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Leader Narcissism and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness in Uncertain Times

Mediated by Perceived Leader Charisma

Franziska Wehselau

12223719

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University of Amsterdam: Department of Psychology

MSc Psychology (Track: Consultancy & Organizational Development)

Supervisor: Dr. Barbara Nevicka

Second Assessor: Moniek Veltman

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Abstract

This study aimed to reconcile the inconsistent findings on leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness by identifying external circumstances and mechanisms through which narcissists may be perceived as effective. Given the increasing number of narcissists in society as well as the unstable times in which we live, investigating whether narcissists are perceived as effective in times of uncertainty due to their charismatic attributions is critical for understanding the potential benefits of narcissistic leadership. This topic was investigated with a cross-sectional study design that involved sending online surveys to 161 leader–follower dyads. The results indicated that leader narcissism is not related to perceived leadership effectiveness through perceived leader charisma when employees feel more uncertain. However, following suggestions from previous research, this study explored and confirmed that narcissistic leaders are perceived as less effective when followers feel more uncertain, which was explained by lower trust in the leader. Followers tend to prefer and choose narcissistic leaders in times of uncertainty. Therefore, the findings of this thesis are relevant for future research as they indicated that followers do not seem to perceive such leaders as more effective in times of uncertainty once they have emerged as leaders. Based on the results, this study concluded that further research is required on leader narcissism and its inconsistent findings with perceived leadership effectiveness.

Keywords: Leader Narcissism, Leader Charisma, Follower Uncertainty, Leader Effectiveness

Our world is characterized by rapid growth, constant change, and increasing insecurities (Lipman-Blumen, 2006). The past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated this persistent uncertainty with unpredictable, continuously changing regulations in addition to the constant worry of getting sick. In times of uncertainty and rapid change, one might wonder about the most capable type of person for leading us through such times. Narcissistic leaders, characterized by “grandiosity, self-love, and inflated self-views” (Campbell et al., 2011), have been demonstrated to emerge as leaders (Grijalva et al., 2015a; Judge et al., 2006; Nevicka et al., 2011) and to be preferred in times of uncertainty and crisis (Nevicka et al., 2013). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that these leaders may also be capable of leading us through uncertain times, as narcissists may provide uncertain followers with a sense of security through their overconfidence and charisma (Deluga, 1997). Noteworthy, society today is characterized by an increasing proportion of narcissists; it has even been stated that the United States, Europe, and Asia are currently suffering from a “narcissism epidemic,” (Vater et al., 2018, p. 2) indicating that a large and ever-increasing number of individuals are scoring higher on narcissism (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). This trend was corroborated by a study that found that an increasing number of adolescents are being classified as possessing narcissistic characteristics, such as self-centeredness (Ferris et al., 2009). Research that investigated the development of the scores of college students on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) from 1979 to 2006 found that NPI scores increased by 30% during that period (Twenge et al., 2008). As narcissists have been reported to be increasingly valued in modern Western societies (Nevicka et al., 2013; Vater et al., 2018), as indicated by their tendency to emerge as leaders, it is likely that an increasing number of narcissists will lead us in the future. As perceptions of uncertainty will further shape our future and the workplace, investigating narcissists’ role in this context is essential, especially considering the rise of narcissists in leadership positions. Thus, it is of high value to extend previous research that has focused, to a large extent, on the downsides of narcissism

(Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006) to circumstances under which narcissists are perceived as effective leaders (Campbell, 2001), as reflected in their performance that contributes to the achievement of their team's goals (Judge et al., 2002).

The concept of narcissism has been extensively researched, with studies distinguishing between a dark side and a bright side of narcissism (Fatfouta, 2019). The dark sides of narcissism include narcissists' arrogance and hostility (Judge et al., 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006), while the bright sides include narcissists' charisma, self-sufficiency, and self-esteem (Judge et al., 2009). However, research that has investigated narcissistic leadership has to date failed to reach a consensus of whether narcissistic leaders help or hinder their organizations (Fatfouta, 2019; Hoffman et al., 2013). Many studies have suggested that narcissistic leadership has undesirable outcomes, such as counterproductive work behavior (e.g., Judge et al., 2006; Penney & Spector, 2002) and a lack of managerial integrity (Blair et al., 2008), whereas a smaller number of studies have suggested that narcissistic leaders may be perceived as effective under certain circumstances, such as during short-term interactions (e.g., Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Paulhus, 1998). These inconsistent findings may be attributed to the existence of both bright and dark characteristics of narcissists.

The current research aimed to bring clarity to the debate on the effectiveness of narcissistic leaders. Viewing the debate as being simply between the bright and dark sides of narcissism is insufficient (Fatfouta, 2019), as it has been suggested that narcissistic leadership does not conclusively harm or hinder perceptions of effectiveness (e.g., Braun, 2017). Instead, one might expect that narcissists' effectiveness is dependent on the context in which they lead due to the possibility that certain characteristics are more appreciated in certain circumstances. Indeed, research has emphasized the importance of context to the effectiveness of narcissistic leadership (Braun, 2017; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Hoffman et al. (2013), for example, investigated the role of ethical context in relation to narcissistic leadership and

its relationship with followers' perceptions of leadership. They found that narcissists are perceived as less effective when ethical behavior is required in an organization. Thus, it seems that the context in which narcissists engage in is related to their perceived leadership effectiveness.

However, whether narcissists are perceived as effective in times of uncertainty once they have emerged as leaders remains unknown. One of narcissists' most powerful beneficial leadership characteristics is charisma (Deluga, 1997), which might explain why they are perceived as more effective in certain contexts. Charismatic individuals are said to have far-reaching and exceptional effects on their followers (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999). With their charisma, narcissists are able to transfer inspiring visions and demonstrate their unwavering confidence (Antonakis et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2018). These abilities may be especially valuable in times of uncertainty, where followers require leaders to provide direction, exhibit confidence, and communicate a clear vision (Shamir & Howell, 1999). Hence, it would be insightful to investigate whether these powerful bright characteristics are able to counterbalance narcissism's dark side in uncertain contexts, potentially explaining narcissists' ability to be perceived as effective in uncertain times (Davis & Gardner, 2012). Obtaining an enhanced understanding of narcissists' perceived leadership effectiveness also has several practical implications, such as for leadership screenings in the workplace. Thus, the present research aimed to determine whether the relationship between narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness, mediated by leader charisma, varies depending on the level of uncertainty experienced by followers. Conclusively, the following research question guided this study: *Does the relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness, mediated by perceived leader charisma, vary depending on the level of follower uncertainty?*

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows: The next section presents the theoretical framework for the development of the hypotheses for this study, followed by the

explanation of the methods used and the respective data analysis conducted. Lastly, the discussion of the results aims to explain the expected and unexpected findings and furthermore provides practical implications given the present study's findings.

Theoretical Development

Leader Narcissism and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness

The term “narcissism” is rooted in the Greek myth of Narcissus, a young man who fell in love with the perfection of his own reflection in the water. Based on this myth, the term narcissism was established by Ellis (1898; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). In accordance with the myth, narcissists are characterized by egocentrism, self-love, self-confidence, feelings of grandiosity and entitlement, and fantasies about their power (Campbell et al., 2011; Deluga, 1997; Fatfouta, 2019). With these characteristics, narcissism has been observed from two sides, firstly as a personality disorder called narcissistic personality disorder, which is diagnosed in line with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (APA, 2013). The diagnosis applies when at least five out of nine criteria are met, with example items including “requires excessive admiration” and “has a grandiose sense of self-importance.” Second, narcissism can be classified as a personality trait (Fatfouta, 2019). While the variable has a categorical form from a clinical perspective, from a personality perspective, narcissism is perceived to vary along a continuous scale, reflecting the level of narcissism that an individual scores on a narcissism scale from low to high. Hence, when discussing “narcissists,” one typically refers to individuals who score relatively high on the narcissism scale. The present research focused on narcissism as a trait since previous research has indicated this to be more valuable in relation to the workplace (Campbell et al., 2011) and the study of leadership (Fatfouta, 2019).

Additionally, narcissism has been divided into two subcategories, namely grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Grandiose narcissism includes characteristics such as dominance,

aggression, and arrogance, whereas vulnerable narcissism relates to defensive action, insecure grandiosity, and hypersensitivity (Besser & Priel, 2010; Miller et al., 2011). In the workplace, one is more likely to think of a grandiose narcissist who exhibits characteristics such as extraversion, overconfidence, and dominance. In addition, grandiose narcissism has been researched much more in the leadership context because it is thought to have a more significant impact for organizations (Campbell et al., 2011). Grandiose leaders are also more likely to emerge as leaders (Grijalva et al., 2015a). Therefore, the present study focused on grandiose narcissism.

Generally, research has supported the notion that narcissists emerge as leaders (Judge et al., 2006; Nevicka et al., 2011), potentially due to the bright sides that they convey (Back et al., 2010). On the one hand, this can be explained by their positive first impressions, exemplified by their charm, extraversion, and confidence (Ong et al., 2016). On the other hand, it can be explained by narcissists seeking and obtaining positions of power, through which their need and strive for self-assurance and self-enhancement are fulfilled (Campbell & Campbell, 2009). Thus, narcissists' inner drive for status and power may contribute to them securing more leadership roles, among other things, because they do not hold back from appointing themselves as leaders (Grijalva & Harms, 2014).

However, narcissists' tendency to emerge as leaders does not automatically imply that they are perceived as effective leaders once they have emerged in leadership positions, as leader emergence is not the same as leader effectiveness (Hoffman et al., 2013). While research has consistently demonstrated that narcissism is positively related to leadership emergence, as seen in a recent meta-analysis by Grijalva and Harms (2014), the literature on leadership effectiveness lacks a consensus (Hoffman et al., 2013). Some studies have supported that narcissistic leaders are perceived as effective, among other things, due to their confidence, extraversion, and charisma (Deluga, 1997; Williams et al., 2018). These bright traits of narcissism seem beneficial and are possibly even required for effective leadership

(Deluga, 1997). However, other studies have suggested that these leaders are perceived as less effective due to their lack of empathy (Blair et al., 2008) and integrity (Hoffman et al., 2013) as well as their arrogance (Williams et al., 2018), selfishness (Watts et al., 2013), and strong dominance (Back et al., 2010), which especially manifests over longer encounters with them. Narcissists may also be perceived as less effective due to the high-risk choices they make and their abusive supervision, which can negatively affect the organization's effectiveness (Fatfouta, 2019; Grijalva & Harms, 2014). Based on calls from previous research (e.g., Grijalva & Harms, 2014; Hoffman et al., 2013), the present study aimed to reduce the inconsistencies in the current literature on narcissistic leadership effectiveness by investigating circumstances *when* narcissists are perceived as effective rather than ineffective; furthermore, it evaluated whether one of the bright traits of narcissists, namely perceived leader charisma, acts as an explanation for this relationship (Williams et al., 2018). The subsequent section examines follower uncertainty as a circumstance *when* narcissists may be perceived as effective rather than ineffective.

