TITLE: Depleting Pathways of Self-Sacrificial and Laissez-Faire Leadership: The Roles of Leader Gender and Perceived Organizational Support

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Depleting pathways of Self-Sacrificial and Laissez-Faire Leadership: The Roles of Leader Gender and Perceived Organizational Support

Recent findings suggest that certain leadership behaviors may be depleting for both leaders and employees, or beneficial for employees but detrimental for leaders. However, factors that raise burnout risks for leaders when acting in a certain way have received less attention. Two potentially relevant factors are leaders’ gender and their perceptions of organizational support (POS). Thus, in this paper we examine the potentially gendered associations between leader burnout and two contrasting leadership styles: laissez-faire and self-sacrificial. We also explore the potential modulation of these associations by leaders’ POS. Using structural equation modeling, we analyze self-reported data collected at two time points (6 months apart) from a panel sample of 767 leaders. The results show that both laissez-faire leadership and self-sacrificial leadership are associated with leaders’ burnout, and a laissez-faire style particularly raises the risks for female leaders. Moreover, high POS exacerbates the association between laissez-faire leadership and burnout for female leaders, but not male leaders. We discuss both theoretical and practical implications of these findings, hoping to raise awareness among scholars and organizations of possible approaches to prevent or mitigate leader burnout.

Keywords: laissez-faire leadership, self-sacrificial leadership, burnout, gender, organizational support
Abundant literature has linked leadership behaviors to employee wellbeing and performance (Montano et al., 2017). However, the link between leadership behaviors and leaders’ own wellbeing has received less attention (Kaluza et al., 2020). Beyond the necessity to clarify the potential downside of certain leadership styles for leaders’ wellbeing, it is also crucial to find out more about for whom these behaviors may be less beneficial. Filling this knowledge gap can help reduce the risk of burnout more effectively by directing more precise preventive measures and support to those in need (Kaluza et al., 2020).

Previous studies have suggested that two contrasting leadership styles (laissez-faire and self-sacrificial) are potentially depleting for leaders (Arnold et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2020). Laissez-faire leadership refers to abdication from the designated leader role (Skogstad et al., 2014) and the key characteristic of self-sacrificial leadership is sacrificing time and energy to promote others’ welfare (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999). Thus, both withdrawal from social interaction (with consequent loss of access to associated resources) and exertion of efforts for the benefit of others may raise burnout risks for leaders (Arnold et al., 2015; Lanaj et al., 2021). Moreover, there may be leader gender-dependent differences in the prevalence and/or effects of these leadership styles (Eagly et al., 2003; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Hence, in this study we focus on the potential influence of leaders’ gender on associations between their burnout and both laissez-faire and self-sacrificial leadership.

Researchers who have examined leadership with a gender perspective have mainly focused on distinguishing between behaviors that are apparently associated with either male or female leaders (e.g., Arnold, & Loughlin, 2010). According to role congruity theory, gender roles encompass generalized beliefs not only regarding what men and women are and do, but also what they should be and do (Eagly & Karau, 2002). These beliefs include an association between male gender and agentic behaviors (e.g., acting independently), and another between female gender and communal behaviors (e.g., acting in a nurturing manner).
For example, laissez-faire leadership could be regarded as a stereotypical agentic strategy for male leaders (Vinkenburg et al., 2011), and self-sacrificial leadership more in line with our communal expectations of female leader behaviors (Arnold & Loughlin, 2010). The degree (if any) that leaders’ gender influences associations between leadership behaviors and burnout have received little attention in both leader wellbeing and gender research literature. However, it has been suggested that leaders who act non-stereotypically (e.g., men acting self-sacrificially and women in a laissez-faire manner), may be at greater risk for strain through violation of gendered norm expectations (Akinola et al., 2018).

It has also been proposed that perceived organizational support (POS, the perceived degree that a subject’s organization is willing to make sacrifices to help if needed) may modulate the impact of leaders’ gender roles on outcomes (Thompson et al., 2020). POS is often highlighted as a measure to counter or buffer against burnout (Kurtessis et al., 2017). However, high POS is also reportedly associated with experiences of obligation to reciprocate by striving to match the organization’s support (Jolly et al., 2021). From a gender role perspective, it has been suggested that POS may have different effects on male and female leaders. For example, designated roles stipulate that women should be more accommodating than men. Hence, female leaders may feel a greater obligation to return efforts (with associated strain), rather than experience such support as a buffering resource (Thompson et al., 2020).

