry could be taught to critically reflect on their followers' actual negative evaluations and reappraise them as learning

experiences and opportunities to improve their status (Grapsas et al., 2019).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Whereas a strength of this research is that we conducted two studies with different research methodologies, there are also some limitations. In Study 1, we enhanced the external generalizability of our findings by examining actual leader–follower dyads in the workplace. One drawback of Study 1 is that we assessed our focal variables cross-sectionally, limiting the causal conclusions that can be drawn from these findings. Therefore, future longitudinal field studies are needed to show the process in the field. Another interesting approach would be to conduct diary studies using event sampling methods (Lopes et al., 2004; Ohly et al., 2010). These could capture the short-term dynamics of abusive supervision as a direct reaction to single episodes of supervisor-directed deviance and self-esteem threat.

Finally, as participation in our study was voluntary, we cannot rule out the possibility of self-selection bias. It is possible that leader–follower dyads with positive relationships were more likely than others to participate in our study. Indeed, the variance of followers' supervisor-directed deviance was relatively low across the whole sample with a "high" value set at 1.20. This indicates that there was a floor effect, and in particular, that followers who did not behave in deviant ways participated in our study. For future research, we would recommend selecting participants differently to ensure more variance in followers' supervisor-directed deviance. For instance, HR departments could invite random leader–follower dyads to participate in research studies to ensure more variance in follower behaviors.

In Study 2, we randomly assigned participants to one of three experimental vignettes describing low, medium, or high supervisor-directed deviance. However, our manipulation check showed that participants rated the medium and high supervisor-directed deviance experimental vignettes as equally deviant. In the medium supervisor-directed deviance condition, the follower was described as someone who *sometimes* shows deviant behaviors toward the leader; whereas in the high supervisor-directed deviance condition, the follower was described as someone who *often* showed these behaviors toward the leader. Thus, it seems that as soon as a follower is described as someone who shows supervisor-directed deviance to *some* extent (irrespectively if this is sometimes or often), the follower is perceived as deviant and also as more deviant than a follower who *never* shows supervisor-directed deviance (low supervisor-directed deviance condition). Consequently, we grouped the medium and high supervisor-directed deviance conditions for our analyses. For our results, we consider the lack of differentiation between the medium and high supervisor-directed deviance groups as less problematic, as we found an indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions via perceived self-esteem threat in *all* conditions (low, and medium/high). This finding also aligns with the results of Study 1, in which, similarly, followers' supervisor-directed deviance did not moderate the indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision via perceived self-esteem threat.

In our study, participants first read the supervisor-directed deviance vignettes and were subsequently asked about perceived self-esteem threat and about their abusive supervision intentions. With this design, we were able to ensure that supervisor-directed deviance preceded our mediator (i.e., self-esteem threat) and dependent variable (i.e., abusive supervision intentions). However, we are cautious about making claims about the causal ordering of our mediator and dependent variable. Future research could therefore implement experimental causal-chain designs to establish a causal ordering (Spencer et al., 2005). Furthermore, in Study 2, we chose a between-subjects design to keep participants' workload low. However, this approach did not allow us to make comparisons concerning the same person. To overcome this restriction, future studies could implement within-person designs (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). This would offer an opportunity to examine how different forms of supervisor-directed deviance affect abusive supervision intentions within the same individual.

According to trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000), threatened egotism theory (Baumeister et al., 1996; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), and the NARC (Back et al., 2013), individuals high in narcissistic rivalry are assumed to be particularly likely to aggress when their grandiose, but fragile self-views are threatened. However, contrary to our expectations, our studies showed that followers' supervisor-directed deviance did not trigger self-esteem threat in leaders high in narcissistic rivalry and lead to abusive supervision. Instead, leaders high in narcissistic rivalry were prone to showing abusive supervision irrespective of their followers' behavior. Therefore, future research could examine whether other follower behaviors may threaten the grandiose self-esteem of leaders high in narcissistic rivalry and thus increase the likelihood of abusive supervision. For instance, prior research assumed that narcissists are more likely to aggress when threatened in public than in private (Ferriday et al., 2011). Individuals high in narcissism want to be admired by others and being challenged in public could threaten their positive self-image. Accordingly, we advise future researchers to differentiate between private vs public ego-threatening follower behaviors, because the latter might be even more threatening to leaders high in narcissistic rivalry, and thus lead to more abusive supervision.

Furthermore, it has been proposed that narcissists are particularly likely to aggress when threatened in status-related (and less when threatened in affiliation-related) aspects, as when being confronted with a competitor who could damage the narcissist's reputation (Grapsas et al., 2019). Thus, it could be that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry might be particularly prone to show aggression toward followers who outperform them and thus undermine their status.

Conclusion

In sum, our findings show that narcissistic rivalry is the maladaptive dimension of leader narcissism, while leaders' narcissistic admiration seems to be the brighter narcissism dimension. Across the two studies, we found that leaders' narcissistic rivalry, but not their narcissistic admiration, was consistently positively associated with follower-reported abusive supervision and abusive supervision intentions. Furthermore, leaders high in narcissistic rivalry showed tendencies toward abusive supervision, irrespective of followers' supervisor-directed deviance, and that only in part could leaders' perceived self-esteem threats explain why leaders high in narcissistic rivalry displayed abusive supervision intentions.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the studies.

Research Involving Human Participants and/or Animals All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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4

CHAPTER 4: WHAT YOU GET IS WHAT YOU SEE: OTHER-RATED BUT NOT SELF-RATED LEADERS' NARCISSISTIC RIVALRY AFFECTS FOLLOWERS NEGATIVELY

(Manuscript 3)

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ORIGINAL PAPER

What You Get is What You See: Other-Rated but not Self-Rated Leaders' Narcissistic Rivalry Affects Followers Negatively

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Abstract

Individuals with high levels of narcissism often ascend to leadership positions. Whereas there is evidence that narcissism is linked to unethical behavior and negative social outcomes, the effects of leader narcissism on an organization's most important resource—its employees—have not yet been studied thoroughly. Using theoretical assumptions of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC) and social exchange theories, we examined how leaders' narcissistic rivalry was related to follower outcomes in a sample of matched leaders and followers. Followers of leaders high in narcissistic rivalry reported less perceived supervisor support, lower quality leader-member relationships, lower performance-based self-esteem, and lower job engagement. These effects were only found when follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry was used in the model but not when self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry was used as a predictor. This implies that the negative effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on followers are driven by the expression of narcissistic tendencies (i.e., destructive leader behavior). Leader development should thus focus on changing destructive leader behavior. We propose that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry can be motivated to make such changes by showing them that by hurting their followers, they will eventually undermine their own reputation and status. Furthermore, selection and promotion practices should incorporate objective measures to weaken the effects of narcissists' self-promotional tactics in these contexts and thus prevent people high in narcissistic rivalry from rising to leadership positions.

Keywords Leaders' narcissistic rivalry · Leadership · Narcissism · Narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept · Follower outcomes

> Even at their best, narcissistic leaders are bound to leave damaged systems and relationships in their wake.
>
> (Rosenthal and Pittinsky 2006, p. 619).

Leader narcissism has been discussed widely but also only selectively in the literature. Whereas it has been shown that high levels of subclinical, grandiose narcissism are related to leader emergence (Brunell et al. 2008; Grijalva et al. 2015), the question of how narcissistic leaders[1] affect their surroundings has often been restricted to economical outcomes. Scholars in the field of business ethics have been concerned with issues that arise from narcissists' unethical and self-serving behavior on an organizational level (Blair et al. 2017; Chatterjee and Hambrick 2007). However, studies on the influence of leader narcissism on the arguably most important resource of an organization—its human capital—have yielded inconclusive or contradictory results (for an overview, see Schyns et al. 2019). Whereas some authors have argued that leader narcissism is an antecedent of abusive supervision (Padilla et al. 2007; Nevicka et al. 2018a; Waldman et al. 2018) and elicits high frustration, tension, and emotional exhaustion in followers (Hochwarter and Thompson 2012; Nevicka et al. 2018a), Wisse and Sleebos (2016) found no association between leader narcissism and abusive supervision. Furthermore, other authors have

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[1] In the following, due to space considerations and for ease of reading, we use the term "narcissistic" for people with high levels of subclinical narcissism. Clearly, there is no dichotomy of narcissistic and not narcissistic, but the variable represents a continuum. Furthermore, we focus on grandiose, or agentic, narcissism, as opposed to vulnerable, or neurotic, narcissism, as the first form has been shown to be more relevant in the organizational context (Campbell et al. 2011).

pointed out that narcissists and successful leaders have many characteristics (e.g., passion and charisma) in common (Rosenthal and Pittinsky 2006) and have raised the question of whether organizations may actually benefit from having narcissistic leaders (Campbell et al. 2011; Maccoby 2000).

Successful leadership is largely built on positive dyadic relationships (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995), and it has been shown in other contexts that narcissists have trouble—or rather, are not interested in—building sustainable relationships (Campbell and Campbell 2009). In the business ethics literature, several studies have examined how leader narcissism relates to follower emotions, perceptions and behavior (e.g., Braun et al. 2018; Den Hartog et al. 2020; Huang et al. 2020; Liu et al. 2017; Nevicka et al. 2018b). The current study aims to further contribute to this literature by heeding claims for a more fine-grained approach in investigating narcissism (e.g., Ackermann et al. 2011; Braun 2017) through differentiating two dimensions of narcissism proposed by the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC; Back et al. 2013). Whereas narcissistic admiration might lead to favorable social outcomes, narcissistic rivalry is presumed to go along with exhibiting devaluing behavior toward others and negative social outcomes (Back et al. 2013).

Focusing on the antagonistic dimension of narcissistic rivalry, building on theoretical assumptions regarding narcissists' behavior and relationships in the workplace, and translating empirical results from studies on narcissists' personal relationships to a work context, we propose that working for leaders high in narcissistic rivalry will negatively impact how followers feel and behave. In taking a holistic perspective, we investigated effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on several follower outcomes by asking: How do followers *perceive* leaders high in narcissistic rivalry, how is the perceived *relationship* with their leaders affected, how do they *feel* about themselves, and what is the impact on their self-reported *behavior* in the workplace?

By examining how leaders' narcissistic rivalry influences relevant follower outcomes in a real-life sample of matched leaders and followers, this paper contributes to the business ethics and leadership literature as follows: First, it answers the call for a more nuanced view on subclinical narcissism by distinguishing between two related but different dimensions of grandiose narcissism: narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry. Distinguishing between these dimensions can help answer the question of whether there is a "healthy dose" of narcissism (Craig and Amernic 2011) and shed light on earlier inconclusive results. We drew on the Narcissistic Rivalry and Admiration Concept (Back et al. 2013) and social exchange theories (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995) as theoretical foundations for examining the effects of these two dimensions of narcissism on follower outcomes. Second, as Braun (2017) outlined in a thorough literature review, previous studies in this context used leaders' self-reports of their narcissism levels as well as other-ratings. This is in line with, for instance, Carlson et al. (2011), who argued that whereas narcissists do have self-insight, disentangling whether self- and other-perceptions differ is worthwhile, as leaders and their followers should each have "unique insight" (Vazire and Mehl 2008, p. 1202) into leaders' typical behavior. Indeed, other-ratings of personality can be more predictive of behavior than self-ratings (Connelly and Ones 2010), especially regarding narcissism (Braun 2017; Hogan and Fico 2011). Whereas previous research has shown that self- and other-ratings of narcissism can have differential effects on interpersonal outcomes, such studies have mostly used unidimensional measures such as the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin and Hall 1979; for an overview, see Braun 2017). Research that has used multidimensional conceptualizations of narcissism (e.g., the NARC) while simultaneously incorporating both self- and other-perspectives on a person's narcissism is still scarce. We aim to further contribute to the literature in the field by integrating and comparing leaders' and followers' perspectives on leaders' narcissistic rivalry as the maladaptive dimension of narcissism to prevent same-source biases and the issues that arise when measuring "dark" personality traits with only self-reports (Spain et al. 2013).