Narcissistic Leadership and Follower Uncertainty

As previously mentioned, research to date lacks a consensus regarding narcissism's perceived effectiveness (Nevicka et al., 2018). From the knowledge provided by the literature, it is likely that narcissism is a "mixed blessing" and, when viewing leader effectiveness as an outcome, the context might have an effect on whether narcissists are perceived as effective rather than ineffective (Campbell et al., 2011; Williams et al., 2018). This was proposed by the contextual reinforcement model, which states that narcissists' effectiveness varies depending on the situation (Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Campbell et al., 2011). Specifically, the contextual reinforcement model proposes that narcissistic leadership is effective in the so-called "emerging zone," such as unstructured and chaotic situations, but less effective in the so-called "enduring zone," which includes stable situations. In unstable and unstructured situations, narcissists' ability to project confidence in their actions, as well as their

extraversion, will be valued more highly than in stable situations (Foster & Trimm, 2008; Hoffman et al., 2013). In unstable situations, followers will perceive psychological comfort and certainty from those narcissistic behaviors (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Research has already demonstrated that uncertainty affects the emergence of narcissists in leadership positions, such that narcissists are preferred in times of uncertainty (Nevicka et al., 2013; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). The present study aimed to build on this past research to investigate whether narcissistic individuals, once in a leadership position, are also perceived to be effective in times of uncertainty. In addition to building on the contextual reinforcement model, two theories – uncertainty identity theory and implicit leadership theory (ILT) – were used to explain why narcissistic leaders may be perceived as effective in times of uncertainty.

First, uncertainty identity theory predicts that when individuals feel uncertain about a situation and how to act, they are motivated to reduce the uncomfortable feeling of uncertainty (Hogg, 2007a). In these situations, it has been shown that followers' preference for leaders who exhibit confident leadership characteristics, conveying unambiguous and clear direction (i.e., autocratic leaders), increases to reduce ambiguity about the uncertain situation at hand (Rast et al., 2013). By following that powerful leader, individuals aim to reduce the uncertainty experienced by fulfilling their need for leadership (Hogg, 2021). The leader provides sense to followers' uncertain self and leads individuals by telling them what to do and, to some extent, think. Narcissism has been demonstrated to be related to autocratic leadership (Hogg, 2021) in that narcissists tend to present directive and commanding behavior (Grapsas et al., 2020), which is indicated by their overconfidence, need for power, and conviction of their own correctness (Burkle, 2019). Due to narcissists' ability to transmit a grand vision and their ability to inspire others, they have the strength to attract followers (Maccoby, 2004). According to uncertainty identity theory, this attraction can reduce followers' uncertainty because their need to belong to a group, which is met by narcissists' ability to attract followers, and their need for strong leadership in uncertain times will be

fulfilled (Hogg, 2021). Thus, the findings of Rast et al. (2013) can be expected to be transferable to narcissistic leaders, who would attract followers through their directive behavior in times of uncertainty (Hogg, 2021). Crucially, the following question arises: Are these leaders then also perceived as effective leaders in uncertain times? Due to narcissists' overconfidence in their course of action combined with their low levels of stress in uncertain situations, resulting in reduced uncertainty in followers (Nevicka et al., 2013), uncertain times can be expected to foster higher perceptions of the leader's effectiveness (Foster & Trimm, 2008).

Second, ILT proposes that individuals have unconsciously held cognitive schemas that define traits that classify a prototypical leader and differentiate them from nonleaders (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Shondrick et al., 2010). These schemas serve as guidelines for recognizing and categorizing individuals as leaders. If an individual's behaviors or traits match prototypical leadership schemas, then that individual is also more likely to be categorized as an effective leader (Lord et al., 2020). Narcissists exhibit several prototypical characteristics of leaders, such as confidence and extraversion (Nevicka et al., 2013), making them more likely to be categorized as leaders. In addition, Lord et al. (2001) stated that schemas are flexible. Individuals adapt their schemas of who constitutes a prototypical leader depending on situational factors (Nevicka et al., 2013). If the input for a schema changes, such as leadership, then the activation pattern of prototypical characteristics is likely to change as well, and these changes are said to occur relatively quickly (Lord et al., 2001). Specifically, in uncertain situations, followers may adapt their ideal perception of a leader according to their need to reduce uncertainty. One approach to reducing one's feelings of uncertainty lies in looking up to an authority figure who can provide support, clarity, and reassurance about the uncertain situation (Hungerford & Cleary, 2021; Lipman-Blumen, 2006). Thus, narcissists may be the most likely to match followers' perception of an ideal prototypical leader under uncertain circumstances, as they tend to convey confidence,

dominance, and consistency, even in times of uncertainty (Foster & Trimm, 2008). Thus, they match the implicit schemas that followers use as guidelines for defining a prototypical leader, especially in crisis situations where persistence, guidance, and strength are required. Taking these findings together, according to ILT, leaders who demonstrate behaviors that match prototypical leadership characteristics, such as confidence and extraversion, are more likely to be categorized as a leader as well as to be rated as more effective. Since narcissists tend to exhibit these characteristics, it is likely that these leaders are commonly categorized as prototypical leaders and perceived as more effective (Lord et al., 2020). This is expected to especially be the case in times of uncertainty, where it is essential for leaders to act purposefully, provide clear direction, and demonstrate confidence to calm followers and offer decisive solutions (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). The following sections provide a closer examination of leader charisma, as charismatic leadership qualities have been said to match schemas that individuals have of prototypical leaders (Galvin et al., 2010). Thus, this variable may act as an explanatory variable for the relationship between narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness.

Perceived Leader Charisma

As narcissism has been inconsistently linked to leader effectiveness, either positively or negatively, scholars have aimed to make sense of these mixed findings by focusing on specific narcissistic traits that can explain the mixed findings, one of which is narcissists' charisma (Williams et al., 2018). *Charisma* can be defined as "values-based, symbolic, and emotion-laden leader signaling" (Antonakis et al., 2016). The aforementioned characteristics of narcissists (i.e., their confidence, purposeful action, and provision of clear direction) are perceived as charismatic characteristics by followers (Bligh et al., 2004), which supports the common finding of past research that narcissists are perceived as charismatic (Deluga, 1997; Galvin et al., 2010). Thus, charisma was proposed as one characteristic of narcissists that seems essential to their leadership qualities (Rogoza & Fatfouta, 2020). Narcissists' ability to

inspire others by conveying and implementing emotional and grand visions, in addition to their strong confidence, drives the perception and attribution of their charisma (Antonakis et al., 2016; Rogoza & Fatfouta, 2020; Williams et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2021), abilities that are essential for effective leadership (Rogoza & Fatfouta, 2020). Based on the aforementioned literature, I inferred that narcissistic leaders should, on average, be perceived as charismatic and thus proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Leader narcissism is positively related to perceived leader charisma.

Based on the discussion of contextual influences (i.e., uncertainty) on the effectiveness of narcissistic leadership, the following question arises: Can followers' perception of narcissistic leaders' charisma explain why narcissists are perceived as effective depending on the context in which they act? The following section outlines how uncertainty is expected to affect narcissists' perceived leadership effectiveness through perceived leader charisma in two ways. Specifically, the following section proposes that follower uncertainty not only affects charismatic attributions to their narcissistic leader but also affects the extent to which perceived leader charisma is related to perceived leadership effectiveness, thereby explaining under which circumstances narcissistic leaders may be perceived as effective.

Increased Charismatic Attributions in Times of Uncertainty

Narcissists have a special ability to convey their grand vision and attract followers with their visionary communication (Maccoby, 2004). Because narcissistic leaders' visionary communication style offers followers optimism, clarity, and enthusiasm (Frese et al., 2003), their followers are likely to attribute more charisma to them. Critically, the context in which followers find themselves may enhance their leader's charismatic attributions (Merolla et al., 2007). In uncertain situations, leaders are challenged to act boldly, confidently, and potentially more meaningfully (Bligh et al., 2004), giving them the opportunity to take powerful and seemingly courageous actions (House et al., 1991), which is in line with narcissists' approach to leading. Because uncertain situations evoke anxiety and distress, this

combination of uncertainty and certain charismatic leadership characteristics of narcissists, such as confidence and optimism, will result in followers attributing more charisma to leaders who seem capable of reducing this distress, psychological discomfort, and feelings of uncertainty (Merolla et al., 2007; Shamir & Howell, 1999). Research has supported this theoretical proposition by demonstrating that charismatic politicians concur with situations of crisis and uncertainty (Merolla et al., 2007) as well as by demonstrating whether and how often a leader faces crises correlates with his/her attributions of charisma (Bligh et al., 2004; House et al., 1991). Two separate studies have found support for the prediction that situations of uncertainty and crisis amplify followers' attribution of charisma to their leader (Bligh et al., 2004; Merolla et al., 2007). In both cases, the authors investigated President George W. Bush's attribution of charisma in relation to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Noteworthy, Bush has been stated to show narcissistic traits himself (Hagström, 2021). After the evoked crisis situation, the narcissistic president's leadership style was characterized as more charismatic than before the crisis in both studies. Thus, as an extension of Hypothesis 1, I inferred that it is likely that the charismatic attributions of narcissists increase in times of uncertainty, which led to the development of the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Follower uncertainty moderates the positive relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leader charisma, such that the relationship is stronger for higher levels of follower uncertainty than for lower levels.

Perceived Leadership Effectiveness in Times of Uncertainty

This section elaborates on a second way in which uncertainty is expected to affect the perceived leadership effectiveness of narcissists through perceived leader charisma. Positive leader characteristics such as charisma are highly valued by followers (Williams et al., 2018); thus, whether they contribute to perceived leadership effectiveness is expected to be affected by follower uncertainty. Returning to ILT, charismatic leadership qualities align with schemas that individuals have of prototypical leaders (Galvin et al., 2010). ILT proposes that leaders

who exhibit behaviors that match prototypical leadership characteristics are rated as more effective (Lord et al., 2020). Crucially, the schema of who matches a prototypical leader is malleable based on the context that individuals act in (Nevicka et al., 2013). As previously mentioned, in uncertain times, followers' perception of who constitutes an effective leader will depend on their leader's ability to reduce their need to minimize their feelings of uncertainty. Charismatic leaders are known for their drive to actively seek visions that guide change (Rast et al., 2016), resulting in confident and supportive leadership behaviors for followers, such as the provision of the hope and optimism required in uncertain situations (Hungerford & Cleary, 2021). These leadership behaviors of leaders perceived as charismatic by followers are in line with the leadership schemas that followers adopt in times of uncertainty (Maccoby, 2004; Waldman et al., 2001). Moreover, they offer the guidance and reassurance that followers require to reduce the uncomfortable feeling that uncertainty brings. Therefore, I proposed the following hypothesis:

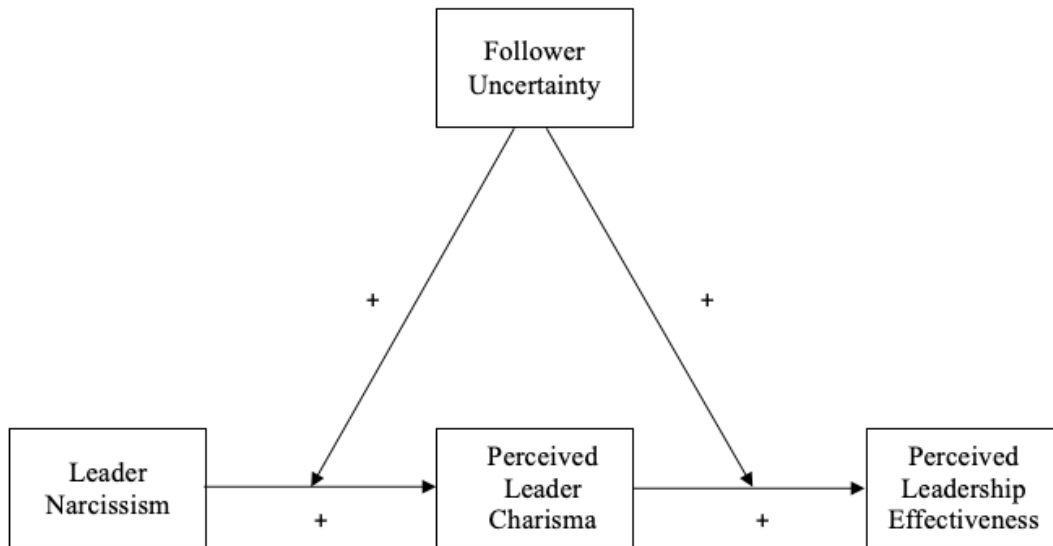
Hypothesis 3: Follower uncertainty moderates the positive relationship between perceived leader charisma and perceived leadership effectiveness, such that the relationship is stronger for higher levels of follower uncertainty than for lower levels.