Accordingly, this study has three main aims. The first is to examine the associations of laissez-faire and self-sacrificial leadership with leaders’ burnout to assess the replicability of previously reported findings when both leadership styles are included in the same analysis. The second is to assess the dependence (if any) of associations between these leadership styles and leaders’ burnout on their gender. The third is to determine if (and if so how) POS interacts with the associations, for male and female leaders, respectively.
Our overall goal is to contribute to the literature on leader wellbeing and gender by illuminating the associations between the two leadership styles and burnout, as well as potentially gendered differences in the associations. In doing so, we move beyond previous studies in both leader wellbeing research (e.g., Kaluza et al., 2020), and leader gender research (e.g., Hoyt & Murphy, 2016), to assess the possibility that leaders’ gender may influence risks for depletion when acting in certain ways. We also contribute to the broader social exchange literature by examining the implicit assumption that POS is equally important for male and female leaders, regardless of their leadership style. Hence, we advance the discussion on potential moderating effects of leaders’ gender on the influence of contextual factors on leadership processes associated with leader burnout.

**Theory and Hypotheses**

**Leadership Behaviors and Leader Burnout**

Solely viewing leaders as influencers of others’ work environment may lead to the neglect of important processes and factors. Recent findings suggest that some leadership behaviors may be depleting for both leaders and associated employees (Arnold et al., 2017; Kaluza et al., 2020). Additionally, some leadership behaviors that could be beneficial for employees’ wellbeing may also have detrimental effects on the leaders’ wellbeing (Chen et al., 2020). Here, as already mentioned, we focus on two contrasting leadership styles, laissez-faire and self-sacrificial, which have been previously associated with leader burnout and can be regarded as being substantially aligned with expectations for male and female leader behaviors, respectively.

Laissez-faire leadership is characterized by avoidance and withdrawal (e.g., from making decisions and being present when needed; Skogstad et al., 2014). It is strongly associated with adverse employee performance and wellbeing outcomes (Lundmark et al.,
Acting in a laissez-faire manner is also reportedly associated with leaders’ own burnout according to previous studies, both directly (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2010; Zwingmann et al., 2016), and as a significant element of passive leadership patterns (i.e., latent profiles; Arnold et al., 2017). Moreover, it has been indirectly related to higher burnout scores through genuine emotion, i.e., as an emotional regulation strategy (Arnold et al., 2015).

Conversely, self-sacrificing leaders strongly promote employee engagement and commitment through devotion of time and effort to facilitating and securing employees’ wellbeing and effectiveness (e.g., van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). They are often willing to sacrifice themselves for their employees (De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2004), as self-sacrificial leadership involves postponement of satisfaction of one’s own interests for the sake of others (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999). To date, most research on self-sacrificial leadership has focused on these behaviors’ positive outcomes for employees and organizations (e.g., Arnold & Loughlin, 2010; Chen et al., 2020). However, from a leader perspective, acting self-sacrificially has also been shown to increase chances of leader depletion (Chen et al., 2020; Lanaj et al., 2021). Thus, based on these previous studies, we propose the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Leaders’ laissez-faire leadership is positively related to their self-rated burnout.

Hypothesis 2: Leaders’ self-sacrificial leadership is positively related to their self-rated burnout.

Depleting Pathways to Burnout From a Gender Role Congruity Perspective

Gender roles are shared views about women’s and men’s attributes (Eagly & Karau, 2002), with associated collective beliefs regarding appropriate sex-dependent behavioral
propensities. They are internalized through socialization, so behaving consistently with these norms is in line with others' and one's own expectations regarding what men and women are and do, what they should be, and what they should do (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Gender stereotypes are powerful, and acting in accordance with expectations associated with them is often beneficial when seeking others’ approval (Heilman, 2012). As people have internalized these norms, violating expectations may also evoke negative feelings in those who act non-stereotypically (Rudman & Glick, 2001).

According to role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), agentic behaviors are largely associated with male gender, and communal behaviors with female gender. Agentic behaviors or characteristics involve, for example, being assertive, dominant and confident, independent, and self-sufficient, whereas communal behaviors or characteristics involve, for example, being helpful, sympathetic, nurturing, and interpersonally sensitive (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Thus, both employees and leaders consider agentic behavior by male leaders and communal behavior by female leaders as congruent with the standards for their gender (Heilman, 2012). Although gender differences seem to have decreased somewhat in recent decades in many countries, studies on differences between male and female leaders show that the expectations they encounter still differ (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).