Literature Review and Derivation of Hypotheses

Conceptualizing Narcissism

As a subclinical personality trait, narcissism is characterized by a pervasive pattern of grandiosity and self-importance, a constant need for attention and admiration, and feelings of entitlement (Back and Morf 2018; Schütz et al. 2004). Contemporary models have taken a closer look at the conceptualization of narcissism, as research on the factor structure of various narcissism scales has distinguished several facets, and empirical findings have repeatedly shown that narcissism is related to positive (e.g., charmingness, extraversion, initial popularity, dating success) as well as negative behavioral tendencies and outcomes (e.g., exploitative and manipulative behavior, arrogance, social disapproval, conflicts; for an overview, see Back and Morf 2018). In an attempt to explain these seemingly paradoxical correlates and outcomes, several multidimensional models of narcissism (see Back and Morf 2018; Krizan and Herlache 2018; Miller et al. 2016) have distinguished between agentic, antagonistic, and neurotic aspects. In these models, grandiose narcissism contains antagonistic (e.g., low agreeableness, arrogance, exploitativeness, entitlement) and agentic aspects (e.g., extraversion, grandiosity, dominance, leadership).

In line with these considerations, the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Concept (NARC; Back et al. 2013) suggests

two distinct but related dimensions of grandiose narcissism. The agentic dimension, called *narcissistic admiration*, is characterized by self-promotional attempts to enhance narcissists' grandiose self-views by striving for uniqueness, entertaining fantasies of one's own grandiosity, and seeking social admiration through charming behavior and self-presentational tactics. This typically leads to positive social outcomes (e.g., popularity, attraction, and social status). Through feedback processes, the perception of these outcomes provides an ego-boost and further reinforces self-enhancement. The antagonistic dimension, called *narcissistic rivalry*, is based on efforts to protect one's grandiose self-views by devaluing and derogating others to feel superior. These efforts result in aggressive behavior and social conflict, which in turn threatens the narcissist's ego and thus leads to increased self-defensive strategies. As we aimed to examine potentially negative effects of leader narcissism in the workplace, we focused on the maladaptive dimension of grandiose narcissism: narcissistic rivalry.

Narcissism and Leadership

Because narcissists are likely to seek out contexts that provide the opportunity to enhance or maintain their grandiose self-views, they tend to strive for leadership positions more often than people low in narcissism (Abeyta et al. 2017; Chen 2016; Nevicka et al. 2011a). Indeed, not only do narcissists seek out contexts that confirm their grandiose self-views, but they are also perceived as being more suitable for leadership positions, even in zero-acquaintance contexts (Brunell et al. 2008; Ong et al. 2016) and irrespective of their actual performance (Nevicka et al. 2011b). This finding can be explained by implicit leadership theories: People have general beliefs about what a "typical" leader should be like (Epitropaki et al. 2013). In many respects, narcissists match these preconceptions by generally showing dominant, extraverted, self-assured, and confident behavior—the "ingredients we tend to look for in a leader" (De Hoogh et al. 2015, p. 474). Indeed, a meta-analysis by Grijalva et al. (2015) showed that narcissists' propensity to ascend to leadership positions could be explained by high levels of extraversion. After attaining leadership positions, however, narcissists are not necessarily effective leaders. Only when leaders rate themselves is narcissism positively related to leader effectiveness. When rated by their followers, supervisors, or peers, leader narcissism is unrelated or negatively related to leader effectiveness (Grijalva et al. 2015).

Undoubtedly, "good" or "effective" leadership to a large part entails successfully leading—as opposed to merely managing—others (Kotter 1990). Positive reciprocal relationships between leaders and followers are crucial for ensuring individual motivation, performance, and well-being and thus achieving organizational goals (Dulebohn et al. 2012; Martin et al. 2010). Furthermore, holding a leadership position entails a moral responsibility to not abuse the power this role affords. Narcissists, however, are focused on their own needs and have been shown to manipulate and use others as long as it serves their own goals (Blair et al. 2017; Campbell et al. 2011). Whereas some authors have not found negative effects of leader narcissism on follower well-being (Volmer et al. 2016), others have reported negative effects of leader narcissism on follower job engagement, emotional well-being, and tension, especially in the absence of effective coping strategies in followers (Ellen et al. 2017; Hochwarter and Thompson 2012; Nevicka et al. 2018a). Concerning the impact of leader narcissism on follower behavior, Braun et al. (2018) showed that leader narcissism elicits malicious envy in followers, leading to supervisor-directed counterproductive work behavior. A closer look at narcissistic leaders' behavior revealed that they tend to engage in less relational-, task-, and change-oriented behavior than others do: They show little concern for their followers, do not develop efficient communication patterns, do not define or organize their work and roles, and do not encourage innovative thinking (Martin et al. 2016). Furthermore, several recent studies found a connection between leader narcissism and abusive supervision tendencies (i.e., leaders' propensity to show hostile verbal and nonverbal behavior toward their followers, e.g., by humiliating or ignoring them; Nevicka et al. 2018a; Waldman et al. 2018; but see Wisse and Sleebos 2016, for different results).

In sum, findings concerning the effects of leader narcissism on follower outcomes are often equivocal, and a clear picture has yet to emerge. Whereas some authors have focused on the "bright side" of being led by narcissists (e.g., Higgs 2009; Maccoby 2000), other business ethics scholars have investigated the negative consequences of the "dark side" of narcissism (Blair et al. 2008, 2017; Ellen et al. 2017; Hochwarter and Thompson 2012). A very likely reason for the earlier inconclusive findings is that these previous studies conceptualized narcissism as a unidimensional construct, ignoring the potential differences between the agentic and antagonistic dimensions of grandiose narcissism.

To apply a more fine-grained perspective, here, we relied on the NARC (Back et al. 2013) as a theoretical framework that could be applied to overcome this limitation and paint a clearer picture of differential outcomes. As mentioned above, building substantive individual relationships with followers can be seen as one of the elementary aspects of being a successful leader. However, leaders with high levels of narcissistic rivalry might not be successful at building relationships or might not be motivated to do so (Bradlee and Emmons 1992). To develop specific hypotheses, studies on interpersonal relationships in a private context that have already used the NARC will be presented in the following paragraphs. Whereas private relationships arguably differ

from leader-follower relationships, it has been shown that core aspects such as respect, trust, and obligation are central to the functioning of both types of relationships, and a perceived lack of these factors leads to issues such as lower relationship satisfaction (Clark and Mills 2011; Dulebohn et al. 2012; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995).

Narcissistic Rivalry in Relationships

Relationships evolve and change over time. Several studies have shown that narcissists create positive initial impressions in relationships as they are perceived as charming, attractive, assertive, and exciting in the so-called "emerging zone" (e.g., Back et al. 2018; Paulhus 2001). Yet, in the long term, the positive impression wanes, and narcissists are increasingly perceived as manipulative, cold, arrogant, untrustworthy, or combative. Consequently, relationship satisfaction declines (Campbell and Campbell 2009; Lavner et al. 2016; Leckelt et al. 2015; Paulhus 1998; Wurst et al. 2017). This process can be traced back to the dimensions of narcissism proposed in the NARC: Narcissistic admiration is responsible for the initial positive effects of narcissism in interpersonal relationships, explained by dominant, expressive behavior and being perceived as assertive. By contrast, the negative long-term effects hail from narcissistic rivalry, manifested in exploitative, arrogant behavior and being perceived as aggressive (Back et al. 2018; Küfner et al. 2013; Wurst et al. 2017). Whereas the positive effects of narcissistic admiration decrease with time, the negative effects of narcissistic rivalry increase (Leckelt et al. 2015).

Thus, while narcissistic admiration may even lead to positive consequences in workplace relationships, narcissistic rivalry should have a negative impact on interaction partners, especially if the interactions last for a long period of time. As we did not study newly formed relationships in the workplace, we expected negative effects of narcissistic rivalry in established relationships. Relations between leaders' narcissistic admiration and follower outcomes were additionally investigated in an exploratory manner.

Leaders' Narcissistic Rivalry and Follower Outcomes

To capture a broad range of follower experiences, we investigated perceptions as well as reported behavior in followers. Importantly, we included followers' and leaders' ratings of leaders' narcissistic rivalry to examine whether the results varied by source (see Back et al. 2013). Even though self- and other-ratings of narcissistic rivalry are moderately related ($r = 0.27$; Back et al. 2013), narcissists can be expected to perceive themselves differently (i.e., in a more positive light) than their interaction partners do, and using self- and other-ratings captures both perspectives. Whereas narcissism is traditionally measured via self-report, several authors have suggested using other-ratings of personality traits especially when researching so-called "dark" personality traits or at least supplementing self-ratings with other-ratings (Spain et al. 2013; Thomas et al. 2003). Specifically, Malesza and Kaczmarek (2018) posited that other-ratings may supplement self-ratings of narcissism as other-ratings contain a degree of unique, trait-relevant information. In this study, we investigated how individual follower outcomes (e.g., self-esteem and engagement) are affected by followers' and leaders' perceptions of leaders' narcissistic rivalry to prevent same-source biases.

Perceived Supervisor Support

According to social exchange theories, relationships in the workplace consist of reciprocal interactions (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995; Thoroughgood et al. 2018): If supervisors provide task-related information and resources and show empathic concern and support, followers reciprocate with motivation, commitment, and loyalty. A meta-analysis (Ng and Sorensen 2008) showed that perceived supervisor support was positively related to relevant follower outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, affective commitment, and turnover intentions). These, in turn, ultimately influence an organization's success (Ostroff 1992). Other researchers found that perceptions of supervisor support influenced not only job-related attitudes but also behavioral tendencies, such as actual turnover (Eisenberger et al. 2002) or organizational citizenship behavior (Chang et al. 2018). Individuals high in narcissistic rivalry are focused on their own advantage but lack empathy and concern for their interaction partners (Back et al. 2013). They show arrogant and aggressive behavior and are perceived as untrustworthy (Leckelt et al. 2015). Moreover, people high in narcissistic rivalry describe themselves as less committed and less faithful in relationships compared with individuals who score lower (Wurst et al. 2017). Thus, leaders high in narcissistic rivalry may be perceived as showing little interest in supporting their followers.

Hypothesis 1a: Self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry will be negatively related to perceived supervisor support.

Hypothesis 1b: Follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry will be negatively related to perceived supervisor support.

Relationship Quality

The need to belong and establish meaningful personal relationships is innate in humans, and the failure to satisfy that need has meaningful negative consequences for physiological and psychological well-being (Baumeister and Leary 1995; Holt-Lunstad et al. 2010; Mellor et al. 2008). In the

workplace, positive relationships between leaders and followers are characterized by mutual respect, trust, and loyalty according to the leader-member-exchange framework (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995). The quality of leader-follower relationships has substantial effects on relevant organizational and individual outcomes, such as turnover intentions and actual turnover, in-role and extra-role performance, commitment, job satisfaction, and well-being (Dulebohn et al. 2012; Martin et al. 2010). A meta-analysis found that leader personality was the best predictor of the quality of these relationships (Dulebohn et al. 2012). Narcissistic rivalry is associated with uncaring, devaluing, and manipulative behavior as well as low levels of empathy and agreeableness (Back et al. 2013). In romantic relationships, it has been shown that narcissists exhibit manipulative, uncaring behavior and make their partners feel unsupported, which in turn leads to decreased relationship quality (Lavner et al. 2016). We expect that these expressions of narcissistic rivalry are reflected in followers' negative evaluations of the leader-member relationship. As the quality of relationships greatly relies on the extent to which we feel supported by our interaction partners (Clark and Mills 2011; Sue-Chan et al. 2012), we expect perceived supervisor support to mediate this relationship.

Hypothesis 2a: Self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry will be negatively related to followers' perceived quality of leader-member relationships. This relation will be mediated by perceived supervisor support.

Hypothesis 2b: Follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry will be negatively related to followers' perceived quality of leader-member relationships. This relation will be mediated by perceived supervisor support.

Performance-Based Self-Esteem

In the workplace, people are often confronted with challenging situations. How well we think we can handle these situations influences our performance (Judge et al. 2007; Stajkovic and Luthans 1998). One benefit of positive interactions with others is that they can enhance the trust we have in our ability to cope with challenging situations (Bandura 1986). We base part of our self-esteem on the presumed evaluations of others (Leary and Baumeister 2000). In line with the assumption that self-esteem fluctuates with others' approval or rejection, a meta-analysis showed that social relationships had a significant effect on self-esteem (Harris and Orth 2019).