Taking the aforementioned findings together, I expected follower uncertainty to enhance the attributions of leader charisma to narcissistic leaders as well as to emphasize the importance of leader charisma in relation to followers' perceived leadership effectiveness. Based on the aforementioned relationships and argumentation, I proposed the following hypothesis for the overall model, which is depicted in Figure 1:

Hypothesis 4: Follower uncertainty moderates the indirect relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness through perceived leader charisma, such that the indirect relationship is stronger when follower uncertainty is high compared with when it is low.

Figure 1

Proposed Theoretical Model for the Perceived Leader Charisma–Mediated Relationship Between Leader Narcissism and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness, Moderated by Follower Uncertainty



Curvilinear Relationship

Due to the inconsistent findings in relation to leader narcissism and narcissistic leader effectiveness, a previous meta-analysis investigated whether the proposed relationship may in fact be curvilinear (Grijalva et al., 2015a). The authors indeed found support for this proposition, indicating that leaders who score very low or very high on narcissism are not the most effective. Rather, moderate levels of narcissism were said to lead to the most beneficial outcomes. Because this was the first paper to address a curvilinear relationship between leader narcissism and leader effectiveness in the form of a meta-analysis without including mechanisms that explain or circumstances that affect the relationship, no concrete hypothesis was proposed. Nevertheless, an exploration of the potential curvilinear relationship could pave the way for future research, moving away from examining narcissistic leadership from a simple black and white perspective. Specifically, I examined whether the point of inflection of the curvilinear relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership

effectiveness changes at different levels of follower uncertainty. The findings could provide relevant implications for practice, such as selection procedures for leadership positions.

Methods

Sample and Procedure

A total of 161 leader–follower dyads across different industries and companies were recruited for the present study. Most participants indicated their nationality as Dutch (followers: 53%, leaders: 56%), followed by German (followers: 29%, leaders: 29%) and others (followers: 18%, leaders: 15%). A G*Power analysis with six variables ($\alpha = 0.05$, $[1 - \beta] = 0.80$) with an expected effect size of $f^2 = .085$, representing a small-to-medium effect size, recommended the inclusion of at least 167 dyads. The variables for the power analysis were as follows: gender, leader narcissism, perceived leader charisma, follower uncertainty, leader narcissism \times follower uncertainty, and perceived leader charisma \times follower uncertainty. The followers in this sample had an average age of 35.09 ($SD = 12.82$) years, with 41% being male. On average, followers worked 35.75 ($SD = 9.18$) hours per week, with an average tenure in their current function at the organization of 4.69 years ($SD = 6.56$). The leaders in the sample had an average age of 43.19 ($SD = 12.35$) years, with 65 % being male. The leaders worked on average 43.48 ($SD = 8.76$) hours per week with an average tenure of 7.42 years ($SD = 7.92$) of working in their current function at the organization. On average, the leaders' span of control (i.e., the number of people they supervise) was 22.23 ($SD = 44.69$). The followers indicated having worked with their supervisor for 3.35 ($SD = 5.10$) years on average.

The researchers approached participants from their own network with a letter to participate in a study about the dynamics between employees and supervisors with an additional request for the e-mail addresses of followers and managers. This process was performed through the researchers contacting their own contacts directly. Additionally, the

researchers recruited participants through a post on LinkedIn and Facebook with a polite request to voluntarily participate in a survey about the dynamics between employees and supervisors. If consent was obtained from both the follower and leader and the e-mail addresses were obtained, e-mails with separate survey links to a Qualtrics survey were sent to the dyads simultaneously. The inclusion criterion for the study was participants who work at least 20 hours per week. In total, the survey was sent to 186 followers and leaders, and ultimately 175 followers and 163 leaders filled it in. This resulted in response rates of 94% for followers and 88% for leaders.

Measures

Leader Narcissism

To measure narcissistic leadership, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16 (NPI-16; Ames et al., 2006) was used.¹ The NPI-16 is a shorter version of the original self-reported 40-item NPI, namely the NPI-40 (Raskin & Hall, 1979). The original measure has been widely used as a measure of narcissism and was demonstrated to correlate highly with the NPI-16 measure of narcissism ($r = .90, p < .001$; Gentile et al., 2013). Additionally, the NPI-16 was demonstrated to have sufficient reliability of .75 across 1,316 samples as well as good criterion and discriminant validity. Example items of the NPI-16 scale include “I like to be the center of attention” and “I am an extraordinary person.” Leaders were asked to indicate how much they agree or disagree with these statements. Answer options range on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*. Higher scores indicate that the leader has more narcissistic traits. Moreover, a reliability analysis revealed satisfactory reliability for the overall scale, with Cronbach’s $\alpha = .85$. A Cronbach’s $\alpha > .70$ has been stated to be satisfactory for the reliability analysis of a given measurement (Bland & Altman, 1997).

¹ After discussion with my supervisor and the other team members we decided to change the NPI-13 to the NPI-16, due to a better fit with our research questions. Additionally, the vanity items in NPI-13 were deemed to be potentially perceived as irrelevant by managers, thus we decided to go with NPI-16 which does not include these items.

Follower Uncertainty

This variable was measured using a scale created by Rast et al. (2012). Seven items were used to assess follower uncertainty about the self. Example items on the scale include “I am uncertain about myself” and “I am uncertain about my future.” Answers range on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*. Higher scores on the scale indicate more uncertainty experienced by followers. This scale was demonstrated to have a high internal reliability with an $\alpha = .93$.

Perceived Leader Charisma

To measure perceived leader charisma, the Charismatic Leadership in Organizations (CLIO) scale was used (De Hoogh et al., 2004). This questionnaire assesses the “articulation of an attractive vision, provision of meaning to followers’ work, [and] role modeling of desired behavior” (De Hoogh et al., 2005, p. 12). These are assessed with six items answered by followers on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*. Example items include “My supervisor has vision and imagination of the future” and “My supervisor is able to make others enthusiastic about his/her ideas.” The reliability of this scale was demonstrated to be sufficient with an $\alpha = .85$.

Perceived Leadership Effectiveness

The three-item general leadership effectiveness scale developed by De Hoogh et al. (2005) was used to measure perceived leadership effectiveness as experienced by the follower. The three items are as follows: “To what extent is the overall functioning of your supervisor satisfactory?”, “How capable is your supervisor as a leader?”, and “How effective is your supervisor as a leader?” Responses are given by followers on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much so*. The internal reliability of the perceived effectiveness scale was demonstrated to be sufficient with an $\alpha = .91$.

Potential Control Variables

First, gender was considered a potential control variable because men, on average, tend to be more narcissistic than women (Grijalva et al., 2015b); moreover, this variable has commonly been included as a control variable when studying narcissism (Nevicka et al., 2011). Additionally, in a previous study, narcissistic female leaders were perceived to be less effective than narcissistic male leaders (De Hoogh et al., 2015). Second, the tenure of the follower–leader relationship was considered a control variable. Narcissists are perceived as especially beneficial and favorable in short-term interactions and early-stage relationships (Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). With longer interaction periods, the downsides of narcissistic leaders become increasingly apparent. Hence, tenure might be controlled for as the length of leader–follower relationships may affect how employees perceive their leader.

Data Analysis

For the data analysis, the statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27) was used. First, several assumption checks were conducted, followed by relevant descriptive statistics and correlation analysis between variables. To test the hypotheses, hierarchical (multiple) regression analyses were carried out. Results were seen as significant with a p-value lower than .05 as a cut-off level for significant results.

Results

Assumption Checks

First, the assumption of linearity was checked by creating a scatterplot in IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27), which revealed that the assumption was met. Second, the assumption of independent errors was tested with the Durbin–Watson test and found not to be violated as all values for the test were between 1 and 3. Third, SPSS was used to create a histogram and a normal P–P plot to check for the assumption of normality. The residuals were found to be approximately normally distributed, indicating that the assumption was met. Fourth, to check

for the assumption of homoscedasticity, the residuals were plotted against the values predicted by the regression model. In the scatterplot, the residuals were reasonably similarly clustered around each value of the predictor variable; thus, the assumption was met. Lastly, the assumption of the absence of multicollinearity was met as none of the correlations between the predictors (i.e., gender, leader narcissism, and perceived leader charisma) exhibited a very high correlation of $r > .8$ (Field, 2018). Thus, as none of the assumptions for testing the general linear model were violated, no transformations of the data were performed, and parametric tests were used in the analyses.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations derived from descriptive statistics in SPSS as well as the Pearson correlations among variables based on bivariate correlation analysis in SPSS. According to expectations and in line with prior research (Grijalva et al., 2015b), the leader's gender was significantly related to leader narcissism ($r = -.20, p = .012$), meaning that men on average were more narcissistic ($M = 4.05, SD = 0.76$) than women ($M = 3.71, SD = 0.86$). Additionally, the leader's gender exhibited a marginally significant relationship with perceived leadership effectiveness ($r = .15, p = .052$), which indicated, contrary to expectations (De Hoogh et al., 2015), that female leaders were perceived on average as more effective ($M = 6.19, SD = 0.93$) than male leaders ($M = 5.87, SD = 1.06$). Lastly, the leader's gender was also marginally significantly related to perceived leader charisma ($r = .14, p = .083$), meaning that female leaders were judged to be slightly more charismatic ($M = 5.94, SD = 0.79$) than male leaders ($M = 5.69, SD = 0.95$). Based on the significant relationship of the leader's gender with leader narcissism and the marginally significant effect with perceived leader charisma, this control variable was included in the analysis for Hypotheses 1 and 2. Due to the marginally significant relationship of leader's gender with the outcome variable of perceived leadership effectiveness, the control variable was also included in the analysis for Hypotheses 3 and 4. This ensured that the relationship

between the independent variable of leader narcissism and the dependent variable of perceived leader charisma or perceived leader effectiveness could not be attributed to the control variable. Furthermore, as leader tenure was not significantly related to leader narcissism ($r = .02, p = .831$), leader tenure was not included as a control variable since it could not be a potential confounder.