Acting in a laissez-faire manner involves abandoning social exchange through, for example, not being present or avoiding interactions (Skogstad et al., 2014). As well as being viewed as a poor leadership style, regardless of the leader’s gender, we argue that such behaviors may be considered more agentic than communal, because engaging in them places leaders in an independent solitaire position. Laissez-faire leadership also inhibits possibilities for acting communally, and thus meeting stereotypical expectations for female leadership. Several studies have shown that male leaders are expected, and perceived, to display such behaviors more often than female leaders (Eagly et al., 2003; Vinkenburg et al., 2011).
Conversely, self-sacrificial leadership behaviors can be seen as essentially communal because they involve putting others before oneself, and trying to ensure that others’ needs are met, even if it may lead to postponement or abolition of satisfaction of the leader’s own needs. Hence, female leaders are acting role-congruently when engaging in self-sacrificial leadership behaviors (Arnold & Loughlin, 2010).

Because of the potential risk of penalization for role violation, acting incongruently is associated with negative effects, such as anxiety or guilt, for both men and women (Akinola et al., 2018). Hence, female leaders should theoretically experience more strain than male leaders when acting in a laissez-faire manner, while male leaders acting self-sacrificially can be expected to experience more strain than female leaders when engaging in communal behaviors. For example, both male and female leaders acting non-gender stereotypically may fear or experience employees’ and senior managers’ negative judgements (Stempel & Rigotti, 2018). In addition, regardless of others’ reactions, leaders who act gender-incongruently may also experience stress because they have internalized these gender norms (Eagly & Karau, 2002). To our knowledge, no previous studies have examined if these two leadership styles’ relations to burnout differ between male and female leaders, despite calls for such research (Arnold & Loughlin, 2010). However, the theoretical arguments outlined above suggest that there may be gendered variations, in accordance with the following two hypotheses.

Hypothesis 3: Female leaders are more likely than male leaders to experience burnout from acting in a laissez-faire manner.

Hypothesis 4: Male leaders are more likely than female leaders to experience burnout from acting self-sacrificially.

Moderating Effects of Perceived Organizational Support for Male and Female Leaders
Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to perceptions of the degree to which organizations value individuals' contributions and care about their wellbeing (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Thus, POS influences individuals’ willingness to engage in both in-role and extra-role performance, due to its effects on perceived trade-offs between costs of contributions (e.g., in terms of efforts and loyalty) and expected benefits or social assets, such as being noticed and rewarded (Thompson et al., 2020). Besides direct relations with performance and wellbeing outcomes, POS may have a moderating effect in strain-stress relations (Jolly et al., 2021). Consequently, increasing support in the workplace can counteract exposure to stressors and enhance wellbeing (Kurtessis et al., 2017).

However, POS may also evoke obligation-driven reciprocal responses from those who have received support (Jolly et al., 2021), which some may perceive as a burden (Thompson et al., 2020). Thus, for some individuals POS may increase depletion of wellbeing, rather than buffer against it (Jolly et al., 2021). Consequently, previous research on the buffering effect of POS has shown mixed results, including lack of a moderating effect or a moderating effect in an unpredicted direction (Jolly et al., 2021). Such mixed results highlight needs to examine when, and for whom, POS constitutes an effective buffer.

The presented consideration of gender congruity theory suggests that POS may buffer the relation between leaders’ laissez-faire leadership and burnout by, for example, providing both male and female leaders with confidence and reassurance that they are not left alone. On the other hand, as laissez-faire leadership behaviors involve detachment from social relationships, POS may not effectively counteract a detrimental association between female or male leaders’ laissez-faire leadership and burnout. Leaders with high levels of POS may instead perceive an increased misfit between their own lack of supportive actions and their organizations’ supportive actions (Thompson et al., 2020). Thus, acting in a laissez-faire
manner may withhold from them possibilities to repay their organizations for provided support by fulfilling leader role expectations, which may add to stress and hence burnout.