If positive interactions with others can make people feel worthy and capable of handling challenging tasks, interactions with leaders high in narcissistic rivalry, who devaluate and derogate their followers and put themselves above them, should erode followers' trust in their abilities at work (i.e., decrease their performance-based self-esteem). In line with Sguera et al. (2018), we argue that perceived supervisor support plays an important role in this relationship, as low levels of perceived support should lead followers to conclude they are not worthy. Thus, we expect the assumed negative relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and performance-based self-esteem to be mediated by perceived supervisor support.

Hypothesis 3a: Self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry will be negatively related to performance-based self-esteem. This relation will be mediated by perceived supervisor support.

Hypothesis 3b: Follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry will be negatively related to performance-based self-esteem. This relation will be mediated by perceived supervisor support.

Job Engagement

An organization's success depends to a large degree on the effort each follower invests in fulfilling the tasks that come with his or her respective role (Katz and Kahn 1978). Job engagement (i.e., the full investment of one's physical, cognitive, and emotional resources) in a specific role is positively related to task and extra-role performance (Kahn 1990; Rich et al. 2010). According to social exchange theory, relationships in the workplace are reciprocal (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005): Organizations provide job security, financial compensation, and attractive tasks through their leaders; followers reciprocate by fulfilling their tasks and investing effort to try to reach organizational goals. In sustainable relationships, leaders show that they appreciate and value their followers, thus motivating their followers to go above and beyond set goals (Dulebohn et al. 2012; Graen and Scandura 1987). Hence, we expect that when leaders devalue their followers and place themselves above them, followers will reciprocate with reduced job engagement. As derogating behavior should be perceived as unsupportive, we expect perceived supervisor support to mediate this relationship (Fig. 1).

Hypothesis 4a: Self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry will be negatively related to job engagement. This relation will be mediated by perceived supervisor support.

Hypothesis 4b: Follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry will be negatively related to job engagement. This relation will be mediated by perceived supervisor support.

We conducted an exploratory investigation to determine how leaders' narcissistic admiration relates to the above-mentioned outcomes.

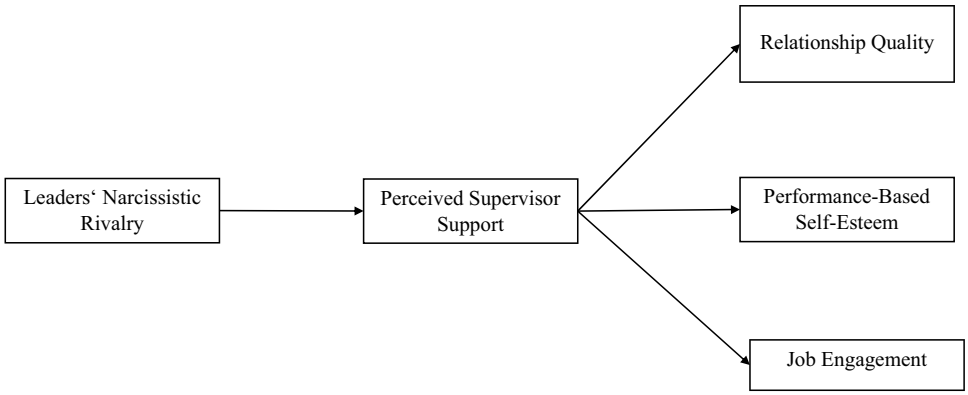

Fig. 1 Proposed theoretical model

Method

Sample and Procedure

As mentioned above, we included leaders' and followers' perspectives in our research. Leaders were approached via the quarterly newsletter of the authors' competence center, the authors' university press department, personal contacts, and online platforms (e.g., www.xing.de). As we wanted to increase the probability that at least one follower per leader would participate, thus gaining as many usable matches as possible, leaders were asked to submit the e-mail addresses of three followers who were then invited to participate in the study. To ensure an unbiased choice of followers and to prevent leaders from picking only followers who could be expected to provide favorable assessments, we asked leaders to name the three followers whose last names came first in the alphabet as long as they had been working together for at least 6 months.

Heeding calls for more transparency in psychological research, the theoretical model and main hypotheses were preregistered on the Open Science Framework (OSF; see https://osf.io/q4ahw/).[2]

Participants took part in the study on a voluntary basis. Anonymity and confidential treatment of data were stressed to avoid concerns about the respective leaders or followers obtaining access to the data. The initial sample consisted of 142 leaders and 168 followers. Six participants were excluded due to a large number of missing items or symmetrical answer patterns. Several participants could not be matched to either a leader or a follower. After leaders and followers had been matched, the final sample consisted of 122 followers nested under 68 leaders. There were on average 1.8 followers per leader (range 1–5).

In the final sample, 41% of leaders and 70% of followers were women. Leaders were between 25 and 61 years old ($M = 45.71$, $SD = 10.62$), and followers were between 20 and 65 ($M = 38.62$, $SD = 12.35$). Respondents came from over ten industries, with the most prevalent being civil services (32.8%). Leaders directly supervised between one and 60 followers ($M = 9.81$, $SD = 9.86$). Out of the leaders, 14.7% held a high (i.e., top management), 32.4% a medium (i.e., department level), and 52.9% a low (i.e., team level) leadership position. Followers had worked for their current supervisors for 4.68 years on average (range 0–29; $SD = 5.54$).

Measures

Narcissistic Rivalry and Admiration

To assess narcissistic rivalry and admiration, we used the 18-item German version of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ; Back et al. 2013). Leaders rated themselves and were evaluated by their followers with an other-rating version of the questionnaire. Sample items are "I want my rivals to fail/My supervisor wants his/her rivals to fail" (rivalry) or "I show others how special I am/My supervisor shows others how special he/she is" (admiration). The items were answered on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*completely*). Internal consistency was acceptable to good for the self-ratings with Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.69$ for rivalry and Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$ for admiration and excellent for the follower ratings with Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.94$ for rivalry and Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$ for admiration.

Perceived Supervisor Support

We assessed perceived supervisor support with the adapted Perceived Organizational Support Scale (Eisenberger et al. 1997, 2002), which consists of nine items (e.g., "My supervisor really cares about my well-being"). Items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*do not agree at all*)

[2] We preregistered further variables and hypotheses that will be reported in a separate manuscript.

to 6 (*strongly agree*). The scale was translated into German using the standard forward- and back-translation procedure (Brislin 1986). The items were translated into German by the first author and then translated back into English by a bilingual research assistant. Discrepancies between the original and the back-translated versions were resolved before the German version was finalized. Cronbach's alpha was excellent ($\alpha = 0.90$).

Leader-Member-Exchange

We used the German version of the Multidimensional Leader-Member-Exchange Scale (LMX-MDM; Paul and Schyns 2004) to measure leader-member-exchange quality. Responding to the authors' recommendations, only three of the four subscales were used (affect, loyalty, and respect), each containing three items (e.g., "I like my leader very much as a person"). Answers were indicated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The internal consistency was excellent ($\alpha = 0.93$).

Performance-Based Self-Esteem

We measured performance-based self-esteem with the five items comprising the subscale performance self-esteem of the State Self-Esteem Scale (Heatherton and Polivy 1991; German version by Rudolph et al. 2020). A sample item is "I feel frustrated or rattled about my performance". Participants rated the items on a 5-point Likert scale with answers ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*completely*). The internal consistency was acceptable ($\alpha = 0.68$).

Job Engagement

Job engagement in this study was operationalized as the extent to which followers invest effort in their work tasks and measured with the subscales physical and affective engagement from the Job Engagement Scale (Rich et al. 2010), each consisting of six items. Again, we used the standard forward- and back-translation procedure to translate the items into German. Sample items are "I feel energetic at my job" (emotional engagement) or "I exert my full effort to my job" (physical engagement). The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The internal consistency was excellent ($\alpha = 0.91$).

Control Variable

As negative affectivity may influence followers' perceptions and evaluations of their leaders, we controlled for negative follower affect. We used the German version of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Krohne et al. 1996), which consists of 10 adjectives (e.g., "nervous", "upset"). Followers indicated the extent to which they were presently experiencing the respective affective states on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely*; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$).

Analysis Strategy

The data were hierarchically structured, as between one and five followers evaluated variables concerning their respective leader's personality and their mutual relationships. Consequently, evaluations of followers (level 1) nested in leaders (level 2) were nonindependent, and this nested structure had to be taken into account to prevent the underestimation of standard errors (Hox 2010; Nezlek 2011). As effects on different levels were not relevant to the research question, but the dependence of the data due to the clustered structure had to be accounted for, we opted for the Mplus *type = complex* analysis strategy (Muthén and Muthén 1998–2012). This procedure adjusts the standard errors for nonindependence of observations but does not yield effects on different levels or cross-level interactions.

The intraclass correlation (ICC), which measures the degree of dependence within a group (Snijders and Bosker 2012), was 0.09 for performance-based self-esteem, 0.12 for job engagement, and 0.53 for leader-member-exchange. However, according to Kahn (2011), using multilevel modeling even with low ICCs is sensible, as ICCs as low as 0.10 can imply meaningful heterogeneity between groups.

We estimated two different models. In Model 1, the leaders themselves rated their narcissistic rivalry levels (IV), and followers rated perceived supervisor support (mediator) as well as leader-member-exchange, performance-based self-esteem, and job engagement (DVs), resulting in a 2–1–1 model with multivariate outcomes. In a second model, all variables were measured from the followers' perspective, resulting in a 1–1–1 model. We specified maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors, which is robust to violations of normality and appropriate when cluster sizes are unbalanced (Heck 2015).

Results

Data management and preliminary analyses were carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, version 25 (IBM Corp. 2017). Descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, and internal consistencies are presented in Table 1.

Hypothesis Testing

Analyses concerning hypothesis testing were carried out using Mplus, version 7.2 (Muthén and Muthén 1998–2012).

Table 1 Means, standard deviations, correlations, and internal consistency estimates

Variable	*M*	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Leader variables											
1 Rivalry self-rating	1.88	0.52	(0.69)								
2 Admiration self-rating	3.13	0.65	0.42***	(0.76)							
Follower variables											
3 Rivalry follower rating	2.01	1.10			(0.94)						
4 Admiration follower rating	3.35	1.07			0.61***	(0.87)					
5 Perceived supervisor support	4.96	0.87			− 0.64***	− 0.31**	(0.90)				
6 Performance-based self-esteem	4.23	0.59			− 0.33***	− 0.21*	0.36**	(0.68)			
7 Job engagement	4.08	0.60			− 0.08	− 0.03	0.24**	0.28**	(0.91)		
8 Leader-member-exchange	5.52	1.20			− 0.53***	− 0.14	0.75**	0.16	0.19*	(0.93)	
9 Followers' negative affect	1.30	0.43			0.29**	0.28**	− 0.29**	− 0.24**	− 0.11	− 0.23*	(0.87)

$N_{leaders} = 68$, $N_{followers} = 122$. Alpha coefficients are given in parentheses along the diagonal

*$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$. ***$p < 0.001$

To test the direct and indirect effects proposed in the theoretical model, two multilevel path models controlling for the clustered data structure were analyzed, using self- and follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry and admiration as predictors, respectively. As mentioned above, leaders' narcissistic rivalry was our focal predictor, whereas effects of leaders' narcissistic admiration were analyzed in an exploratory fashion only. Self- and follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry were not correlated ($r = -0.06$, $p = 0.505$), and there were no significant mean differences between the self- and follower ratings ($t = 1.31$, $p = 0.192$). In both models, we controlled for followers' negative affect.

The fit for Model 1, with self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry and admiration as predictors, was good (RMSEA = 0.00, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.14, SRMR = 0.01). Model 2, with followers' ratings of leaders' narcissistic rivalry and admiration, had a worse fit (RMSEA = 0.19, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.56, SRMR = 0.09). Excluding the control variable greatly improved the fit for Model 2 (RMSEA = 0.00, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, SRMR = 0.00). As the parameter estimates did not differ greatly when Model 2 included versus did not include the control variable, we report the results for the model with the better fit (i.e., in which negative follower affect was not controlled for).[3] Parameter estimates for Model 1 and 2 are reported in Table 2.