Noteworthy, the mean scores of perceived leader charisma ($M = 5.78, SD = 0.90$) and perceived leadership effectiveness ($M = 5.98, SD = 1.02$) were rather high on average. In addition, these two variables were fairly highly correlated ($r = .66, p < .001$). Principal component analysis, however, revealed that the items concerning leadership effectiveness and leader charisma correctly loaded onto two separate factors as expected, thus alleviating concerns regarding discriminant validity.²

² Two factors had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and in combination explained 72.07% of the variance. The three items measuring perceived leadership effectiveness indeed loaded onto a separate factor with high loadings, with the lowest being .88.

Table 1*Univariate Statistics and Pearson Correlations Among the Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Leader Gender ^a	1.35	0.48							
2. Leader Span of Control	22.23	44.69	.04						
3. Leader Tenure	7.42	7.92	-.17*	.06					
4. Leader Narcissism	3.93	0.81	-.20*	-.18*	.02				
5. Follower Uncertainty	2.91	1.31	.02	-.14 [†]	.02	-.02			
6. Perceived Leader Charisma	5.78	0.90	.14 [†]	.04	-.14 [†]	-.02	-.15 [†]		
7. Perceived Leadership Effectiveness	5.98	1.02	.15 [†]	.00	-.13 [†]	-.02	-.29***	.66***	
8. Follower Trust in Leader	6.05	0.82	.23**	-.07	-.08	-.08	-.27***	.59***	.75***

Note. $N = 161$ leader–follower pairs; ^a 1 = male, 2 = female

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .00$

Confirmatory Analysis

Before conducting the analysis to test the predicted hypotheses, the variables of leader narcissism, follower uncertainty, and perceived leader charisma were standardized. For the analyses, the standardized variables were used for predictor as well as moderator variables. Additionally, leader gender was dummy coded (male = 0, female = 1).

Leader Narcissism and Perceived Leader Charisma

To test Hypothesis 1, which predicted that leader narcissism is positively related to perceived leader charisma, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. An overview of the results is provided in Table 2.

In Step 1, the control variable of leader gender was added to the model. In Step 2, leader narcissism was added to the model, which did not result in a significant increase in the explained variance of the model ($\Delta R^2 = 0.00$, $F(1,158) = 0.02$, $p = .883$). The results of the analysis revealed that the relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leader charisma was nonsignificant ($\beta = .01$, $t(158) = .15$, $p = .883$, 95% confidence interval [CI] [-0.13, 0.15]). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported, indicating that more narcissistic leaders are not perceived as more charismatic.

Table 2

Regression Analyses Testing the Effects of Leader Narcissism on Perceived Leader Charisma

Variables	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			
Leader Gender	.14 [†]	.02 [†]	.02 [†]
Step 2			
Leader Gender	.14 [†]		
Leader Narcissism	.01	.02	.00

Note. $N = 161$ leader–follower pairs. Standardized regression coefficients are reported for the respective regression steps

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Leader Narcissism and Perceived Leader Charisma Moderated by Follower Uncertainty

Hypothesis 2 predicted that follower uncertainty moderates the positive relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leader charisma, such that the relationship is stronger for higher levels of follower uncertainty than for lower levels. This hypothesis was tested with a hierarchical multiple regression analysis. An overview of the results is provided in Table 3.

In Step 1, the control variable of leader gender was added to the model. In Step 2, the independent variable of leader narcissism and the moderator of follower uncertainty were added to the model. Their addition did not result in a significant increase of the explained variance of the model ($\Delta R^2 = .02$, $F(2,157) = 1.98$, $p = .141$). However, follower uncertainty was significantly negatively related to perceived leader charisma ($\beta = -.16$, $t(157) = -1.99$, $p = .049$, 95% $CI [-0.28, -0.00]$). The addition of the interaction term of the two predictors in Step 3 revealed a nonsignificant interaction effect between leader narcissism and follower uncertainty on perceived leader charisma ($\beta = -.12$, $t(156) = -1.57$, $p = .118$, 95% $CI [-0.26, 0.03]$). No significant additional variance of the third model was explained by the addition of the interaction term ($\Delta R^2 = .02$, $F(1, 156) = 2.47$, $p = .118$). Due to the nonsignificant findings regarding the interaction, no further simple slope analysis was conducted. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Table 3

Regression Analyses Testing the Effects of Leader Narcissism, Follower Uncertainty, and Their Interaction on Perceived Leader Charisma

Variables	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			
Leader Gender	.14 [†]	.02 [†]	.02 [†]
Step 2			
Leader Gender	.14 [†]		
Leader Narcissism	.01		
Follower Uncertainty	-.16*	.04 [†]	.02
Step 3			
Leader Gender	.15 [†]		
Leader Narcissism	.02		
Follower Uncertainty	-.17*		
Leader Narcissism x Follower Uncertainty	-.12	.06 [†]	.02

Note. $N = 161$ leader–follower pairs. Standardized regression coefficients are reported for the respective regression steps

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Perceived Leader Charisma and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness Moderated by Follower Uncertainty

Hypothesis 3 predicted that follower uncertainty moderates the positive relationship between perceived leader charisma and perceived leadership effectiveness, such that the relationship is stronger for higher levels of follower uncertainty than for lower levels. An overview of the results is provided in Table 4.

In Step 1, the control variable of leader gender was added to the model. In Step 2, the independent variable of perceived leader charisma and the moderator of follower uncertainty were added to the model. The addition of perceived leader charisma and follower uncertainty in Step 2 resulted in a significant increase in the explained variance of the model ($\Delta R^2 = .46$,

$F(2,157) = 69.12, p < .001$). Additionally, the analysis revealed that perceived leader charisma was significantly positively associated with perceived leadership effectiveness ($\beta = .62, t(157) = 10.62, p < .001, 95\% CI [0.52, 0.76]$), while follower uncertainty was negatively associated with perceived leadership effectiveness ($\beta = -.19, t(157) = -3.32, p = .001, 95\% CI [-0.32, -0.08]$). Adding the interaction term between the two predictors in Step 3 revealed a marginally significant interaction effect between perceived leader charisma and follower uncertainty on perceived leadership effectiveness ($\beta = .11, t(156) = 1.84, p = .068, 95\% CI [-0.01, 0.25]$). Thus, the addition of the interaction term resulted in a marginally significant increase in the explained variance of the model ($\Delta R^2 = .01, F(1,156) = 3.37, p = .068$). Due to the marginally significant findings of the interaction effect, a simple slope analysis was conducted, which indicated that a significant positive relationship existed between perceived leader charisma and perceived leadership effectiveness when follower uncertainty was low ($[-1SD], \beta = .51, t(157) = 5.44, p < .001, 95\% CI [0.33, 0.71]$). A significant positive relationship was also found between perceived leader charisma and perceived leadership effectiveness when follower uncertainty was high ($[+1SD], \beta = .73, t(157) = 9.16, p < .001, 95\% CI [0.59, 0.91]$); however, this relationship was stronger when follower uncertainty was high. Figure 2 presents the findings, which indicate that perceived leader charisma was positively related to perceived leadership effectiveness for both high and low levels of follower uncertainty, with the relationship being stronger for high levels.

Thus, the relationship between perceived leader charisma and perceived leadership effectiveness was indeed stronger for high levels of follower uncertainty, providing some tentative support for Hypothesis 3.

Table 4

Regression Analyses Testing the Effects of Perceived Leader Charisma, Follower Uncertainty, and Their Interaction on Perceived Leadership Effectiveness

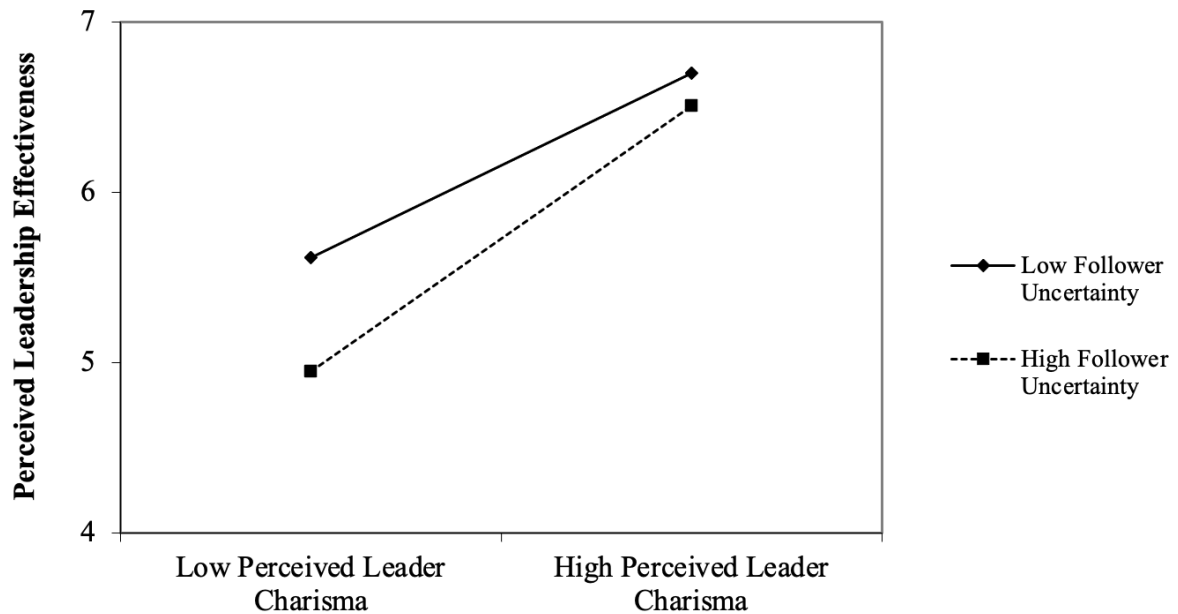
Variables	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			
Leader Gender	.15 [†]	.02 [†]	.02 [†]
Step 2			
Leader Gender	.07		
Perceived Leader Charisma	.62***		
Follower Uncertainty	-.19**	.48***	.46***
Step 3			
Leader Gender	.08		
Perceived Leader Charisma	.61***		
Follower Uncertainty	-.21***		
Perceived Leader Charisma x Follower Uncertainty	.11 [†]	.49***	.01 [†]

Note. $N = 161$ leader–follower pairs. Standardized regression coefficients are reported for the respective regression steps

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 2

Moderating Effect of Follower Uncertainty on the Relationship Between Perceived Leader Charisma and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness



Leader Narcissism and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness Through Perceived Leader Charisma Moderated by Follower Uncertainty

Hypothesis 4 tested the overall model by proposing that follower uncertainty moderates the indirect relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness through perceived leader charisma, such that the indirect relationship is stronger when follower uncertainty is high than when it is low. This hypothesis was tested with Model 59 in the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2017) with 5000 bootstrapped samples.

Given that the first stage of the conditional mediation model was already nonsignificant, as indicated earlier when Hypothesis 2 was tested, the full model would not work and was therefore not tested further. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Exploratory Analysis

Curvilinear Analysis

The subsequent analysis aimed to investigate whether the relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness in times of uncertainty is, in fact, a curvilinear one. To address this question, a curvilinear hierarchical regression analysis was conducted, prior to which the standardized independent variable of leader narcissism was multiplied by itself to obtain its squared values. An overview of the results is provided in Table 5.