From a gender role perspective, it could also be argued that laissez-faire leadership behaviors conflict less with role expectations for male leaders than for female leaders (Vinkenburg et al., 2011). As gender roles stipulate that women should be more caring than men, female leaders may also feel more pressure to provide reciprocal care for their organizations and associated employees (Heilman, 2012; Thompson et al., 2020). Thus, inability to do so (because of social detachment) may increase stress more among female leaders than among male leaders. We have found no previous studies on the subject, so it is unclear if POS moderates, and if so in what direction, the suggested associations between laissez-faire leadership and leader burnout. It is also unclear whether the supposed moderating relation differs between male and female leaders. Thus, as this is the first study (to our knowledge) to examine the effects of POS as a modulator of the laissez-faire leadership–leader burnout relation, instead of hypothesizing, we pose the following research question:

Research question 1: Does POS buffer (weaken) or exacerbate (strengthen) the relation between male and female leaders’ respective levels of laissez-faire leadership and burnout levels?

Similarly, it is unclear whether high levels of POS buffer the relation between male and female leaders’ self-sacrificial leadership and burnout equally or differently. High POS may potentially relieve stress of male and/or female leaders. Alternatively, it may increase their feelings of obligation to continue acting self-sacrificially, to repay their organizations for the provided support. Thus, it may hinder self-sacrificing leaders from finding other paths of action rather than constituting an accessible, burnout-buffering social resource. Alternatively, it could be argued that female leaders have fewer alternatives to acting self-sacrificially (i.e., communally) than male leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). For example, for female leaders,
receiving positive appraisals and support may be seen as conditional upon acting communally, in accordance with their gender role. Conversely, it may be more difficult for male leaders acting self-sacrificially to use available social resources (e.g., POS) when acting non-prototypically, thereby increasing their burnout risks. Thus, as suggested for laissez-faire leadership behaviors, rather than buffering against burnout, high POS levels may add to the strain when male and/or female leaders act self-sacrificially. As this is also the first study (to our knowledge) to examine POS as a moderator of the self-sacrificial leadership–leader burnout relation, instead of hypothesizing, we pose the following question:

Research question 2: Does POS buffer (weaken) or exacerbate (strengthen) the relation between male and female leaders’ respective levels of self-sacrificial leadership and burnout levels?

For a summary of our hypothesized relations and research question, see Figure 1.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

**Method**

**Participants and Procedure**

With the help of statisticians of Statistics Sweden (the national agency for official statistics), a random sample of 5,000 leaders (of 223,469 persons listed at the time as holding a leader position) was drawn from the Swedish occupational register. The register is an annually updated record of occupations held by all employees in Sweden managed by the agency. The 5,000 sampled leaders received a paper questionnaire via mail in April 2019 (T1). We received 1,331 responses, yielding an overall response rate of 27%. In October 2019 (6 months later, T2), a second paper questionnaire was distributed via mail to the 1,331 leaders who responded at T1. In total, 767 leaders responded to the second questionnaire, and
constituted the study’s panel sample, with a follow-up response rate of 58%. For characteristics of the samples at both T1 and T2, see Table 1.

A cover letter accompanying the questionnaires stressed the voluntary nature of participation was stressed, and informed consent was obtained for both the data collection and publication of any findings based on the data. All respondents were assigned an identification code to assure anonymity in the data files. The participants received no reimbursement for answering the surveys. They received no reimbursement for participation, and ethical approval for this study was granted by the Regional Board of Ethics based in Umeå [grant ref. 2018/454-31].

The propensity to answer was marginally higher for female leaders than male leaders, as well as for those born in Sweden and/or working in public sector organizations. It was also marginally positively associated with leaders’ age and education level. There were no significant differences between respondents at T1 and T2 in terms of any of the included characteristics. Hence, we found no indications of any systematic dropout. For clarity, significance throughout the paper refers to statistical significance (recognizing that a relationship that is not significant at a population level can be extremely significant for affected individuals).

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Measures

Self-Sacrifice

Participating leaders’ self-rated self-sacrificial leadership was measured using five items from the leader self-sacrifice scale (De Cremer & Van Knippenberg, 2004), for example, “I always help my employees in times of trouble, even if it is at costs to me.”
Respondents provided answers on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (often, if not always).

**Laissez-Faire**

Leaders’ self-rated laissez-faire leadership was measured using the four-item scale from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire 5X-short (Bass & Avolio, 1995). This is the most frequently used instrument for evaluating laissez-faire leadership, its reliability and validity have been tested across multiple settings and nations, and it has been used in previous comparisons of male and female leaders’ leadership (e.g., Eagly et al., 2003). An illustrative item is: “I avoid getting involved when important issues arise.” Respondents provided answers on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (often, if not always).