Hypothesis 1a, which posited a negative relationship between self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry and perceived supervisor support, was not supported (β = -0.11, $SE = 0.15$, $p = 0.445$). In line with Hypothesis 1b, we found a negative relationship between follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry and perceived supervisor support (β = − 0.72, $SE = 0.07$, $p < 0.001$).

In Hypotheses 2a and 2b, a negative relationship between self- and follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry and leader-member-exchange was expected to be mediated by perceived supervisor support. Self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry did not predict leader-member-exchange (β = 0.01, $SE = 0.07$, $p = 0.903$), which went against H2a. Follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry, in turn, predicted follower ratings of leader-member-exchange, but the effect was beyond traditional levels of significance (β = − 0.23, $SE = 0.13$, $p = 0.072$). Furthermore, the effect was mediated by perceived supervisor support as expected ($b = -0.52$, $SE = 0.11$, $p < 0.001$).

The negative relation between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and performance-based self-esteem postulated in Hypotheses 3a and 3b was not evident for self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry (β = 0.12, $SE = 0.09$, $p = 0.179$) or follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry (β = -0.14, $SE = 0.14$, $p = 0.332$). However, as expected, there was a significant indirect effect from follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry to performance-based self-esteem via perceived supervisor support ($b = -0.10$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.028$).

Hypotheses 4a and 4b proposed a negative relation between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and job engagement, mediated by perceived supervisor support. Again, no significant direct effect was found for self-rated (β = 0.07, $SE = 0.09$, $p = 0.472$) or follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry (β = 0.13, $SE = 0.12$, $p = 0.293$). However, the indirect effect from follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry to job engagement via perceived supervisor support was significant ($b = -0.13$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.001$).

[3] Parameter estimates for Model 2 including followers' negative affect as a control variable are reported in Table 3 for the sake of completeness.

Table 2 Parameter estimates for the multilevel mediation analyses

Variable	Perceived supervisor support			Leader-member-exchange			Performance-based self-esteem			Job engagement		
	β	*SE*	*p*	β	*SE*	*p*	β	*SE*	*p*	β	*SE*	*p*
Model 1												
Self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry	− 0.11	0.15	0.445	0.01	0.07	0.903	0.12	0.09	0.179	0.07	0.09	0.472
Self-rated leaders' narcissistic admiration	0.12	0.15	0.423	0.16	0.08	0.035*	− 0.20	0.09	0.017*	− 0.10	0.10	0.296
Perceived supervisor support				0.73	0.05	< 0.001***	0.34	0.08	< 0.001***	0.25	0.10	0.017*
Followers' negative affect	− 0.69	0.16	< 0.001***	− 0.06	0.17	0.743	031	0.17	0.086	− 0.08	0.23	0.711
Model 2												
Follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry	− 0.72	0.07	< 0.001***	− 0.23	0.13	0.072	− 0.14	0.14	0.332	0.13	0.12	0.293
Follower-rated leaders' narcissistic admiration	0.14	0.09	0.145	0.21	0.08	0.009**	− 0.05	0.12	0.662	− 0.01	0.11	0.946
Perceived supervisor support				0.67	0.09	< 0.001***	0.26	0.12	0.027*	0.32	0.11	0.003**

$N = 68$ leader-member pairs

*$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$. ***$p < 0.001$

Table 3 Parameter estimates for Model 2 with followers' negative affect as control variable

Variable	Perceived supervisor support			Leader-member-exchange			Performance-based self-esteem			Job engagement		
	β	*SE*	*p*	β	*SE*	*p*	β	*SE*	*p*	β	*SE*	*p*
Follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry	− 0.71	0.07	< 0.001***	− 0.23	0.13	0.076	− 0.13	0.15	0.382	0.13	0.12	0.295
Follower-rated leaders' narcissistic admiration	0.16	0.10	0.095	0.22	0.09	0.011**	− 0.03	0.12	0.777	0.01	0.12	0.965
Perceived supervisor support				0.66	0.09	< 0.001***	0.22	0.12	0.054*	0.30	0.11	0.007**
Followers' negative affect	− 0.14	0.08	0.069	− 0.03	0.08	0.689	− 0.13	0.08	0.118	− 0.06	0.10	0.549

$N = 68$ leader-member pairs

*$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$. ***$p < 0.001$

Additional Analyses

For many decades, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin and Hall 1979; German version by Schütz et al. 2004) has been the predominant measure in research on grandiose narcissism. Only in recent years have instruments that conceptualize narcissism as a multidimensional construct emerged. To examine whether results differ on the basis of the conceptualization of narcissism as one- or two-dimensional, we also tested the theoretical model with self-rated leader narcissism as measured by the NPI as a predictor. Again, we included followers' negative affect as a control variable. The model fit the data very well (RMSEA = 0.00, CFI = 0.1.00, TLI = 1.00, SRMR = 0.00). Scores on the NPI did not predict perceived supervisor support (β = − 0.09, *SE* = 0.13, *p* = 0.474), leader-member-exchange (β = 0.08, *SE* = 0.07, *p* = 0.277), performance-based self-esteem (β = − 0.15, *SE* = 0.08, *p* = 0.060), or job engagement (β = − 0.12, *SE* = 0.08, *p* = 0.149). Indirect effects were not significant (all *p*s > 0.474).

The relationships between narcissistic admiration and follower outcomes were investigated in an exploratory fashion. Follower-rated narcissistic admiration was positively related to leader-member-exchange (β = 0.21, *SE* = 0.08, *p* = 0.009). Self-rated leaders' narcissistic admiration was negatively related to performance-based self-esteem (β = − 0.20, *SE* = 0.09, *p* = 0.017) and positively related to leader-member-exchange (β = 0.16, *SE* = 0.08, *p* = 0.035). There were no significant indirect effects via perceived supervisor support (all *p*s > 0.160 for follower-rated leaders' narcissistic admiration and all *p*s > 0.383 for self-rated leaders' narcissistic admiration).

Discussion

Key Findings and Theoretical Implications

Narcissists are characterized by particular motivations and behaviors that facilitate their ascent to leadership positions (Abeyta et al. 2017; Chen 2016; Nevicka et al. 2011a). However, once there, only they themselves would describe them as "good" leaders. The current study focused on the maladaptive dimension of leader narcissism (i.e., narcissistic rivalry) in a business ethics context and integrated leaders' and followers' perspectives to try to explain *why* it is that others do not evaluate narcissistic leaders positively. We suggested that, similar to romantic or private relationships, the followers of leaders high in narcissistic rivalry perceive these leaders as unsupportive and that this results in negative outcomes concerning followers' perceptions, feelings, and reported behavior. In sum, the results showed a consistent picture: Self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry was unrelated to followers' perceptions of supervisor support and emotional and motivational outcome variables. Followers' ratings of leaders' narcissistic rivalry, by contrast, were negatively connected to these outcomes. Perceived supervisor support mediated the negative effects of follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry on leader-member-exchange, performance-based self-esteem, and job engagement.

We investigated the proposed relationships in a sample of matched leaders and followers. Our results clearly show that when it comes to the motivational, emotional, and behavioral consequences of leaders' narcissistic rivalry, what counts is followers' perceptions of leaders rather than leaders' self-perceptions. Thus, if leaders high in narcissistic rivalry admit that they have devaluing thoughts and see others as less worthy than themselves but these cognitions are not manifested in behavior, followers seem to be largely unaffected. Only if the derogatory attitudes toward others are transformed into actual, perceptible behavior that is observed by followers do negative effects occur. Leaders high in narcissistic rivalry seem to behave in such a way toward their followers that these in turn feel less supported, feel less valuable, evaluate their relationships more negatively, and show less engagement.

To further examine whether it is indeed the acting out of derogatory thoughts and attitudes about others that drives the negative effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry, future studies could examine abusive supervision as a behavioral expression of these cognitions. Even though narcissism has already been proposed as an antecedent of abusive supervision (Nevicka et al. 2018a; Padilla et al. 2007; Waldman et al. 2018), at least one study found no significant relationship between narcissism and abusive supervision (Wisse and Sleebos 2016). Thus, investigating the mediating role of abusive supervision in the relationship between narcissistic rivalry as the maladaptive dimension of narcissism and perceived supervisor support could shed further light on the actual behavior of leaders high in narcissistic rivalry. To get closer to capturing actual behavior, diary studies using event-sampling techniques could be a valuable approach here.

Previous research has yielded contradictory statements regarding the viability of using self- or other-ratings of narcissism to predict individual outcomes. Hoffmann et al. (2013), for example, found that self-rated leader narcissism did not predict follower-rated leader effectiveness. The authors referred to previous studies reporting weak relationships between self-ratings of leader narcissism and other-ratings of leadership variables and argued that treating narcissism as a unidimensional construct might have caused the positive and negative effects to cancel each other out. By distinguishing between narcissistic admiration and rivalry in our study, we circumvented that pitfall and showed that the two dimensions of narcissism proposed in the NARC are

related to follower outcomes in different ways. Indeed, our additional analyses using the unidimensional NPI did not reveal significant effects of leader narcissism on our outcome variables and thus clearly differed from the results using follower ratings of narcissistic rivalry as the maladaptive dimension of narcissism.

This finding supports the assumption that positive and negative effects of grandiose narcissism might cancel each other out when unidimensional measures are used and further strengthens the argument for using more fine-grained approaches to measurement. However, it is still possible that a negativity bias influenced our results: Followers might have attributed general negative attitudes or affectivity to their leaders, biasing their evaluations of the leaders and their relationships. We lowered this possibility by controlling for followers' negative affectivity. Additionally, the results dovetail with previous research that showed that other-ratings of personality were more predictive of behavior than self-ratings (Connelly and Ones 2010), especially concerning evaluations of narcissism (Braun 2017). As Hogan and Fico (2011) contended, narcissistic leaders' reputation (i.e., how they are perceived by others) is especially useful for predicting leader behavior. To further corroborate this claim, we recommend combining followers' perspectives on leaders' narcissistic rivalry with objective measurements of actual leader behavior in future studies to thus better understand the links between narcissistic rivalry, abusive supervision, and perceived supervisor support.

The findings from our study are partly in line with findings on private or romantic relationships, which show that long-term partners of narcissists do not feel cared for, report manipulative behavior and conflicts, suffer from a lack of commitment and warmth, and are generally not satisfied with their relationships (Campbell and Foster 2002; Campbell et al. 2006; Lavner et al. 2016; Wurst et al. 2017). We also corroborate the findings by Wurst et al. (2017), who did not operationalize narcissism as a unidimensional construct but distinguished between narcissistic admiration and rivalry. Like them, we showed that particularly the rivalry dimension of narcissism entails negative outcomes for interaction partners, and we can add that this holds true not only in private but also in work contexts.

Of course, all relationships develop and change over time. In connection with the NARC, it has been shown that the rivalry component is responsible for the negative long-term effects of narcissism in relationships, such as rejection, conflicts, or unpopularity (Leckelt et al. 2015; Wurst et al. 2017). In turn, narcissistic admiration generates the positive social outcomes typical of narcissists, such as being perceived as attractive and likable or attaining social status and praise (Back et al. 2018; Leckelt et al. 2015; Wurst et al. 2017). Consequently, it is possible that leader-member relationships are likewise affected by these temporal trajectories. If this is the case, the stronger influence of narcissistic admiration in early relationships may lead followers to perceive their narcissistic leaders as more supportive, and negative outcomes should be less obvious. In the long run, however, as the rivalry dimension becomes more influential, negative social outcomes, such as low perceived support, low follower engagement, reduced self-esteem, and unsatisfactory relationships should predominate. This argument is also in line with results from Nevicka et al. (2018b), who found that less visible leaders, who had less opportunity to treat their employees negatively in comparison with more visible leaders, had a less negative impact on followers' job attitudes.