In Step 1, the control variable of leader gender was added to the model. In Step 2, leader narcissism, leader narcissism squared, and the moderator of follower uncertainty were added to the model. The results indicated a significant main effect for follower uncertainty on perceived leadership effectiveness ($\beta = -.29$, $t(156) = -3.82$, $p < .001$, 95% *CI* [-0.45, -0.14]). However, no significant linear main effect was found for leader narcissism on perceived leadership effectiveness ($\beta = .34$, $t(156) = 0.54$, $p = .592$, 95% *CI* [-0.93, 1.62]), nor was a quadratic main effect found for leader narcissism on perceived leadership effectiveness ($\beta = -.33$, $t(158) = -0.53$, $p = .598$, 95% *CI* [-1.61, 0.93]). The addition of the interaction term of the squared independent variable with the moderator in Step 3 also indicated a nonsignificant interaction effect ($\beta = 0.00$, $t(155) = 0.05$, $p = .963$, 95% *CI* [-0.16, 0.17]). Thus, the addition of this interaction term did not result in an increase in the explained variance of the model ($\Delta R^2 = .00$, $F(1,155) = 0.00$, $p = .963$). Therefore, no support was found for a curvilinear relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness in times of uncertainty.

Table 5

Regression Analyses Testing the Effects of the Curvilinear Relationship Between Leader Narcissism and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness Moderated by Follower Uncertainty

Variables	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			
Leader Gender	.15 [†]	.02 [†]	.02 [†]
Step 2			
Leader Gender	.17*		
Leader Narcissism	.34		
(Leader Narcissism) ²	-.33		
Follower Uncertainty	-.29***	.11**	.09**
Step 3			
Leader Gender	.17*		
Leader Narcissism	.34		
(Leader Narcissism) ²	-.36		
Follower Uncertainty	-.29***		
(Leader Narcissism) ² x Follower Uncertainty	.00	.11**	.00

Note. $N = 161$ leader–follower pairs. ² = squared leader narcissism variable. Standardized regression coefficients are reported for the respective regression steps

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Followers' Trust in the Leader

An additional mediator that might explain the relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness in times of uncertainty is the trust that followers have in their leaders. Trust is a critical factor in all organizational settings (Pashiardis & Brauckmann-Sajkiewicz, 2022; Sutherland, 2017) and has consistently been found to be one of the most crucial variables for leadership effectiveness (Hasel, 2013; Jung et al., 2009), next to other desirable outcomes such as organizational citizenship behavior and cooperation (Kwiatkowska et al., 2019). Narcissists are known for their egocentrism (Grijalva & Harms,

2014), exploitation of others for their own benefit (Kwiatkowska et al., 2019), and lack of empathy (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001), which are likely to result in narcissists being trusted less by their followers, especially over long-term encounters. As previous research has called for more research into the mediating role of trust between leadership and outcome variables in times of crisis versus noncrisis (Hasel, 2013), I investigated the mediating role of trust for the present research sample, as trust was measured as part of another research question.³

To test whether followers' trust in their leader might be a potential mediator of the moderated relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness in times of uncertainty, Model 8 in the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2017) with 5000 bootstrapped samples was used. First of all, the total effect of the interaction between leader narcissism and follower uncertainty on leadership effectiveness was nonsignificant ($\beta = -0.00$, $t(157) = -0.01$, $p = .996$, 95% $CI [-0.15, 0.15]$). Therefore, no simple slope analysis was conducted at high and low levels of the moderator. However, the effect of the interaction between leader narcissism and follower uncertainty on followers' trust was found to be marginally significant ($\beta = -0.12$, $t(157) = -1.95$, $p = .053$, 95% $CI [-0.24, 0.00]$; see Figure 3). The simple slope analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between leader narcissism and followers' trust when follower uncertainty was high ($+1SD$), $\beta = -.23$, $t(157) = -2.13$, $p = .034$, 95% $CI [-0.44, -0.02]$). However, when follower uncertainty was low ($-1SD$), no significant relationship was found between leader narcissism and followers' trust ($\beta = .08$, $t(157) = 0.68$, $p = .496$, 95% $CI [-0.14, 0.30]$). When followers' trust was added to the model that also included the interaction term, the interaction effect became significant (β

³ Followers' trust was assessed with a shortened version (Schaubroeck et al., 2011) of the originally developed scale by McAllister (1995). The adapted scale is conducted of six items, differentiating between affect-based trust, which is measured by three items (e.g., "I can talk freely to my supervisor about difficulties I am having at work and know that (s)he will want to listen.") and cognitive-based trust, which is measured by the other three items (e.g., "Given my supervisor's track record, I see no reason to doubt his/her competence and preparation for the job"). Answer options are given on a scale from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*. This scale has been shown to have high internal reliability with $\alpha = .84$.

= .11, $t(156) = 2.06$, $p = .041$, 95% $CI [0.00, 0.21]$; Figure 4). The simple slope analysis revealed a marginally significant positive relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness when follower uncertainty was high ($+1SD$), $\beta = .18$, $t(156) = 1.93$, $p = .055$, 95% $CI [-0.00, 0.37]$). However, when follower uncertainty was low ($-1SD$), no significant relationship was found between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness ($\beta = -.10$, $t(156) = -1.04$, $p = .301$, 95% $CI [-0.29, 0.09]$).

Furthermore, the relationship between followers' trust and perceived leadership effectiveness was positive and significant ($\beta = .92$, $t(156) = 13.45$, $p < .001$, 95% $CI [0.79, 1.06]$).

Moreover, the indirect effect of the interaction between leader narcissism and follower uncertainty on perceived leadership effectiveness through followers' trust was found to be significant as the 95% confidence interval did not include a zero ($B_{\text{indirect}} = -0.11$, 95% $CI [-0.22, -0.01]$). Table 6 depicts the conditional indirect effects of the mediation at high versus low levels of uncertainty. The results indicated that narcissistic leaders are perceived as less effective when followers feel more uncertain, as explained by lower trust in the leader. However, this effect disappears when followers feel certain. Thus, the mediated moderation model was supported (see Figure 5).

Figure 3

Moderating Effect of Follower Uncertainty on the Relationship Between Leader Narcissism and Followers' Trust

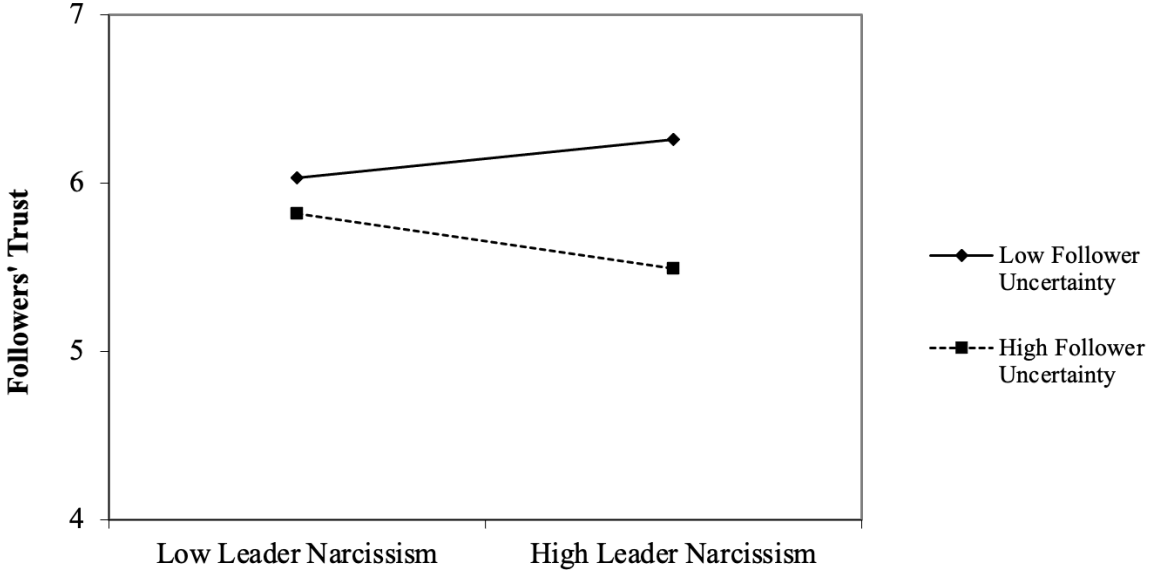


Figure 4

Moderating Effect of Follower Uncertainty on the Relationship Between Leader Narcissism and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness When Followers' Trust in the Leader is Included

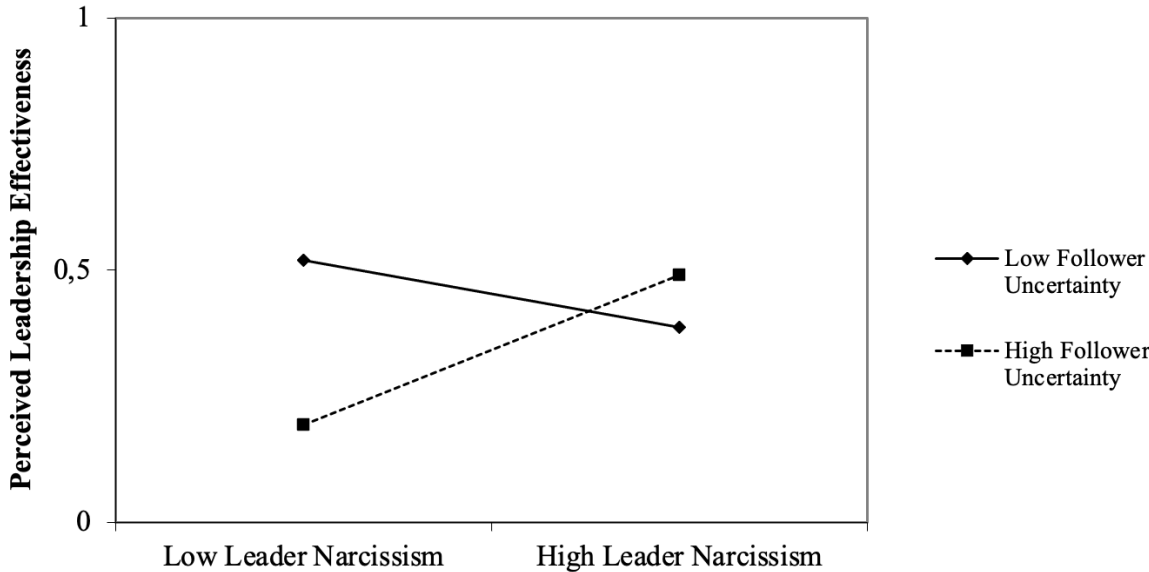


Table 6

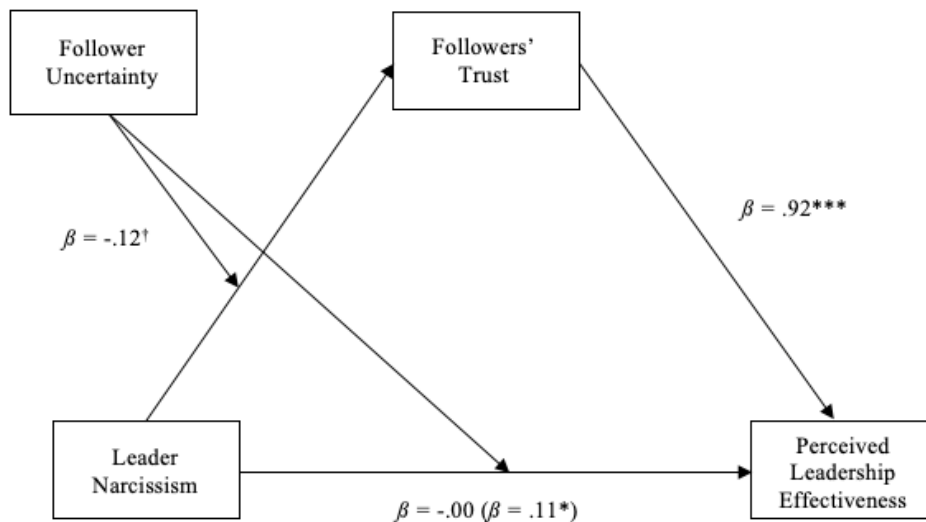
Bootstrapping Results for Test of Conditional Indirect Effects of Leader Narcissism on Perceived Leadership Effectiveness at Specific Levels of the Moderator (Follower Uncertainty)

Mediator	Value of Follower Uncertainty	Conditional indirect effect	SE	95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
Followers' Trust	Low	.07	.09	-.09	.25
	High	-.21*	.11	-.43	-.01

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

Figure 5

Moderating Effect of Follower Uncertainty on the Relationship Between Leader Narcissism and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness Through Followers' Trust



Note. Standardized regression coefficients for the interaction between leader narcissism and follower uncertainty on perceived leadership effectiveness as mediated by followers' trust.