**Burnout**

Leaders’ self-rated burnout was assessed using the four-item burnout scale of the Copsoq II questionnaire (Pejtersen et al., 2010), which is one of the most widely used instruments for evaluating psychosocial risks at work. It has been translated into more than 25 languages, and validated in several settings and nations, including Sweden (Berthelsen et al., 2016). An illustrative item is: “How often have you felt worn out?” Respondents provided answers using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (all the time).

**Gender**

Statistics Sweden provided data on participating leaders’ registered gender, coded as 1= man and 2 = woman.

**Perceived Organizational Support**

The participating leaders rated their POS using the eight-item scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986), which has been translated into numerous languages, shown to have
good internal consistency, and associated with a multitude of outcomes world-wide, e.g., by Kurtessis et al. (2017). An illustrative item is: “Help is available from my organization when I have a problem.” Respondents provided answers on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

**Control Variables**

We constructed models to test Hypotheses 1 and 2 with age (years), education level (1 = primary school, 2 = high school, and 3 = university/college), and gender (1= male, 2 = female) as control variables. We also constructed models with grouping based on the leaders’ gender to test the other hypotheses (3 and 4) and address the research questions. Hence only age and education level were controlled for in these models. Previous studies have shown that all three included variables (age, education level and gender) may be related both to leadership behaviors (Barbuto et al., 2007) and burnout symptoms (Ahola et al., 2006). Therefore, we recognized the importance of accounting for their effects when assessing both self-reported leadership behaviors and burnout.

**Statistical Analysis**

We used Mplus version 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017) and the robust full information maximum likelihood estimator (MLR) to estimate structural equation models (SEMs). MLR was used to account for potential non-normality (Enders, 2010; Rhemtulla et al., 2012), and the small amount of item-level missing data (< 1.4%), which we assumed were missing at random. We applied a threshold of $p < .05$ for significant differences in the analyses. Based on our hypotheses, we conducted our analysis in four sequential steps.

First, we estimated measurement models using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA; Little, 2013) for all participating leaders, and subsequently for male and female leaders separately. Model fit was assessed using the indices provided in Mplus: comparative fit index
(CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), standardized root mean residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Applying traditional cut-off criteria, we regarded CFI and TLI values exceeding .90, as well as SRMR and RMSEA values exceeding .08, as indicating acceptable fit. We also applied strict criteria (CFI and TLI > .95; SRMR < .08 and RMSEA < .06) as indicating good fit (Kline, 2015).

Including two leadership constructs as independent variables in the same model may increase chances of biased results due to construct redundancy between the two measures (Banks et al., 2018). We addressed this possibility using the recommended approach for testing discriminant validity by examining the confidence interval (CI 95 %) of the correlation between laissez-faire and self-sacrificial leadership in the CFA, regarding values < 0.80 as indicative that such bias was not problematic (Rönkkö & Chou, 2022). To ensure that the assessment of the structure and meaning of the constructs was sufficiently similar across the two groups (male and female leaders), we also tested for measurement invariance (Putnick & Bornstein, 2016). For this, we tested the configural (factor), metric (factor loading) and scalar (item intercepts) equivalence between the groups. Following recommendations of Chen (2007) for evaluating measurement invariance, a decrease equal to or greater than .01 in CFI/TLI (ΔCFI/TLI), an increase equal to or greater than .015 in RMSEA (ΔRMSEA), and/or .03 (.01 for scalar) in SRMR (ΔSRMR) was deemed to indicate nonequivalence.

Second, to test Hypotheses 1 and 2, we estimated a structural model based on the measurement model including all leaders. In this model, leaders’ self-rated burnout was regressed against leaders’ self-rated self-sacrifice and laissez-faire behaviors. The control variables (age, education level, and gender) predicted all latent variables (Figure 1). To reduce risks for biases in predictions, laissez-faire and self-sacrificial leadership were allowed to co-vary with each other, as were the three control variables.
Third, to test Hypotheses 3 and 4, we estimated a multigroup SEM with gender as a grouping (rather than control) variable and with scalar invariance constraints in place. Differences between male and female leaders were evaluated using the significance of the relations between the two leadership styles and burnout for the two groups. We also assessed differences in the magnitude of the regression coefficients for male and female leaders by dividing estimates of differences with the corresponding standard errors (\(D\beta/SE\)) and associated \(p\) values.