To examine temporal effects, we analyzed our theoretical model using the duration of the leader-member relationship as a moderator in a post hoc analysis. Surprisingly, it was not the case that followers who had only worked with their supervisors for a short time evaluated their relationship more favorably. This finding differs from the results of studies in romantic or private contexts, which showed that the relationship satisfaction of people with narcissistic partners declines over time (Lavner et al. 2016) and that this can be attributed to the differential predominance of the admiration and rivalry dimensions over the course of a relationship (Leckelt et al. 2015; Wurst et al. 2017). Still, we excluded pairs who had worked together for less than 6 months, and it is possible that the negative effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry has already been substantiated after a few months (see Paulhus 1998). Thus, future research could examine the assumptions we made in newly formed leader-member collaborations. Longitudinal studies would definitely be worthwhile to shed further light on the temporal effects of narcissism and draw causal conclusions regarding the development of work relationships with narcissistic leaders. For instance, it may also be the case that work relationships differ from private relationships in certain aspects (e.g., the emotional significance one attributes to them).

Our exploratory investigation of narcissistic admiration in the context of leader-member relationships showed that leaders who perceive themselves or are perceived as high on narcissistic admiration have better leader–follower relationships than others. In this respect, it may be worthwhile to investigate the overlap between narcissistic admiration and components of transformational leadership to learn more about the processes underlying this effect. Transformational leaders inspire their followers by communicating compelling visions in a charismatic way (Bass 1991). Judge et al. (2006) did not find associations between leader narcissism and transformational leadership. This could be due to their use of a unidimensional narcissism measure. Applying the NARC in this context may show whether narcissistic admiration is indeed positively related to transformational leadership. According to the NARC, people high in narcissistic admiration entertain visions of grandiosity (Back et al.

2013), which might, in an organizational context, apply to visions for one's organization. It may thus be the case that leaders high in narcissistic admiration form relationships with their followers that are perceived as positive because these leaders share motivating visions and give followers the feeling that they are part of something big and important.

However, self-rated leaders' narcissistic admiration was negatively related to followers' reports of performance-based self-esteem. This shows that leaders who aim to be the center of attention and praise their own accomplishments seem to elicit feelings of inadequacy in their followers regarding work performance. In this sense, leaders' narcissistic admiration may also be regarded as maladaptive in some respects: Based on social comparison processes, negative feelings toward the leader may be elicited because the leader triggers feelings of inferiority. Followers who experience low performance-based self-esteem typically show less satisfaction and lower performance (Judge and Bono 2001). Further, malicious envy and supervisor-directed counterproductive work behavior could result (Braun et al. 2018; Whelpley and McDaniel 2016).

Limitations

Whereas the dyadic data structure of our sample enabled us to study our theoretical assumptions from two perspectives, some methodological aspects could be improved in future studies. First, we had an unbalanced sample: We asked leaders to invite up to three of their followers. We did so to increase the possibility that at least one follower per leader would answer the questionnaire. Future studies could use balanced and unique dyads and collect ratings on all variables of interest from both partners so that actor-partner-interdependence models (APIM; Kenny and Cook 1999) could be computed.

Furthermore, we asked leaders to select the followers according to their surnames, but we were unable to control whether they actually did so. Biases could have influenced our sample in such a way that leaders intentionally invited followers from whom they expected favorable ratings. However, followers' ratings of most variables were comparable to those reported in the literature in the field, which speaks against possible biases. Leaders' self-rated narcissistic rivalry was indeed lower than in previous papers: Whereas others found ratings between 1.92 and 2.70 (e.g., Lange et al. 2016; Leckelt et al. 2015; Geukes et al. 2017; Mota et al. 2019), the mean was 1.86 in our study. This could have resulted from our acquisition strategy: To cover the whole range of narcissism and attract leaders high in narcissism, we claimed we were looking for leaders who would share with us what characterizes "outstanding" leaders. This might have provoked socially desirable answers concerning narcissistic rivalry. However, other studies have shown that typically, social desirability is not a problem with narcissism. Additionally, other studies have reported higher variance in self-reported narcissistic rivalry than our study. Many other studies have used student samples (for an exception, see Lange et al. 2016), with a younger population and a larger share of female participants. Whereas the use of real-life leader-member pairs instead of a student sample is a strength of our study that impacts external validity, in the future, sampling strategies should ensure that there is enough variance in all relevant variables. This could be achieved by asking leaders to provide at least three followers' names and have an algorithm choose one randomly.

Of course, leadership does not happen in a vacuum. According to trait activation theory (Tett and Burnett 2003), the manifestation of personality traits depends on the situation, which in turn is shaped by contextual factors and interaction partners' behavior. In line with this, the framework of the toxic triangle (Padilla et al. 2007; Thoroughgood et al. 2018) presumes that destructive leadership emerges as a consequence of destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments. One environmental factor that may buffer against the negative effects of narcissistic leaders on their followers is coworker support. According to the job demands-resources model (Bakker and Demerouti 2007) and the cross-domain buffering hypothesis (Lepore 1992), coworker support can be seen as a job resource that is beneficial to followers' well-being and engagement. For example, strong support from team members weakens the negative relationship between abusive supervision and job satisfaction (Hobman et al. 2009). Future studies should also take into account follower characteristics and organizational culture. On the basis of theoretical accounts and empirical findings on destructive leadership (Padilla et al. 2007; Schyns et al. 2019), we would expect that especially followers who are perceived either as "easy targets" (i.e., submissive followers) or as highly threatening to a leader's grandiose ego (i.e., confrontational followers) will suffer from having a leader high in narcissistic rivalry. For example, Nevicka et al. (2018a) found that followers with low self-esteem suffered more from narcissistic leaders than those with higher self-esteem. Also, whether an organization's culture prohibits or sanctions unethical and devaluing behavior should influence how openly narcissistic leaders display their derogative attitudes. Leaders' narcissistic rivalry might also elicit unethical follower behavior in two ways: for one, supervisor-directed deviance or counterproductive work behavior might result as ways of retaliation or protest against devaluing leader behavior (Braun 2017). On the other hand, obedient followers could be easily convinced to engage in other-targeted unethical behavior that contributes to leaders' self-serving goals (Uhl-Bien and Carsten 2007). Finally, a leader is of course not characterized by a single personality trait. In fact, it has been shown that some

leader characteristics can temper the negative effects of leader narcissism. Basing their research on paradox theory (Smith and Lewis 2011), Owens et al. (2015), for example, showed that leader humility buffered the negative effects of leader narcissism. Future studies could thus further examine other moderating leader characteristics.

Practical Implications

The central implication of our results seems evident: We do not recommend that organizations hire people high in narcissistic rivalry for leadership positions. Of course, it is not as easy as that. Besides narcissists' propensity to seek out and achieve leadership positions (Grijalva et al. 2015), executive assessment, especially in Germany, is slow to embrace personality tests as valid selection tools (Schuler et al. 2007). Whereas such tests are fairly well-established in the US, and their use has increased in Germany as well (Hossiep et al. 2015), human resource specialists often refrain from using personality assessments due to concerns about validity and acceptance, especially in hierarchically high positions (Benit and Soellner 2013). Apart from the possibility of using general psychometric measures such as the NARQ (Back et al. 2013) in personnel selection, a first measure for specifically assessing "dark" personality traits in the work context was recently introduced (Schwarzinger and Schuler 2016). Due to the abovementioned reasons, the extent to which this will be used in the field remains to be seen. Indeed, as narcissists do have self-insight and openly admit to their narcissism (Carlson 2013), such measures might not even be needed, as one could just ask candidates whether they would describe themselves as narcissistic. In addition to personality tests, conditional reasoning tests or objective performance measures should be incorporated into selection and promotion procedures to circumvent self-presentational tactics that influence more subjective methods such as job interviews or assessment centers (Braun 2017; LeBreton et al. 2007). However, as we noted at the beginning of this paper, leadership success depends on interpersonal skills to a large extent. Thus, specifically selecting for desirable personality traits such as integrity, empathy, or agreeableness, which typically do not coincide with narcissistic rivalry (Back et al. 2013; Rogoza et al. 2016; Wetzel et al. 2016), could also help organizations avoid having people high in narcissistic rivalry ascend to leadership positions. Even before selection processes begin, organizations could influence whether people high in narcissistic rivalry even apply for a position by framing job descriptions with a focus on agentic versus communal aspects. As the latter opposes the way narcissists construe their self-views (Back et al. 2013; Grijalva and Zhang 2016), they should be less motivated to apply for such positions.

Once narcissists have obtained leadership positions and are negatively affecting their followers, other measures should be taken to minimize negative outcomes. Being a relatively stable personality trait that decreases slightly over the life span and in reaction to life events (Chopik and Grimm 2019; Grosz et al. 2019; Wetzel et al. 2019), narcissism in itself is hardly affected by training programs or coaching. This can be attributed to narcissists being resistant to critical feedback about themselves (Bushman and Baumeister 1998; Kernis and Sun 1994).

However, there might be some leverage regarding narcissistic behavior: Our findings show that leaders' narcissistic rivalry's negative effects on employees can be traced back to followers' perceptions of their leaders' behavior (i.e., the observable expressions of narcissistic rivalry). Thus, one strategy could be to work with leaders who are high in narcissistic rivalry on the behavioral expression of their attitudes toward others. As narcissists seldom see reasons to change unless circumstances challenge or threaten their grandiose self-views (Brunell and Campbell 2011), it may be important to alert them to the negative impact their behavior has on their reputation (e.g., through decreasing follower well-being and performance). Seeing that by hurting others, they eventually hurt their own standing in an organization could make behavioral change self-relevant for leaders high in narcissistic rivalry, as such positive changes could boost their status and thus foster their grandiose self-views (Grapsas et al. 2019). Training or coaching that builds on multisource feedback and thus raises narcissistic leaders' awareness of the contrast between how they see themselves and how colleagues, followers, supervisors, and clients perceive them and that focuses on practicing positive leadership skills could also be helpful here. Additionally, designing performance ratings to take into consideration supportive leadership behavior might be a further incentive for leaders high in narcissistic rivalry to adapt the behavioral expression of their narcissistic tendencies. Furthermore, whereas narcissism itself is relatively stable, certain aspects that come with it can indeed be improved through training (e.g., their lack of empathy, perspective taking, or emotional intelligence; Geßler et al. 2020; Hepper et al. 2014; Köppe et al. 2019). These aspects positively influence leader-member relationships (Cropanzano et al. 2017). In addition, organizations could enable employees to engage in upward ethical leadership by helping them develop strong networks and upward leadership skills as well as establishing strong organizational norms that promote ethical behavior and speaking up about destructive leadership behavior (Uhl-Bien and Carsten 2007; Thoroughgood et al. 2018). Finally, closely monitoring potentially destructive leaders and establishing disciplinary procedures for destructive leader behavior, taking feedback from followers seriously, and ensuring

employee rights can further help organizations avoid the negative effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry.

Conclusion

Leaders high in narcissistic rivalry are perceived as less supportive by their followers, which, according to followers' reports, results in lower performance-based self-esteem, lower job engagement, and worse evaluations of the leader-member relationship. What drives these effects is probably not leaders' self-evaluation but rather how their narcissistic tendencies translate into actual behavior, which is then perceived by their followers. Studies with behavioral data could help to corroborate this assumption.

Whereas leaders' narcissistic rivalry clearly has negative consequences, narcissistic admiration may have beneficial effects on how leaders are perceived. Links to charisma, vision, and facets of transformational leadership need to be further investigated. As narcissists typically look for a stage to shine from and thus seek and often attain leadership positions, organizations should consider using personality tests as well as objective selection methods in executive assessments and implement training and coaching opportunities that focus on raising leaders' self-awareness for their destructive behaviors and replacing them with constructive leadership behaviors. Establishing the motivation to change in leaders high in narcissistic rivalry, for example, by outlining how devaluative or aggressive behavior can impair a leader's reputation, is key in such endeavors.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

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5

CHAPTER 5: GENERAL DISCUSSION

OVERALL SUMMARY AND INTEGRATION OF THE STUDY RESULTS

Individuals high in narcissism strive for leadership positions and attain them easily (Chen, 2016; Grijalva et al., 2015; Nevicka, De Hoogh, et al., 2011). However, the question as to whether they are also *effective* leaders has not been answered satisfactorily yet (e.g., Braun, 2017; Grijalva et al., 2015). The present dissertation aimed at examining the potential "dark side" of leader narcissism and focused on leaders' narcissistic rivalry, the maladaptive narcissism dimension according to the narcissistic admiration and rivalry concept (NARC; Back et al., 2013). In four empirical studies presented in three manuscripts, I focused on how leaders' narcissistic rivalry relates to destructive leader behavior or behavioral intentions regarding abusive supervision and to various follower outcomes, specifically relationship quality, performance-based self-esteem and job engagement. In addition, I scrutinized potential underlying mechanisms and explored a) whether leaders' devaluing cognitions about followers mediated the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions and b) whether followers' perceptions of supervisor support mediated the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and the abovementioned follower outcomes. Lastly, as leadership is a dynamic phenomenon to which followers also contribute (e.g., Shamir, 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2018), I proposed that dominant or deviant follower behavior might elicit perceived self-esteem threats and trigger abusive supervision (intentions) in leaders high in narcissistic rivalry.