The regression coefficient for the interaction between leader narcissism and follower

uncertainty on perceived leadership effectiveness, while controlling for follower's trust, is in parentheses.

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Noteworthy, when affective trust and cognitive trust were examined separately, the analysis indicated that the interaction between leader narcissism and follower uncertainty was only significant for affective trust ($\beta = -0.16$, $t(157) = -2.09$, $p = .038$, 95% $CI [-0.31, -0.01]$; see Figure 6), not for cognitive trust ($\beta = -0.07$, $t(157) = -1.19$, $p = .234$, 95% $CI [-0.20, 0.05]$). A simple slope analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between leader narcissism and followers' affective trust when follower uncertainty was high ($+1SD$), $\beta = -.31$, $t(157) = -2.22$, $p = .028$, 95% $CI [-0.58, -0.03]$). However, when follower uncertainty was low ($-1SD$), no significant relationship was found between leader narcissism and followers' affective trust ($\beta = .11$, $t(157) = 0.80$, $p = .424$, 95% $CI [-0.17, 0.40]$). When followers' affective trust was added to the model that also included the interaction term, the interaction effect became nonsignificant ($\beta = .09$, $t(156) = 1.54$, $p = .125$, 95% $CI [-0.03, 0.22]$). Furthermore, the relationship between followers' affective trust and perceived leadership effectiveness was positive and significant ($\beta = .60$, $t(156) = 9.40$, $p < .001$, 95% $CI [0.47, 0.72]$). Lastly, the indirect effect of the interaction between leader narcissism and follower uncertainty on perceived leadership effectiveness through followers' affective trust was found to be significant as the 95% confidence interval did not include a zero ($B_{\text{indirect}} = -0.10$, 95% $CI [-0.19, -0.01]$). Table 7 depicts the conditional indirect effects for the mediation at high versus low levels of uncertainty.

When examining cognitive trust, the effect of the interaction between leader narcissism and follower uncertainty on followers' cognitive trust was statistically

nonsignificant ($\beta = -0.07$, $t(157) = -1.19$, $p = .234$, 95% CI [-0.20, 0.05]). Thus, no further simple slope analysis was conducted.

Figure 6

Moderating Effect of Follower Uncertainty on the Relationship Between Leader Narcissism and Followers' Affective Trust

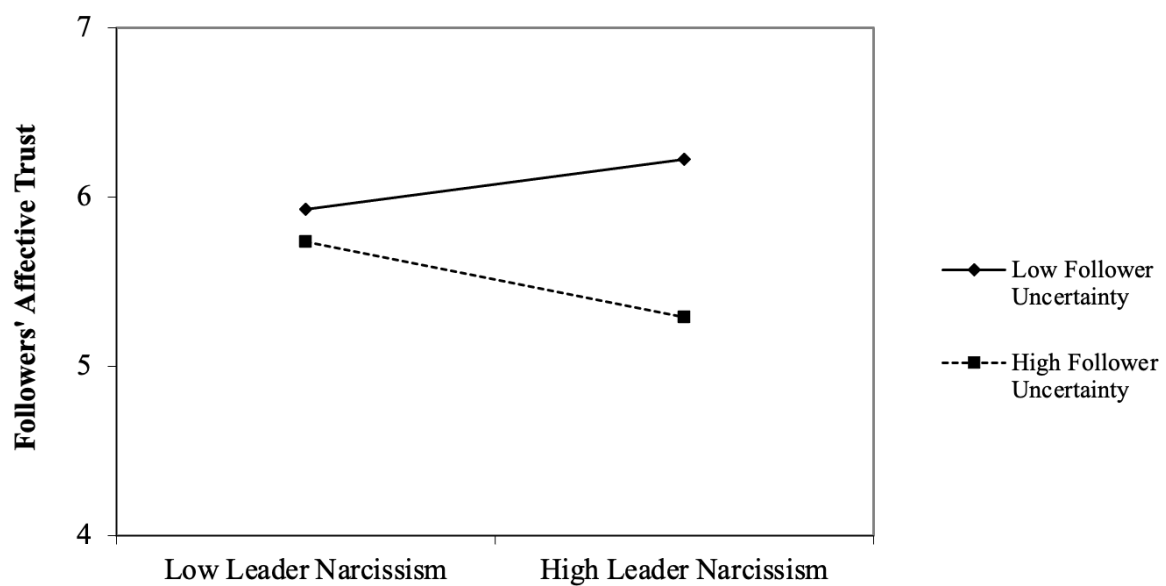


Table 7

Bootstrapping Results for the Test of Conditional Indirect Effects of Leader Narcissism on Perceived Leadership Effectiveness at Specific Levels of the Moderator (Follower Uncertainty)

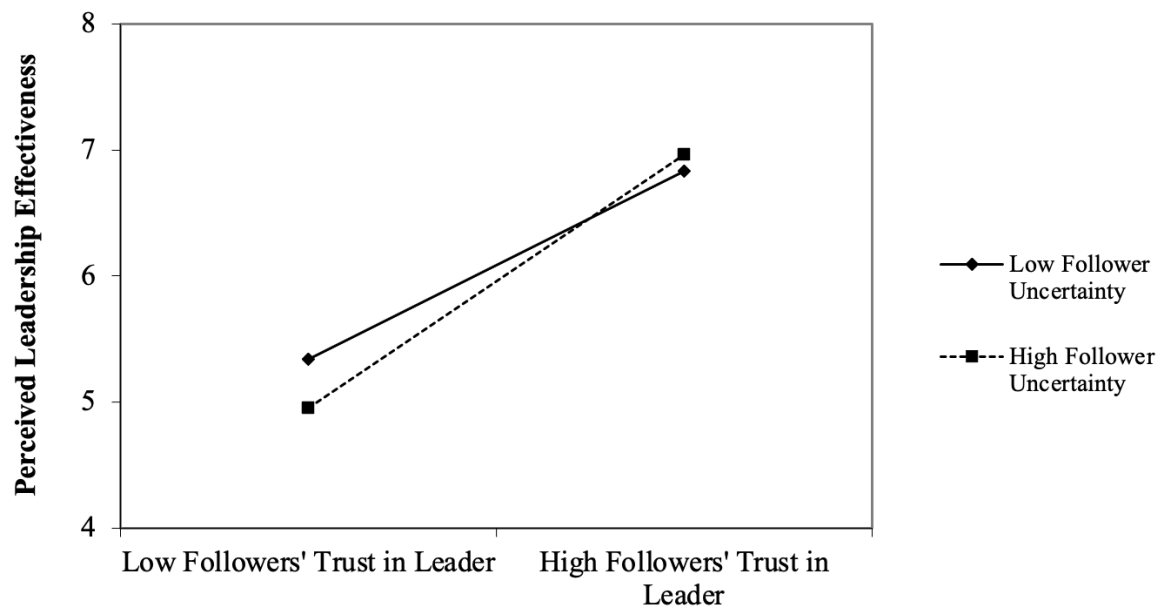
Mediator	Value of Follower Uncertainty	Conditional indirect effect	SE	95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
Followers' Affective Trust	Low	.07	.06	-.05	.20
	High	-.18*	.10	-.40	-.00

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

Although the analysis for Model 59 was not found to be significant for perceived leader charisma as a mediator, Model 59 was still examined with followers' trust in the leader as a mediator. In addition to the results of Model 8 that examined the interaction between leader narcissism and follower uncertainty on followers' trust, the results of the analysis revealed that the effect of the interaction between followers' trust and follower uncertainty on perceived leadership effectiveness was significant ($\beta = 0.13$, $t(155) = 2.40$, $p = .018$, 95% *CI* [0.02, 0.24]; see Figure 7). Noteworthy, a simple slope analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between followers' trust and perceived leadership effectiveness when follower uncertainty was high ($+1SD$), $\beta = 1.05$, $t(155) = 12.37$, $p < .001$, 95% *CI* [0.03, 0.40], $r = .70$) as well as when it was low ($-1SD$), $\beta = .70$, $t(155) = 6.19$, $p < .001$, 95% *CI* [0.48, 0.93], $r = .45$). However, when the effect sizes of the results were compared at high versus low levels of the moderator, the relationship between followers' trust and perceived leadership effectiveness was observed to be much stronger at high levels of the moderator, exhibiting a medium to strong effect, whereas the effect at low levels of the moderator was interpreted to be small to medium. Additionally, the analysis results indicated that the overall model was negative and significant for high levels of follower uncertainty because the 95% confidence interval for the conditional indirect effect of leader narcissism on perceived leadership effectiveness through followers' trust in their leader did not include zero ($B_{\text{indirect}} = -0.24$, 95% *CI* [-0.49, -0.02]), thus supporting Model 59 (see Figure 8). Table 8 depicts the conditional indirect effects of the mediation at high versus low levels of uncertainty.