Fourth, to examine the moderating effect of POS, thereby addressing research questions 1 and 2, we estimated measurement models and tested for measurement invariance between male and female leaders, with the addition of POS in the models. Latent variable interactions were estimated using the lambda-mu-sigma (LMS) method (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2019). Similarly to the approach for assessing differences in the direct relations between the two leadership styles and burnout, we evaluated differences in the moderating effects of POS between male and female leaders using the significance of the interaction for them. We also assessed differences in the magnitude of the interaction terms for male and female leaders, by dividing estimates of the differences with corresponding standard errors (\(D\beta/SE\)) and associated \(p\) values.

Results

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for latent variables, bivariate correlations, and omega (\(\omega\)) scale reliability estimates. Bivariate correlations were generally in the expected direction, with both leadership styles positively related (and POS negatively related) to burnout. Omega reliability estimates of the scales ranged from 0.71 to 0.87.

[Insert Table 2 about here]
Table 3 presents fit indices of the measurement models for the total sample and for male and female leaders separately, the models used to evaluate measurement invariance, and the structural models. All models showed a good fit with the data. Similarly, the CI CFA test for discriminant validity (using 0.80 as an upper limit cut-off), suggests that the laissez-faire and self-sacrificial leadership constructs clearly diverge from each other ($r = .03, 95\% CI [-0.063, 0.120]$). The test for measurement invariance between male and female leaders did not indicate reductions in model fit with increasing constraints. Hence, scalar measurement invariance between male and female leaders was supported.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

The main effect structural model including all leaders (Figure 2a) indicated that both laissez-faire leadership at T1 and self-sacrificial leadership at T1 were positively associated with burnout at T2 ($\beta = .16, SE = .05 p < .001$, and $\beta = .09, SE = .04, p = .032$), supporting Hypotheses 1 and 2. Comparison of estimates for male and female leaders (Figure 2b), suggested that the association between laissez-faire leadership at T1 and burnout at T2 was significant for females ($\beta = .22, SE = .06, p < .001$), but not males ($\beta = .11, SE = .07, p < .126$). However, the difference in magnitude of the regression coefficients was not significant ($\Delta \beta = -.12, SE = .12, p < .311$). Thus, although our analyses indicated that the relation was only significant for female leaders and there was a gender-dependent difference in magnitude of the relation, this difference is not significant. Hence, Hypothesis 3 is not fully supported.

Furthermore, the relation between self-sacrificial leadership at T1 and burnout at T2 was not significant for male or female leaders ($\beta = .12, SE = .06, p < .055$, and $\beta = .07, SE = .06, p < .257$, respectively). The relation between self-sacrificial leadership and burnout was more pronounced for male leaders than for both female leaders and the total sample ($\beta = .09$), but the difference in magnitude of the regression coefficients between male and female
leaders was not significant ($\Delta \beta = .07, SE = .11, p < .816$). Thus, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

For the tested moderation models (i.e., including POS), Table 4 presents the model fit indices of the measurement models for the total sample and for male and female leaders separately, as well as the models used to evaluate measurement invariance. All these models also showed a good fit with the data. The test for measurement invariance between male and female leaders did not show reductions in model fit with increasing constraints. Thus, scalar measurement invariance between male and female leaders was again supported.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

POS positively moderated the relation between female leaders’ laissez-fair leadership at T1 and burnout at T2 ($\beta = .10, SE = .03, p = .001$, Figures 2c and 3), but it had no significant impact on this relation for male leaders ($\beta = .12, SE = .09, p = .181$)\textsuperscript{2} The difference in magnitude of the regression coefficients for male and female leaders was not significant ($\Delta \beta = .02, SE = .11, p < .822$). POS also did not moderate the relation between male or female leaders’ self-sacrificial leadership and burnout ($\beta = .06, SE = .08, p = .491$ for male leaders, and $\beta = .08, SE = .05, p = .087$ for female leaders). As for the previous analyses, the difference in magnitude of the regression coefficients for male and female leaders was not statistically significant ($\Delta \beta = -.026, SE = .11, p < .816$). Thus, to answer research question 1, POS exacerbated the association between female leaders’ laissez-faire leadership at T1 and burnout at T2, but for male leaders POS had neither a buffering nor exacerbating effect. The difference in magnitude of interactions for male and female leaders was not significant. To answer research question 2, POS did not buffer or exacerbate the association between self-
sacrificial leadership at T1 and burnout at T2 for male or female leaders, and the difference in magnitude of interactions for male and female leaders was not significant.