In the following sections, I first summarize and integrate the findings of the studies presented in this dissertation. Second, I present theoretical and practical implications derived from the studies' results in view of the extant literature. Third,

limitations and avenues for further research are discussed. The chapter ends with a general conclusion.

The findings of all four studies reported in this dissertation lend strong support to the proposition I derived from the NARC (Back et al., 2013), that leaders‘ narcissistic rivalry is a maladaptive and harmful leader characteristic. In Manuscripts 1 and 2, I found a robust, moderately positive effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions in two experimental vignette studies and on abusive supervision in a field study. In Manuscript 3, I further found that followers of leaders high in narcissistic rivalry did not feel supported by their supervisors and that this led to negative evaluations of the leader-member-relationship, to low levels of performance-based self-esteem and low job engagement. Importantly, these associations were only statistically significant when followers rated their leaders' narcissistic rivalry, not when self-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry was used as a predictor.

Concerning potential underlying mechanisms explaining the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions, I based my assumptions on the NARC (Back et al., 2013) and ego threat theory (Baumeister et al., 1996) and proposed that the positive relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and their intentions to treat followers abusively would at least partly be due to their devaluing cognitions regarding their followers' competence and likeability. This assumption was partially supported by the study results in Manuscript 1, where leaders' evaluations of their followers as unlikeable, but not as incompetent, mediated the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions. However, these effects are to be interpreted with caution due to barely significant differences. Furthermore, in Manuscript 2, I hypothesized that there would be an indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions (Study 1) and on abusive supervision (Study 2) via perceived self-esteem threat. This assumption

was supported only in the experimental vignette study (Study 1), but not in the field study (Study 2).

Lastly, I studied the role of follower behavior as a potential trigger for abusive supervision and examined whether follower behavior moderated the association between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions (Manuscript 1) and the indirect effect via perceived self-esteem threats (Manuscript 2). In Manuscript 1, based on the dominance complementary model (Grijalva & Harms, 2014) and ego threat theory (Baumeister et al., 1996), I assumed and found that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry intended to treat dominant followers more abusively than followers who behaved submissively or constructively. Importantly, behaving in a submissive or constructive fashion did not protect followers from being treated abusively: the relationship was, albeit weaker, still existent in these cases. In Manuscript 2, I assumed that supervisor-directed deviance, which encompasses being rude to or making fun of the leader, would challenge narcissistic leaders' inflated egos and thus strengthen the positive association between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and perceived self-esteem threats, leading to more abusive behavior or intentions to show such behavior. I found no moderating effect in both studies reported in Manuscript 2, indicating that the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision via perceived self-esteem threats was independent of follower behavior. Still, the direct effects from leaders' narcissistic rivalry on perceived self-esteem threats and on abusive supervision, respectively, were significant at medium and high values of the moderator, supervisor-directed deviance, in Study 2. Furthermore, in Study 1, the indirect effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions via perceived self-esteem threats was significant in all three experimental conditions, i.e. when followers showed low, medium or high supervisor-directed deviance. This is in line with the results from Manuscript 1, as these results imply that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry perceive

self-esteem threats and show abusive supervision irrespective of their followers' behavior to a certain degree, as the effects were stronger when followers behaved in dominant ways in Manuscript 1 but did not disappear in other cases both in Manuscripts 1 and 2. However, methodological explanations that could explain the lack of a moderation effect especially in Manuscript 2, Study 2, have to be taken into account as well and will be discussed in the respective section.

In sum, the studies comprising this dissertation showed that leaders' narcissistic rivalry relates to abusive supervision and abusive supervision intentions and that this holds true for deviant or dominant as well as for submissive or constructive followers. Furthermore, devaluing cognitions about followers and leaders' threatened egos seem to play a role in explaining this relationship, but evidence concerning these mediating effects is only tentative. Lastly, followers who perceive their leaders as high in narcissistic rivalry feel less supported and report low relationship quality, low performance-based self-esteem and decreased job engagement.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This dissertation affords insight into the consequences of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on various levels and contributes to the literature at the intersection of personality and organizational psychology in important ways. Theoretical implications derived from the studies presented in this dissertation are discussed and integrated in the following.

Leaders' Narcissistic Rivalry as a Maladaptive Trait

Previous studies on narcissism in an organizational context have often yielded inconclusive results, relating it to positive (e.g., being perceived as charismatic, Galvin et al., 2010; objective career success, Volmer et al., 2016; entrepreneurial orientation;

Wales et al., 2013) as well as negative (e.g., increased followers' counterproductivity, Martin et al., 2016; decreased team collaboration, Nevicka, Ten Velden, et al., 2011; being perceived as manipulative, Nevicka et al., 2013; organizational fraud, Rijsenbilt & Commandeur, 2013) individual and organizational outcomes. Even though it has been proposed that leaders' narcissism might be an antecedent of destructive leadership (Krasikova et al., 2013), empirical studies examining this relationship have found positive (Nevicka, De Hoogh, et al., 2018; Waldman et al., 2018) as well as insubstantial associations (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). The results of this dissertation support the notion that these inconclusive results might partly be due to an inaccurately broad conceptualization of narcissism in previous studies, where adaptive and maladaptive aspects of narcissism might have canceled each other out (e.g., Nevicka, De Hoogh, et al., 2018). All of the studies presented in this dissertation used a more fine-grained, two-dimensional conceptualization and focused on leaders' narcissistic rivalry, the antagonistic narcissism dimension according to the NARC (Back et al., 2013). The results of the presented studies imply that narcissistic rivalry, but not narcissistic admiration, is responsible for negative effects of leaders' narcissism on followers and that this dimension is an antecedent of destructive leader behavior. Furthermore, the studies suggest that the self-protective inter- and intrapersonal strategies central to narcissistic rivalry are so strong that leaders high on that trait feel threatened in their grandiose self-views irrespective of follower behavior: This results in the intention to treat followers abusively, as this might presumably restore leaders' superiority and status (Back et al., 2013; Grapsas et al., 2019).

The Relevance of Perspective

Based on socioanalytic theory (Hogan & Blickle, 2018), MacAbee and Conelly (2016) distinguish between a person's *identity* (i.e., unique self-perceptions, personality from the perspective of the actor) and *reputation* (i.e., personality from the perspective of observers) and suggest that researchers should more frequently compare self- and other-ratings instead of purely relying on self-ratings. Such an approach could help disentangling unique and shared assessments of personality traits and their correlates. Indeed, other-ratings of personality have been found to be more predictive of behavior than self-ratings (Connelly & Ones, 2010), especially concerning evaluations of narcissism (Braun, 2017).

In consequence, this dissertation combined different methodological approaches and perspectives: In Manuscripts 1 and 2, leader' self-assessments regarding their narcissistic rivalry levels predicted whether they a) intended to show and b) showed abusive supervision in experimental vignette studies as well as in a field study. In Manuscript 3, I supplemented the follower perspective and examined how leader- as well as follower-ratings of leaders' narcissistic rivalry related to followers' feelings and behavior. The fact that I only found support for my hypotheses when using follower-ratings of leaders' narcissistic rivalry implies that, when it comes to negative effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on followers, what counts is not leaders' self-reported narcissistic rivalry (*identity*) but how it is expressed in behavior and perceived by followers (*reputation*). Importantly, biased self-ratings due to social desirability conceivably did not play a role here, as individuals high in narcissism generally display self-insight regarding their personality and do not distort their answers in socially desirable ways (e.g., Carlson et al., 2011; Malesza & Kaczmarek, 2020; Sedikides et al., 2004).

Of course, reputation and identity are closely linked, as identity encompasses how one wants to be perceived by others and guides social interaction, thus eliciting other's evaluations of this behavior and creating reputation (Hogan & Blickle, 2016). Indeed, self-other agreement for personality traits is generally quite substantial, with correlations around .40 according to a meta-analysis by Vazire and Carlson (2010). Regarding narcissism, Back et al. (2013) report self-other agreement of r = .51 regarding narcissistic admiration and r = .27 regarding narcissistic rivalry. This difference might be due to the observability of the dimensions, as the assessment of narcissistic rivalry with the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ; Back et al., 2013) encompasses affective, behavioral and cognitive aspects, some of which can be expected to be easier to observe (e.g., aggressive behavior) than others (e.g., taking pleasure in others' failure).

Furthermore, it might well be that abusive supervision acts as a further mediator in the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and negative follower outcomes: Only when leaders' destructive tendencies are actually expressed in abusive behavior that is perceived by followers do negative effects on followers emerge. This stresses the importance of carefully considering which perspective is really relevant to a given research question and whether deciding on one or comparing both perspectives is the appropriate choice. The results from this dissertation imply that, when examining complex interpersonal phenomena such as relationships in the workplace, including both leaders' and followers' perspectives in studies might be the most fruitful approach, as both identity (i.e., self-perceptions) and reputation (i.e., others' perceptions) contribute to explaining those complex phenomena in unique ways.

Underlying Mechanisms and Triggers for Abusive Supervision

One aim of this dissertation was to shed light on potential underlying processes and triggers regarding the association between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision or abusive supervision intentions. Narcissism as a personality trait is characterized by complex motivational, cognitive and behavioral dynamics (Back & Morf, 2018). Narcissistic rivalry is coined by self-protective strategies aimed at protecting one's grandiose, but fragile self-view. In order to enhance and maintain feelings of superiority, individuals high in narcissistic rivalry devalue and belittle others (Back et al., 2013). Thus, I first examined whether this devaluation of others could partly explain the positive relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and their abusive supervision intentions.

Regarding individuals high in narcissism, Grapsas and colleagues (2019) point out that the belief in their own superiority is inextricably linked to the belief that others are inferior. This belief could serve as a justification for abusive behavior. Indeed, Keller Hansbrough and Jones (2014) suggested that individuals high in narcissism in general have negative implicit followership theories, i.e. they see their followers as incompetent or insubordinate. Similarly, Kong (2015) showed that negotiators high in narcissism evaluated their counterparts as incompetent. I examined the assumption that leaders' evaluations of their followers as incompetent and unlikeable would be an explanatory factor in the relationship between narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions. In contrast to the abovementioned articles, in Manuscript 1, the evaluation of followers as unlikeable, but not as incompetent mediated the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision intentions. These results lend support to the assumption made in the NARC that individuals high in narcissistic rivalry devalue others, but suggest that the domain of evaluation (i.e., liking vs. competence) makes a difference. It might be that leaders' self-serving biases play a role

here: Individuals high in narcissism strongly value and self-enhance in the agentic domain, which includes competence. Admitting that their followers are incompetent might reflect badly on themselves, as they probably were involved in hiring them. However, as the effects I found were rather small and the indirect effect via likeability was scarcely below, the effect via competence scarcely above common significance levels, these results have to be interpreted cautiously and should be replicated in further studies.