Figure 7

Moderating Effect of Follower Uncertainty on the Relationship Between Followers' Trust in the Leader and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness

**Table 8**

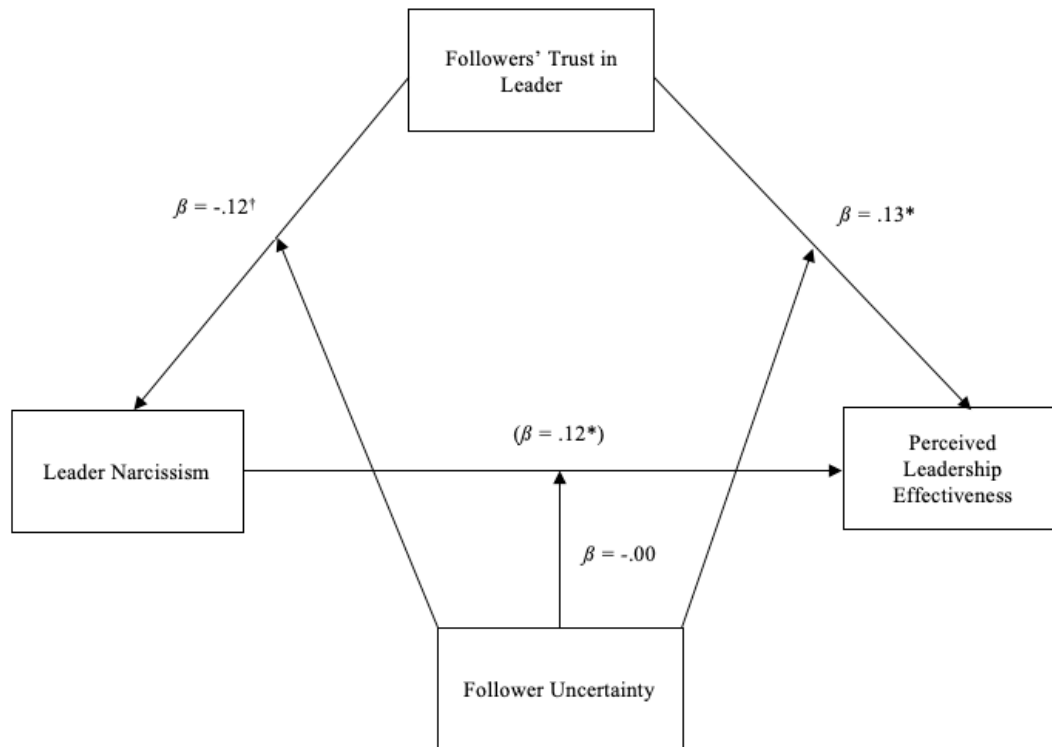
Bootstrapping Results for Test of Conditional Indirect Effects of Leader Narcissism on Perceived Leadership Effectiveness Through Followers' Trust in the Leader at Specific Levels of the Moderator (Follower Uncertainty)

Mediator	Value of Follower Uncertainty	Conditional indirect effect	SE	95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
Followers' Trust	Low	.05	.06	-.06	.19
	High	-.24*	.12	-.49	-.02

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

Figure 8

Moderating Effect of Follower Uncertainty on the Relationship Between Leader Narcissism and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness Through Followers' Trust



Note. Standardized regression coefficients for the interaction between leader narcissism and follower uncertainty on perceived leadership effectiveness as mediated by followers' trust.

The regression coefficient for the interaction between leader narcissism and follower uncertainty on perceived leadership effectiveness, while controlling for followers' trust, is in parentheses.

$^\dagger p < .10$, $* p < .05$, $** p < .01$, $*** p < .001$

Discussion

The literature on narcissism and its relation to leadership effectiveness still lacks a consensus (Grijalva et al., 2015a; Hoffman et al., 2013). Due to the inconsistent findings, the present study aimed to reconcile these inconsistencies by examining whether the relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness is mediated by perceived

leader charisma and whether this relationship varies depending on the level of follower uncertainty. The overall model, which predicted that follower uncertainty moderates the indirect relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness through perceived leader charisma, was not supported. However, charisma was consistently found to be positively related to perceived leadership effectiveness for high and low levels of follower uncertainty. Additionally, some exploratory analyses were conducted. No support was found for the expected curvilinear relationship between narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness. However, narcissists were found to be perceived as less effective when followers feel more uncertain due to the reduced trust they have in their leaders. These expected and unexpected findings are elaborated in the following sections.

Theoretical Implications

Based on this study's findings, charismatic attributions to leaders seem to possess high value for leadership effectiveness, especially in times of uncertainty. This implication is in line with ILT, which proposes that prototypical leadership characteristics contribute to leaders being rated as effective. Galvin et al. (2010) stated that charismatic leadership qualities align with schemas that individuals have of prototypical leaders. Crucially, individuals adapt their schemas of leadership characteristics that constitute a prototypical leader depending on situational factors (Nevicka et al., 2013). As charismatic leaders promote change and actively seek strategies to guide it (Rast et al., 2016), they are likely to convey a confident and inspiring vision in times of uncertainty, which is in line with the leadership schemas that followers require to reduce their feelings of uncertainty in such times (Maccoby, 2004; Waldman et al., 2001). Additionally, researchers have argued that prototypical leaders are trusted more because they are expected to act in the best interests of an individual or group, and because followers tend to exhibit an increased need for strong leadership in uncertain times (Hogg, 2007b), they are more likely to rely on a prototypical charismatic leader (Rast et al., 2016). Ultimately, as stated previously, ILT proposes that leaders who demonstrate

behaviors that match prototypical leadership characteristics are rated as more effective (Lord et al., 2020). Thus, the present study supports the previous theoretical suggestions of ILT in relation to charisma.

In light of this, the present study found support for the prediction that charisma is a prototypical leader characteristic, which seems especially relevant in times of uncertainty. Additionally, this study contradicted Rast et al. (2016) when they claimed that “charismatic leaders only garnered trust under high uncertainty—suggesting that under low uncertainty, such leadership may be short-lived due to a lack of trust among followers” (p. 271). Although the present study found that charisma was more strongly related to perceived leadership effectiveness when employees felt highly uncertain, the effect was still significant for low levels of uncertainty, suggesting that charismatic attributions are generally relevant for perceived leadership effectiveness. Much research has supported the importance of charisma to successful leadership, including perceived leadership effectiveness (Den Hartog et al., 1999; Lowe et al., 1996; Vergauwe et al., 2018). Future research could build on these findings by investigating the mechanisms (e.g., inspiring vision; Vergauwe et al., 2018) that underlie the relationship between leader charisma and perceived leadership effectiveness in times of high *and* low uncertainty, thereby obtaining an improved understanding of the importance of charisma to leadership effectiveness.

However, despite several studies demonstrating that narcissists tend to be perceived as charismatic (Deluga, 1997; Galvin et al., 2010), the present study found no support for this. Additionally, contrary to theory and expectations, narcissists were not found to be perceived as charismatic in times of certainty nor uncertainty. Specifically, simply a main effect of follower uncertainty and perceived leader charisma was found, indicating that in times of uncertainty, followers perceive their leaders to be less charismatic. A potential explanation for these unexpected findings is the attribution of uncertainty by followers. The followers likely experienced uncertainty due to the behavior of their leader, such as their lack of empathy

(Blair et al., 2008; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) and tendency to exploit others (Blair et al., 2018). These behaviors would logically be counterproductive to the attribution of charisma to leaders, resulting in lower attributed charisma when followers feel uncertain.

Additionally, the questionnaire used to assess follower uncertainty had a focus on uncertainty about the self. However, the present study investigated follower uncertainty in interaction with leadership behaviors. As a result, followers may have separated the uncertainty that they personally experienced from behaviors related to the leader, which could potentially explain the lack of interaction between leader narcissism and follower uncertainty. Future research could extend the present research by using a different questionnaire to measure uncertainty. For example, Colquitt et al. (2012) created a scale focused on employees' perceived uncertainty at work, an example item of which is "If I think about work, I feel a lot of uncertainty." Thus, followers might be more likely to make a connection between their experienced uncertainty and work contexts, and thus, their leader's behavior.

Based on this study's findings, a twofold conclusion in regard to ILT as well as uncertainty identity theory was derived. Neither theory was supported when narcissism was examined as the predictor variable. However, when Hypothesis 3 was tested with charisma as the predictor variable, ILT was supported in that more charismatic leaders were perceived as more effective when followers were more uncertain. A potential explanation for the unexpected findings for narcissism can be traced back to leader–follower acquaintance. Research has consistently stated that the dark sides of narcissists are revealed mostly over long-term encounters (Campbell et al., 2005; Grijalva et al., 2015a). By contrast, the positive traits and benefits that may contribute to narcissists being perceived as favorable and effective mostly manifest and hold for initial encounters and early-stage relationships (Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Grijalva & Harms, 2014). Paulhus (1998), for example, found that already after the seventh encounter with narcissists, people's positive impressions turned to negative ones, including perceptions of their arrogance, overconfidence in their abilities, adverse

nature, and tendency to show off (Paulhus, 1998). In the current sample, the average time of acquaintance between leaders and followers was 3.35 years⁴. This time span can no longer be considered a short-term encounter; thus, narcissistic negative traits would likely have already become too prevalent to outweigh the more positive traits, such as the narcissists' charisma, extroversion, and confidence (Deluga, 1997; Williams et al., 2018).

The support for ILT with perceived leader charisma again points to the importance of this variable for leadership effectiveness, especially in times of uncertainty. As previously stated, followers adapt their schemas of who constitutes a prototypical leader depending on situational factors (Nevicka et al., 2013). In light of this, charisma indeed seems to especially match the schema of who constitutes a prototypical leader when followers feel more uncertain.

In addition to the confirmatory analyses, two exploratory analyses were conducted based on the proposed relevance of past research. First, no support was found for the curvilinear relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness in times of uncertainty. A potential explanation for the lack of significant findings is this study's relatively small sample size. The meta-analysis of Grijalva et al. (2015a), who provided the basis for the curvilinear prediction between narcissism and leadership effectiveness in the present study, was based on an extensive data set of over 1000 studies. Future studies with the possibilities of obtaining a larger data pool should aim to replicate the findings of Grijalva et al. (2015a) while also extending them by examining potential moderator and/or mediator variables. They proposed that an optimal midrange level of narcissism may exist (Grijalva et al., 2015a) and, under optimal circumstances, narcissists may bring great contributions and advancement to organizations (Maccoby, 2004). Narcissists have even been proposed to be

⁴ Since leader-follower acquaintance was measured in the current sample, I checked whether leader narcissism x leader-follower acquaintance interact on perceived leader charisma. The interaction was found to be non-significant in the present study ($\beta = .02$, $t(157) = 1.06$, $p = .290$, 95% *CI* [-0.02, 0.06]). This could be attributed to the sample size of the present study as well as to the fact that there were rather few followers with followers with short-term relationships with the leader.

“extraordinarily useful – even necessary” (Maccoby, 2004, p. 94). Thus, research should continue to investigate a potential curvilinear relationship between narcissism and organizational outcomes, such as leadership effectiveness, to determine the optimal level of narcissism and to investigate whether the point of inflection of this curvilinear relationship may depend on external circumstances such as follower uncertainty.

Second, the present study found support for the proposition that followers’ trust in their leader mediates the moderated relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness in times of uncertainty. The findings indicated that followers trusted narcissistic leaders less when they experienced uncertainty, which serves as an explanation for why followers perceive narcissistic leaders to be less effective in times of uncertainty. This makes sense according to the prediction that narcissists may be trusted less due to some of their detrimental characteristics, such as their exploitative behavior (Kwiatkowska et al., 2019) and a lack of empathy (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). However, since trust is one of the most crucial variables in relation to leadership effectiveness (Hasel, 2013; Jung et al., 2009), it follows logically that narcissistic leaders, who are judged to be less trustworthy, are perceived as less effective. The present study found support for this outcome seeming to especially be the case in times of uncertainty as the effect was found to disappear in times of certainty. These findings can be explained by past research (Kramer, 2001; Lind & van den Bos, 2002). Lind and van den Bos (2002) proposed trust to be a mechanism for managing uncertainty. However, if followers’ trust in their leader is low, they lack this mechanism to be able to cope with uncertainty. Thus, the present findings provide support for the importance of trust in uncertain times. As stated previously, trust is highly effective at reducing feelings of uncertainty (Kim & Kim, 2005; Oldeweme et al., 2021). However, considering the definition of trust of Kim and Kim (2005), who stated that “trust refers to the belief that the promise of the other party can be relied upon and that, in unpredictable circumstances, the other will act with goodwill toward the trusted” (p. 2), it becomes apparent why followers would rather not

trust narcissistic leaders, who are mainly concerned with their own benefit and not with the goodwill of their employees (Besser & Priel, 2010). Moreover, the present study replicated previous studies that have consistently found a positive relationship between followers' trust and perceived leadership effectiveness.