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

Discussion

There is sparse literature on potential links between leadership behaviors and deterioration in leaders’ wellbeing (Zwingmann et al., 2016), and a clear need for greater understanding of the factors involved. In efforts to enhance such understanding we have focused on associations between laissez-faire and self-sacrificial leadership with burnout. We have also moved beyond previous research by assessing the gendered effects of laissez-faire and self-sacrificial leadership on leaders’ depletion, and the potential buffering or exacerbating effects of POS on the leadership style-burnout relation for male and female leaders.

We first tested if both laissez-faire and self-sacrificial leadership are pathways to leader burnout (Hypotheses 1 and 2). Our results confirm these hypotheses, thereby replicating previous findings (e.g., Zwingmann et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2020), and confirming that these leadership styles are connected to leader burnout. Based on role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), we hypothesized that female leaders would primarily be at risk for burnout from laissez-faire leadership behaviors (Hypothesis 3), and male leaders primarily at risk for burnout from acting self-sacrificially (Hypothesis 4). Our results did not fully support these claims. We found a significant relation between burnout and laissez-faire leadership of female leaders ($\beta = .22, p < .001$), but not male leaders ($\beta = .11, p < .126$). However, despite a substantial difference in magnitude of these relations ($\Delta \beta = -.12$), the difference was not significant. Hypothesis 4 was rejected as the relation between self-sacrificial leadership and burnout was non-significant for both males and females. However,
the strengths of these relations ($\beta = .12, p < .055$ for male leaders, and $\beta = .07, p < .257$ for female leaders) indicate that male leaders may have contributed more substantially to the significant relation found between self-sacrificial leadership and burnout for the total sample. Similarly to the findings regarding laissez-faire leadership, the difference in magnitude of the relations was not significant ($\Delta \beta = .07$).

In our examination of the buffering or exacerbating effects of POS on the relation between the two examined leadership styles and burnout for male and female leaders (addressing research questions 1 and 2) we only found one significant interaction effect. This indicates that POS exacerbated the relation between female leaders’ laissez-faire leadership and burnout. Thus, POS did not have a buffering effect on any of the relations (i.e., reduce the strength of the leadership-burnout relation), and for female leaders it increased rather than reduced the strength of the relation. This indicates that for female leaders, high levels of POS may increase the risk for depletion when acting non-stereotypically in a laissez-faire manner. However, no such increased risk was detected for male leaders who act non-stereotypically (i.e., self-sacrificially). Moreover, in all cases differences between male and female leaders in terms of the magnitude of the interaction were not significant.

The results are somewhat ambiguous. On one hand, laissez-faire leadership seems to be more of a risk for female leaders as it was only significantly related to burnout for them. Similarly, POS seemed to exacerbate this relation for female leaders but not male leaders. On the other hand, we found no significant differences in strength of the relations between male and female leaders, partly due to high within-group variation for male leaders, indicating that the strength of these relations is less uniform for them. Nevertheless, we found clear indications of an association between laissez-faire leadership and burnout that was exacerbated by POS for the female leaders, but not for the male leaders.
Theoretical Implications

In addition to confirming previous findings that laissez-faire and self-sacrificial leadership are related to leader burnout (Chen et al., 2020; Zwingmann et al., 2016), our results indicate that leaders’ gender may play a role. Studies of differences between male and female leaders have mainly focused on how they and others perceive their leadership (e.g., Arnold & Loughlin, 2010), and much less on relations between leaders’ perceptions of their own actions and leader outcomes. Although inconclusive, our results indicate that female leaders may be penalized more strongly than male leaders for adopting a laissez-faire style. In line with role congruity theory, being in a leader role and engaging in agentic leadership behaviors may be stressful for female leaders, because such behaviors are less accepted for them (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Thus, adopting a depleting and poor (laissez-faire) leadership style and simultaneously violating gender role expectations may increase the costs for female leaders, reducing their possibilities to access resources and increasing their burnout risks.

Contrary to our Hypothesis 4, the relation between male leaders’ self-sacrificial leadership and burnout was not significant, although in the hypothesized direction. These results indicate that acting gender non-stereotypically may be less problematic for men, particularly perhaps when they have a leader role. From a leadership theory perspective, communal behaviors can be seen as desirable elements of rudimentary leadership skills for both male and female leaders (Arnold & Loughlin, 2010). Thus, male leaders may have more space for acting in various ways without losing access to valuable resources, and therefore paying less costs than female leaders.