Second, I examined the assumption that individuals high in narcissism easily perceive their grandiose but fragile egos to be threatened in reaction to deviant follower behavior and that this in turn would lead to abusive behavior. As outlined above, narcissistic rivalry is marked by self-protective and avoidant strategies aimed at defending grandiose self-views, such as aggressive and arrogant behavior (Back et al., 2013; Leckelt et al., 2015). Individuals high in narcissism are known to lash out and react aggressively when being criticized (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Krizan & Johar, 2015) and abusive supervision could be used as a strategy to reaffirm superiority over others and restore these individuals' grandiose self-views (Grapsas et al., 2019). Manuscript 1 and Study 1 in Manuscript 2 affirmed the notion that individuals high in narcissistic rivalry are prone to experiencing self-esteem threats, irrespective of follower behavior, and that this relates to abusive supervision. This implies that their sensitivity to potential threats to their inflated egos is so pronounced that they construe slights even when followers do not oppose them openly. This is in line with findings relating narcissistic rivalry to low and fragile self-esteem, which fluctuates heavily in reaction to social feedback (Geukes et al., 2017; Rogoza et al., 2016).

However, the perception of self-esteem threats only mediated the effect of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on abusive supervision intentions in the experimental vignette study in Manuscript 2; in the field study, I only found direct effects of

narcissistic rivalry on perceived threat and on abusive supervision, but no effect of self-esteem threat on abusive supervision. Here, methodological aspects might play a role. In the vignette study, leaders indicated whether they felt threatened and intended to treat their followers abusively directly in response to follower behavior, which was explicitly manipulated in order to portray low, medium or high supervisor-directed deviance. In the field study, on the other hand, leaders had to report in how far their followers had showed supervisor-directed deviance in the past and indicate whether they had felt threatened by it, while abusive supervision in general was assessed by follower ratings. Importantly, most leaders in the field study did not perceive their followers' past behavior as deviant at all, severely restricting the range of that variable. Thus, the fact that perceived self-esteem threats did not play an explanatory role in the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision in the field study might also be due to the fact that almost no threats were experienced. Also, it seems that leaders' intentions to show abusive supervision are closely related to levels of narcissistic rivalry, but that leaders' internal processes do not play a role in explaining followers' perceptions of abusive leader behavior. This supports the notion that leader as well as follower perspectives should be combined when examining leadership phenomena in general (Fleenor et al., 2010) and destructive leadership specifically (e.g., Schyns et al., 2018).

Leaders' Narcissistic Admiration – The Bright Side?

This dissertation focused on leaders' narcissistic rivalry, which, according to the NARC, embodies the maladaptive aspect of grandiose narcissism (Back et al., 2013). The results of the studies I have presented give support to this assumption, as leaders' narcissistic rivalry was related to abusive supervision and abusive supervision intentions, perceptions of lacking support and low-quality leader-follower relationships,

as well as lower performance-based self-esteem and job engagement on the followers' side. However, the narrative would be incomplete without also considering potential bright sides of leaders' narcissism, specifically regarding the agentic dimension of this trait according to the NARC, narcissistic admiration. Other researchers have, for example, suggested potential benefits of narcissistic leaders in organizational crises or unstable, volatile situations, where charisma and proactive behavior might be beneficial in a leader (e.g., Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Galvin et al., 2010; Nevicka et al., 2013). However, these findings were overshadowed by the myriad of studies focusing on negative effects of leaders' narcissism on different levels. I maintain that by applying the more fine-grained distinction between adaptive and maladaptive narcissism dimensions afforded by the NARC, these findings on potential positive effects of narcissism in an organizational context can be explained by narcissistic admiration being related to extraversion, openness, charismatic behavior and self-presentational tactics, which leads to positive social outcomes, such as popularity and higher status and prestige (Back et al., 2013; Leckelt et al., 2015, 2018).

In the study presented in Manuscript 3 in this dissertation, self- and other-rated narcissistic admiration was, for instance, positively related to leader-member-exchange. That is, followers who rated their leaders as higher on narcissistic admiration and whose leaders themselves rated themselves highly on that dimension reported better leader-follower relationships. From a unidimensional perspective on narcissism, this would be rather surprising, as narcissism then would be assumed to entail, e.g., manipulative behavior, low agreeableness, and a lack of empathy. From a two-dimensional perspective, however, all of these aspects are characteristic of the antagonistic dimension, whereas narcissistic admiration is related to aspects that afford social potency, such as extraverted and charming behavior. In line with this notion, narcissistic admiration is associated with short-term popularity and attractiveness, narcissistic

rivalry with long-term conflicts and unpopularity (Back et al., 2013; Küfner et al., 2013; Leckelt et al., 2015).

Interestingly, Hamstra and colleagues (2021) argue from a conservation of resources standpoint and suggest that narcissistic leaders strategically use followers for their self-centered needs in that they only invest in developing positive relationships with those followers who can afford them the admiration they need. In that respect, further research into the potential differential role of narcissistic admiration and rivalry concerning leaders' motivations for (not) building up sustainable relationships with their followers would be worthwhile: Do leaders high in narcissistic admiration invest in those relationships that can give them the praise they need and do leaders high in narcissistic rivalry act abusively towards all of their followers? The findings in Manuscripts 1 and 2 give support to the latter notion.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of the studies presented in this dissertation can inform organizational practice on different levels of the employee lifecycle and regarding overarching cultural aspects.

Leader Selection and Promotion

The findings summarized above clearly show that high levels of narcissistic rivalry in leaders can entail abusive supervisory behavior and have negative effects on employees working for such leaders. Thus, one obvious recommendation for organizations would be to not hire persons with high levels of narcissistic rivalry for leadership positions. As outlined in the introduction, however, this might not be as easy as it sounds. Due to the overlap of narcissistic features with characteristics that are central to peoples' implicit leadership theories (De Hoogh et al., 2015) and a strong

motivation to achieve positions of power and influence (Chen, 2016; Grapsas et al., 2019), individuals high in narcissism often attain leadership positions (Grijalva et al., 2015). One can assume that the narcissist's advantage in climbing the corporate ladder is attributable both to agentic characteristics expressed in the admiration dimension (e.g., extraversion, authoritativeness, grandiosity) as well as antagonistic aspects pertaining to the rivalry dimension (e.g., exploitativeness, entitlement, low agreeableness). Personnel selection procedures might contribute to that: In many cases, the higher up in the hierarchy a vacant position is, the less objective selection procedures are. For example, even though empirical evidence clearly shows that cognitive abilities are the best predictor of performance, especially in complex tasks (Salgado et al., 2003; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998), intelligence tests are more often used in selection processes for lower positions in Germany—if at all (e.g., Armoneit et al., 2020). When selecting for leadership positions, the selection tool of choice still too often is the unstructured interview (e.g., Armoneit et al., 2020), which offers the perfect stage for individuals high in narcissism to present themselves in a favorable light (Paulhus et al., 2013). In order to prevent persons high in narcissistic rivalry from rising to leadership positions, organizations should use objective personnel selection tools, which offer fewer possibilities for self-enhancement strategies than unstructured interviews or assessment center tasks (e.g., Brunell et al., 2008; Paulhus et al., 2013). If interviews are used, they should be highly structured and include questions that are directed at actual behavior (e.g., Levashina et al., 2013).

Furthermore, apart from using structured interviews and cognitive ability tests in leader selection, standardized personality test could further improve the objectivity of hiring decisions. For one, tests that assess narcissism directly, such as the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire (NARQ; Back et al., 2013) or the Dark Triad of Personality at Work (TOP; Schwarzinger & Schuler, 2016) could be used also in

personnel selection. As individuals high in narcissism are aware of and openly admit to their narcissism (Carlson, 2013), it can be expected that social desirability would not play a major role here and HR specialists could find out about destructive leader traits by simply asking applicants about them. Furthermore, organizations could explicitly select for traits that are incompatible with narcissistic rivalry per definition but important for building sustainable relationships with followers, such as integrity, empathy or agreeableness (Back et al., 2013; Rogoza et al., 2016; Wetzel et al., 2016).

Even before hiring individuals high in narcissistic rivalry for leadership positions, organizations can influence whether such individuals apply for certain positions. For instance, marketing procedures can influence whether individuals are attracted to organizations and jobs, as attraction increases with perceived fit to one's own values and goals (e.g., Schneider et al., 1998). Generally, grandiose narcissists hold inflated self-views. These can refer either to agentic aspects (i.e., dominance, assertiveness, achievement) or to communal aspects (i.e., empathy, honesty, helpfulness) (Gebauer & Sedikides, 2018). With regard to the two-dimensional conceptualization proposed in the NARC, individuals high in narcissistic admiration self-enhance on agentic aspects, whereas those high in narcissistic rivalry explicitly disregard communal aspects (Back et al., 2013). Thus, if a job description for a leadership position does not exclusively focus on competitive aspects, but also includes communal aspects such as collaboration and mutual support, individuals high in narcissistic rivalry should be less motivated to apply for these positions (e.g., Fatfouta, 2021).

In the case of internal promotion as opposed to external hiring of leaders, transferring the abovementioned measures to performance rating systems would be advisable to prevent persons high in narcissistic rivalry from achieving leadership positions. That is, incorporating reports on potential leaders' behavior in the workplace

from several perspectives, e.g. from colleagues and followers, and including objective performance measures could help prevent over-claiming and self-presentational strategies to unduly influence promotion decisions. For instance, setting and evaluating performance goals that focus on collaboration or followers' satisfaction and well-being could counterbalance leaders' biased self-evaluations. Thus, making supportive or positive leader behavior an actual requirement for getting ahead in an organization could curb destructive leadership.

However, organizations are reluctant to embrace objective personnel selections tools and HR specialists often rely on their intuition when making hiring or promotion decisions. Thus, the abovementioned self- and other-selection effects elevating individuals high in narcissism to leadership positions will not be reined in easily. So how can the detrimental effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on followers be mitigated or prevented? To answer this question, one can consider interventions targeting the leaders themselves, their followers and the broader organizational context.

Leader Development

The studies presented in this dissertation show that leaders high in narcissistic rivalry tend to act in ways that are perceived as unsupportive, can even be described as abusive and affect followers negatively. As outlined above, adapting hiring and promotion procedures can be one step to prevent these negative effects. In addition, leader development interventions such as training or coaching, which target specific (sets of) competences and aim at changing attitudes or behaviors, can be employed. However, training or coaching leaders to be "less narcissistic" is surely not easy (e.g., Kaul et al., 2007), as narcissism is a relatively stable personality trait. Even though contemporary literature acknowledges that personality in general is not set in stone but rather develops in an active transactional exchange with one's environment over the life

span (e.g., Roberts et al., 2005), it seems that narcissism indeed does not change much over time or due to life events (Chopik & Grimm, 2019; Orth & Luciano, 2015; Wille et al., 2019). What could be targeted by interventions, however, is the *behavioral expression* of narcissists' destructive tendencies, as the results reported in Manuscript 3 imply that the *perception* of these destructive tendencies seems to be what affects followers negatively. For example, trainings that explicitly focus on increasing supportive leadership practices can decrease abusive supervision (Gonzales-Morales et al., 2018). Furthermore, empathy and perspective-taking can be trained in individuals high in narcissism if they are motivated (Hepper et al., 2014) and these aspects contribute positively to leader-follower relationships (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

However, achieving the motivation to change in leaders high in narcissistic rivalry might be challenging, as they typically are resistant to critical feedback (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Kernis & Sun, 1994)—and suggestions to consider training opportunities might be perceived as just that. Especially when negative feedback is given in public, individuals high in narcissism tend to react aggressively (Ferriday et al., 2011). Thus, even though multisource feedback including employees', colleagues' and supervisors' perspectives might help raising an awareness of the discrepancy between the grandiose self-view of a leader high in narcissistic rivalry (which would also translate to putatively excellent leadership skills) and the actual effects of a leaders' destructive behavior, such feedback should be phrased carefully in order not to elicit ego threats and, in consequence, reactance. Having high-status individuals convey critical and thus potentially threatening feedback or the suggestion to adapt one's leadership practices could be a solution here, as persons high in narcissism value status and power (Grapsas et al., 2019). Hence, one can assume that they react more favorably to suggestions from "higher up".