Noteworthy, the interaction of narcissism and follower uncertainty only exhibited a significant negative effect on perceived leadership effectiveness when followers' trust was also added to the model. Thus, followers' trust in their leader seems to act as a suppressor of this relationship (MacKinnon et al., 2000). This indicates that narcissists are trusted less when followers feel more uncertain, which may explain why narcissistic leaders are perceived as less effective. However, if trust is considered, narcissistic leaders are actually perceived as more effective when followers feel more uncertain. Thus, the positive relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness is suppressed by perceived trust in the leader. An explanation of these findings can be found in the dark and bright side perspective of narcissism (e.g., Judge et al., 2009), where a second mediator seems to be at play. On the one hand, narcissists seem to be perceived as less trustworthy due to some of the dark sides they convey, such as looking out for their own needs while ignoring the concerns of others (Rogoza & Fatfouta, 2020) as well as lacking empathy (Blair et al., 2008; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Thus, the results of the present study support the dark path of narcissism. On the other hand, the positive relationship is likely explained by another mediator. Future research should therefore investigate this duality of narcissism and examine other potential mediators (Deluga, 1997; Williams et al., 2018) that explain the positive relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness in times of uncertainty, such as narcissists' confidence.

On a side note, the distinction drawn between affect-based and cognition-based trust (McAllister, 1995) should be noted. Specifically, the interaction between leader narcissism and follower uncertainty was only significant for – and thus driven by – affect-based trust, not

cognition-based trust. Affective trust refers to “emotional bonds between individuals that are grounded upon expressions of genuine care and concern for the welfare of the other party,” whereas cognitive trust refers to “trust that is based on performance-relevant cognitions such as competence, responsibility, reliability, and dependability” (Schaubroeck et al., 2011, p. 864). Examining the two definitions, it becomes apparent that followers are less likely to have affective trust in their narcissistic leaders in uncertain times (Colquitt et al., 2012) due to common behaviors exhibited by narcissists, such as a lack of concern for others (Rogoza & Fatfouta, 2020), egocentrism (Grijalva & Harms, 2014), and a lack of empathy (Blair et al., 2008; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Employees may feel that narcissistic leaders do not offer the required level of emotional reciprocity to signal employees’ protection and security in times of uncertainty (Colquitt et al., 2012).

With these results, the current study provides novel empirical evidence for the relationship between leader narcissism and perceived leadership effectiveness mediated by trust in uncertain times. This evidence also contributes to achieving this study’s aim of reducing the inconsistencies in the current literature on narcissistic leadership effectiveness. Even though narcissistic leaders are often chosen for leadership positions in times of uncertainty (Grijalva et al., 2015a; Judge et al., 2006; Nevicka et al., 2011), followers ultimately do not perceive such leaders as more effective in uncertain times. In fact, narcissistic leaders are perceived as less effective in such times due to lower trust from followers. Here, one can refer back to the proposition that narcissists tend to be perceived in a positive light during first-time encounters (Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Grijalva & Harms, 2014), which is relevant for leader emergence. However, during long-term interactions, their more negative characteristics manifest, thus reducing narcissistic leaders’ effectiveness. Since this is the first study to have examined the aforementioned relationship, future research should aim to replicate the findings to increase their reliability (Plucker & Makel, 2021).

Strengths and Limitations

This study has several strengths. First, because the sample population was drawn from different companies across different sectors, the sample demographics ensure some generalizability for the findings. Additionally, the participants were drawn from two separate countries and represented over 14 nationalities, which further broadened the sample population and thus the findings' generalizability. The present findings could therefore potentially be generalized to different working sectors. Nevertheless, future research could still improve their generalizability by first including a larger data pool and, more crucially, broadening the scope of research to populations outside of the Western world. Past research has demonstrated that individualistic cultures score higher on narcissism compared with collectivistic cultures (Foster et al., 2003; Vater et al., 2018); moreover, it seems that the “epidemic of narcissism” is more prevalent in Western countries (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). This makes sense when one considers the differences between individualism versus collectivism. In individualistic cultures, people are encouraged to focus on themselves (i.e., I-consciousness), whereas in collectivistic cultures, the focus lies on the group (i.e., We-consciousness; Hofstede, 2011). Since the present sample was mostly based on participants from individualistic cultures (mostly Western Europe and the United States), it would be interesting to see what the results look like for more collectivistic cultures. Even though the present study did not find support for the prediction that narcissistic leaders may be perceived as effective, other research did find support for this prediction (e.g., Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Deluga, 1997). As these studies have also been based on Western samples, future research should investigate this relationship in non-Western countries. This proposition is supported by a previous study that noted that most research on leadership is based primarily on the North American culture (Dickson et al., 2012). In non-Western countries, narcissistic leaders are likely to be perceived as less effective than in Western countries because

narcissists' self-oriented and egocentric tendencies to act stand in contrast with the collectivistic aim to act in the best interests of a group (Offermann & Hellmann, 1997).

A second strength of this study was its multi-source data collection through two separate questionnaires, one for leaders and one for followers. This allowed for a more detailed data analysis and evaluation (De Waal et al., 2020). Crucially, multi-source data can also rule out common-method variance (Holmbeck et al., 2002), which refers to the “variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the construct the measure represents” (Podsakoff et al., 2003, p. 879). Such variance could potentially result in a measurement error, ultimately threatening the validity of the research conclusions drawn from a study's results. Because the data for predictor and outcome variables were collected using multiple sources (i.e., leaders *and* followers) in this study, potential biases that might be attributed to the same person filling in a complete questionnaire (e.g., self-report bias) were minimized.

However, this study also has limitations. One limitation that should be considered is its cross-sectional study design. This means that the data were only recorded at one point in time and no manipulations were conducted. As a result, no causal conclusions could be drawn from the present study's findings. One solution could be to use a longitudinal survey to infer causal conclusions (Nijstad, 2009). Conducting the present questionnaire at two different time points would also be especially relevant based on the previous discussion about leader–follower acquaintance. A goal for future research could be to investigate the present relationships in organizational settings at two different time points, ideally at the beginning of a new leader–follower interaction and again after a certain time period, which should be decided based on the density of face-to-face interactions between leaders and followers. A guideline could be the proposition of Paulhus (1998), who reported that the more negative characteristics of narcissists already prevailed over the positive ones after the seventh encounter with a narcissist. Based on the aforementioned research on leader–follower

acquaintance (e.g., Campbell & Campbell, 2009; Campbell et al., 2005; Grijalva et al., 2015a), I expect that narcissistic leaders may have above-average positive impressions on followers in the short-term, and thus, may also be perceived as more effective. However, this positive trend is likely to decrease drastically in the long run, reducing narcissists' perceived leadership effectiveness (Paulhus, 1998).

A second limitation is that selection and/or response bias might have influenced the results. First, selection bias may have been caused by the type of participant recruitment that was conducted. Perhaps only participants who had a good relationship with their supervisor or employee agreed to participate in the study, which might have affected the results in that outcomes generally had a more favorable trend. Second, response bias might have influenced participants into answering in socially desirable ways. This could affect the validity of the present questionnaire (Van de Mortel, 2008). For example, followers may have rated their supervisors more favorably due to concerns about the anonymity of the results, even though it was made very clear that all answers would be confidential. An indication that these two biases occurred is the relatively high average scores on perceived leader charisma ($M = 5.78$, $SD = 0.90$) as well as perceived leadership effectiveness ($M = 5.98$, $SD = 1.02$). Thus, whether participants' responses reflected their true scores or whether a nonrandom deviation from the true scores has occurred is rather difficult to derive (Lavrakas, 2008).

Practical Implications

The findings can offer organizations direction and guidance for the selection procedures for leadership positions. Generally, the results suggested that narcissistic leaders are not perceived as effective in times of uncertainty. However, due to their positive first impressions in short-term and initial interactions, such as interviews for selection procedures, narcissists tend to emerge in leadership positions in times of uncertainty (Grijalva et al., 2015a; Judge et al., 2006; Nevicka et al., 2011). Crucially, this does not imply that followers perceive them as effective once they are in leadership positions. As a result, organizations

should pay close attention to their choice of selection procedures and potentially consider narcissism screening to avoid unpleasant surprises over long-term encounters (Campbell et al., 2011).

Additionally, strategies at an organizational level might be worth implementing to reduce follower uncertainty. For example, fostering a strong and safe organizational culture may be a critical aspect for organizations to consider, as organizational cultures are used as a helping mechanism by employees to reduce uncertainty through obtaining valuable information (O'Neill et al., 2016). Since narcissists have been demonstrated to be preferred as leaders in times of uncertainty (e.g., Nevicka et al., 2013), reducing followers' uncertainty would be expected to decrease followers' preference for narcissistic leaders, thus offering them less potential to arise in leadership positions in the first place.

Since the overall proportion of narcissists is increasing in society (Twenge & Campbell, 2009) and narcissists tend to emerge as leaders (Grijalva et al., 2015a; Judge et al., 2006; Nevicka et al., 2011), investigating the circumstances and conditions in which narcissists are effective and thus bring positive outcomes for their organization remains critical. It could be interesting, for example, to investigate the personalities with which narcissists are likely to work most effectively with. A study found that narcissism strongly correlates with some of the Big Five personality traits, such as positively with extroversion and negatively with agreeableness (Grijalva & Newman, 2015). Here the following question arises: What effects do the characteristics of followers (e.g., introversion vs. extroversion), when combined with narcissistic leaders, have on organizational outcome variables such as perceived leadership effectiveness?

Additionally, as supervisors today are likely to possess at least partially narcissistic traits, studies should consider investigating the coping strategies that followers employ in response to narcissistic leader behaviors. Hochwarter and Thompson (2012) proposed that followers could be trained to maintain a sense of personal control (also referred to as

enactment behavior) over available resources to minimize, for example, frustration and reductions in perceived job performance.

Conclusion

Narcissistic personalities are increasing in society, which – based on the knowledge available – can have positive outcomes, but more often negative outcomes, for organizations and society as a whole. Due to the increasing proportion of narcissists in society and leadership positions, this study aimed to investigate a circumstance, namely times in which followers experience uncertainty, in which narcissists may actually be seen as effective. As life is currently shaped by constant change and uncertainty, this study considered the possibility that narcissists might offer beneficial leadership during these times. Even though this study's main hypotheses were not supported, research should not stop here but rather draw upon the present findings. In an exploratory analysis, this study found that narcissistic leaders are perceived as less effective when followers feel more uncertain due to the lower trust they have in their leaders. Noteworthy, people seem to act in a paradox: they initially tend to prefer leaders who are ultimately perceived as a less effective choice. This observation was already made by J.K. Rowling, who stated – seemingly correctly – that “[h]umans have a knack for choosing precisely the things that are worst for them.” Thus, future research should either focus on finding circumstances in which narcissists are in fact effective or on finding strategies for coping with people's tendency to pick the less effective option.

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