Furthermore, Konrath et al. (2006) found that narcissists' aggressive reactions to ego threats could be mitigated by perceived commonalities with the aggressor. This is in line with applications of the similarity-attraction theory (Byrne, 1971) in an organizational context, which show that perceived similarity fosters positive leader-follower relationships (Liden et al., 1993). Salience of a common organizational identity could increase perceived similarity, spotlight shared goals and thus enhance mutual understanding and support. For example, it has been shown that shared team identity is linked to reduced interpersonal conflicts (Jehn et al., 1999), effective communication (Morton et al., 2012) and social support (van Dick & Haslam, 2012). Thus, stressing a shared organizational identity could further prevent leaders high in narcissistic rivalry from abusing others.

Moreover, leaders high in narcissistic rivalry might be more motivated to change towards more supportive, positive leadership practices if such change appeared self-relevant to them. As status and prestige are important to upholding their grandiose self-views (Grapsas et al., 2019), showing these leaders how acting on their destructive tendencies by not supporting their followers or even treating them in an abusive fashion might reflect badly on these leaders' leadership skills and hurt their reputation, could thus increase their motivation to change. Making it clear that in order to *get ahead* in an organization, one needs to *get along* with one's followers could help in preventing leaders high in narcissistic rivalry from acting out their derogative evaluations of others.

Lastly, some authors have suggested that impression management skills can be helpful in mitigating the negative effects of narcissism in an organizational context: Hamstra and colleagues (2021) found that leaders' narcissism only impaired perceived trustworthiness if they were perceived as being low in sincerity by their followers. Consequently, the authors suggested that narcissistic leaders should at least *appear* to be sincere towards their followers in order to compensate for the negative effects their

narcissism has on their reputation as trustworthy. In the view of socioanalytic theory (Hogan & Blickle, 2016), what counts for one's reputation is others' *perception* of sincerity, regardless of whether that is genuine. Translated to the results from the studies reported in this dissertation, this would mean that as long as leaders high in narcissistic rivalry *act as if* they support their followers, even though they actually see them as inferior and want to treat them abusively, the negative effects on followers should be less severe. However, from the lens of authentic and ethical leadership, such behavior could not be described as authentic, honest and trustworthy (Avolio et al., 2004; Treviño et al., 2003) and could indeed increase followers' perceptions of leader rivalry, which is characterized by untrustworthiness and selfish behavior (Back et al., 2013), an assumption that would need to be tested in future studies.

Follower Resources and Structural Countermeasures

Apart from adapting selection and promotion procedures and inducing leaders to change the behavioral expression of their narcissistic tendencies, organizations should also focus on the followers' perspective and provide employees with strategies and resources to cope with leaders high in narcissistic rivalry. For one, increasing individual resources could be helpful for followers. For example, emotion-focused coping strategies are helpful when stressors are perceived as uncontrollable (Folkman et al., 1986; Mawritz et al., 2014). The findings from this dissertation suggest that this applies to leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision, as follower behavior did not prevent leaders' destructive behavior. Apart from offering training opportunities targeting individual emotion regulation strategies (e.g., Geßler et al., 2020) and resilience or mindfulness (e.g., Hülsheger et al., 2013), promoting coworker support could be valuable to increase followers' abilities to cope with destructive leadership.

For example, Hobman and colleagues (2009) showed that support from team members can weaken the negative relationship between abusive supervision and job satisfaction.

Furthermore, it has been shown that followers' proactive adjustment of the work environment in the sense of problem-focused coping weakens the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and negative follower outcomes (Hochwarter et al., 2012). Being able to manage available job-related resources actively buffers the negative effects of leader narcissism on employee well-being and performance (Ellen et al., 2017). Thus, in line with the job-demands resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), employee resources should be increased in order to counteract the emotional demands destructive leadership entails, by designing work in ways that afford autonomy, self-efficacy experiences and support from others. Thus strengthened, employees might be enabled to engage in upward ethical leadership and speak up about destructive leadership practices (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2007).

Lastly, as outlined in the introduction, there are environmental factors that contribute to destructive leadership developing and taking hold in organizations. In the toxic triangle (Padilla et al., 2007), these factors encompass instability, negative organizational norms and a lack of checks and balances. Thus, apart from adapting leader selection, promotion and development and providing individual support to followers, organizations should establish structural countermeasures that prevent destructive leadership or mitigate its effects. For instance, complaint systems that assure confidentiality and convey to followers that issues with destructive leaders are taken seriously should be implemented. Furthermore, disciplinary actions need to be set in place that prevent leaders with destructive tendencies from acting on them. Organizational culture should promote ethical behavior, mutual trust and support and employee well-being as core values, as hostile organizational norms contribute to abusive supervision (Mawritz et al., 2017). Finally, introducing formal ethic codes and

policies that endorse justice and general employee rights can help in sanctioning destructive leadership (Lange, 2008; Wotruba et al., 2001).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In the following, I discuss theoretical and methodological limitations of this dissertation and derive avenues for further research.

Theory and Concept

In all four studies presented in this dissertation, I examined rather proximal correlates of leaders' narcissistic rivalry, i.e. leaders' reported behavior and behavioral intentions, as well as follower perceptions, attitudes and reported behavior. I selected those variables as they are precursors to important individual and organizational outcomes such as well-being, performance and turnover (e.g., Dulebohn et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2010; Martinko et al., 2013; Ng & Sorensen, 2008; Rich et al., 2010). However, destructive leadership develops in an interplay of leader and follower characteristics and environmental factors (Padilla et al., 2007). For instance, unstable, volatile situations, a lack of checks and balances and organizational norms can contribute to an environment conducive to abusive supervision. Studies have shown that aggressive organizational norms and a hostile climate can foster abusive supervision (Mawritz et al., 2014; Restubog et al., 2011) and that followers refrain from reporting negative leader behavior if they feel unprotected from retaliation (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). Also, co-worker support is a resource that can buffer the negative relationship between abusive supervision and job satisfaction (Hobman et al., 2009). This dissertation examined a leader trait, leader cognitions, their reported behavior and behavioral intentions as well as follower behavior and perceptions, but neglected to take into account environmental factors that might foster or prevent destructive leadership or

mitigate its negative effects, such as organizational culture or followers' resources. Future research should incorporate such aspects, as this might further inform organizational practice: If the establishment of positive organizational norms and a system of checks and balances could prevent leaders high in narcissistic rivalry from harming their followers, efforts should be taken to do so.

Moreover, even though I showed in different studies that leaders' narcissistic rivalry is associated with a) abusive supervision (intentions) and b) negative effects on followers' attitudes and behavior, these insights should be brought together and expanded in future studies. That is, indirect effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on followers' perceptions, attitudes and behavior via abusive supervision should be examined, as it can be presumed that what counts for negative effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on followers is its behavioral expression, for example in the form of abusive supervision. Based on previous research consistently showing negative effects of destructive leadership on followers (for an overview, see Schilling & Schyns, 2014) and on this dissertation's results that emphasize the relevance of leaders' narcissistic rivalry as a harmful leader trait, I would expect these indirect effects to be substantial.

Methodological Aspects

The studies presented in this dissertation used different approaches in order to maximize validity and generalizability of the results. In Manuscript 1 and Manuscript 2, Study 1, I used experimental vignette designs with within- and between-randomization in order to systematically manipulate relevant variables in a controlled fashion and thus increase internal validity. The vignettes were designed following established guidelines in order to create high levels of immersion and increase external validity (e.g., Aguinis & Bradley, 2014) while at the same time systematically varying follower behavior. However, using even more immersive material, such as short videos as opposed to

written descriptions of situations, could further have increased external validity (e.g., Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). Also, even though behavioral intentions are good predictors of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991), approaches which combine experimental and field studies are needed in order to corroborate in how far leaders‘ intentions to treat their followers abusively translate into actual behavior.

In Manuscript 2, Study 2 and Manuscript 3, I conducted field studies with real-life leaders and followers, thus increasing external validity. This poses a significant advantage over many other studies in an organizational context, which often examine leadership in student samples for reasons of accessibility. However, in the field studies, I did not use longitudinal, but rather cross-sectional designs, limiting the causal inferences that can be drawn from the results. Especially since leader-follower relationships develop over time and narcissism plays out differently over the course of time, longitudinal studies would be a valuable next step. Whereas narcissistic admiration is related to initial popularity and being perceived as assertive and dominant at short-term acquaintance, narcissistic rivalry is responsible for conflicts, decreasing popularity and being perceived as untrustworthy when relationships persist over a longer term (Back et al., 2013; Leckelt et al., 2015; Wurst et al., 2017). With a closer focus on actual behavior, diary studies using event-sampling methods could yield deeper insights into the temporal trajectory of relationships between leaders high in narcissistic rivalry and their followers (Ohly et al., 2010).

Using real-life samples of matched leaders and followers in Manuscript 2, Study 2 and Manuscript 3 allowed me to gather self- as well as other-reports of focal variables. Meta-analytic findings regarding other-reports of personality show that a single other-rating of personality is often more valid than self-ratings and that validity increases with more raters (Oh et al., 2011). In Manuscript 3, between one and five followers (on average 1.8 per leader) rated their leaders’ narcissistic rivalry. Thus, I was

able to distinguish between shared and unique variance in the effect of that trait on follower outcomes. However, using balanced samples with unique dyads and measuring not only the predictor but also mediators and outcomes from both perspectives, as opposed to only using follower-ratings for these variables, would have allowed me to calculate actor-partner-interdependence-models (APIM; Kenny et al., 2006) and thus distinguish between actor (e.g., effect of leaders' self-rated narcissistic rivalry on leader-rated relationship quality and effect of followers' self-rated narcissistic rivalry on follower-rated relationship quality) and partner (e.g., effect of leaders' self-rated narcissistic rivalry on follower-rated relationship quality and effect of follower-rated leaders' narcissistic rivalry on leader-rated relationship quality) effects.

Furthermore, some research indicates that there seem to be individuals who score high in narcissistic admiration only and individuals who score high on both narcissism dimensions, but no individuals who score high on narcissistic rivalry only (e.g., Seidman et al., 2020; Wetzel et al, 2016). This is in line with the idea of narcissistic admiration as a "default" strategy, i.e. the assumption that this dimension is typically more strongly present in individuals high in narcissism and that narcissistic rivalry only is triggered when the grandiose self-view is threatened (Back, 2018; Grapsas et al., 2019). Some authors suggest that including both narcissistic admiration and rivalry in regression models might lead to suppression effects and consequently propose to distinguish between composite narcissism scores (i.e., admiration and rivalry) and difference scores (i.e., domination of admiration over rivalry) in order to prevent such suppression effects (Seidman et al., 2020). Future studies should take novel analytical methods such as this so-called "level and difference approach" (Iida et al., 2018) into account in order to distinguish between shared and unique variance that both narcissism dimensions can explain.

Lastly, concerning the measurement of leaders' narcissistic rivalry, supervisor-directed deviance and abusive supervision, one has to take into account potential floor effects and skewed distributions. Even though means and variance of both the predictor and the outcome were similar to previous studies in all manuscripts, these restrictions should be considered when interpreting the results. Importantly, the range of supervisor-directed deviance in the field study in Manuscript 2 was very restricted (M = 1.11, SD = 0.26), which made it difficult to estimate the mediated moderation model. This might provide an alternative explanation as to why the hypothesis concerning the moderating effect of followers' behavior on the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and perceived ego threats was not found. However, complementing the field study with the experimental vignette study, where I explicitly manipulated the moderator and manipulation checks showed that different levels of deviance were perceived, increases confidence in the statement that follower behavior indeed does not seem to moderate the relationship between leaders' narcissistic rivalry and abusive supervision (intentions) or self-esteem threats due to the strong self-defensive mechanisms central to narcissistic rivalry.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation contributes to the literature at the intersection of personality and organizational psychology by showing that leaders' narcissistic rivalry is a maladaptive personality trait that negatively affects leaders' behavior and, thus, has adverse consequences for individuals working for leaders with high levels of narcissistic rivalry. The results from the presented studies suggest that it is the behavioral expression of derogative cognitions about others and the extreme sensitivity to threats to those leaders' inflated self-views that are relevant in this context. In addition, the results suggest that followers cannot, unfortunately, prevent being treated abusively by

adapting their behavior towards leaders high in narcissistic rivalry. In order to mitigate or prevent the negative effects of leaders' narcissistic rivalry on followers, interventions should target leader selection, promotion and development as well as support structures and initiatives for followers and structural countermeasures on an organizational scale.

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