Finally, our results also add to the literature on the moderating influence of POS on the relation between leadership and leaders’ wellbeing. For female leaders, especially, POS had an exacerbating effect on the association between laissez-faire leadership and burnout.
We have argued that organizations providing high degrees of support may result in leaders feeling high obligations to repay the organizations and may experience dissonance if they cannot reciprocate. At least for female leaders acting in a laissez-faire manner, experiencing a need to repay organizations by matching their supportive efforts, or perceiving a mismatch between POS and their own actions, could exacerbate their depletion. Such conclusions are also in line with indications that women may perceive a stronger obligation than men to repay their organizations as their gender role is more aligned with the notion that cooperation is essential for strong wellbeing and performance (Thompson et al., 2020).

We found no indication of an interactive influence of POS that decreased or increased the strength of the association between self-sacrificial leadership and burnout for either male or female leaders. This could have been at least partly due to the weakness (non-significance) of the relation between self-sacrificial leadership and burnout for both groups masking possible moderating effects. However, high levels of POS may be less significant for male leaders acting self-sacrificially, as they are less inclined to utilize such support to find solutions to problems and feel less obliged to repay organizations for their support (Taylor et al., 2000). For female leaders acting self-sacrificially, high levels of POS could also arguably have a zero-sum effect. This is because female leaders may be more inclined than male leaders to seek support from others to address problems, but the positive effects of receiving such support may be countered by them feeling stronger obligation to repay their organizations with greater self-sacrificial efforts.

In line with recent suggestions (Jolly et al., 2021), we propose that POS generally should not be considered a resource, as the effectiveness of any support offered (or perceived) may be demand-, individual- and context-dependent. Our results also indicate that research on leader burnout could benefit from including a gender perspective.

**Practical Implications**
Although more research is needed to draw firm conclusions, our results indicate several measures that organizations should consider to avoid leader burnout. First, leaders should have greater awareness of the risks associated with acting in both a laissez-faire manner and self-sacrificially. Thus, for example, awareness of the links between leadership behaviors and leader wellbeing could be raised in leadership development programs. Leaders could also be given training in detection of depletion indicators and appropriate actions to take to prevent or mitigating burnout. Possible strategies to address leadership-related strain could also be included in discussions between leaders across organizational level, for example, in regular follow-ups of leader performance.

Similarly, Human resources (HR) representatives and other organizational staff (e.g., occupational health officers) with missions to support wellbeing in their organizations should be aware of risks associated with laissez-faire and self-sacrificial leadership. They could also be involved in assessments of leadership and leaders’ wellbeing, which could be used to formulate strategies to support leaders by reducing stressors and/or identifying less depleting practices. As laissez-faire leadership is detrimental for all involved in the process (Klasmeier et al., 2022; Zwingmann et al., 2016), we recommend that organizations especially consider measures to detect, prevent, and reduce its occurrence.

Furthermore, to protect or enhance leaders’ wellbeing, female leaders withdrawing from interaction should receive special attention because laissez-faire leadership seems to be a potential path to depletion for them. As our results also show that POS exacerbates the relation between female leaders’ laissez-faire behaviors and burnout, it is essential for organizations to develop and provide alternative resources. As a start, organizations could strive to find out more about why female leaders become passive instead of taking a more active leadership role. For example, Akinola et al. (2018) have shown that female leaders may find delegation a more difficult leadership task than male leaders because of guilt associated
with perceptions that such actions are agentic. Hence, they may either entirely avoid
dlegation (i.e., act self-sacrificially) or paradoxically delegate poorly, and/or with less
follow-up interactions (Akinola et al., 2018). Thus, effective support for female leaders may
instead involve “ungendering” perceived agentic tasks associated with the leader role through
active reframing. Organizations could also offer specific guidance and support to enhance
female leaders’ performance of ‘male-gendered’ tasks, rather than merely offering them
general support.

**Limitations and Future Research**

Our study contributes to the understanding of associations between specific
leadership styles, burnout and two modulating factors (leader gender and POS) under what
circumstances, but it has several limitations that offer new avenues for future research. First,
the study is based solely on self-report data from leaders. Although we separated
measurement of leadership and burnout in time, as recommended (Podsakoff et al., 2003), the
results may have been affected by common method bias as well as social desirability bias
(Krumpal, 2013). An indication of this is that, contrary to findings from studies based on
employee ratings (e.g., Vinkenburg et al., 2011), male leaders who participated in our study
reportedly engaged in somewhat less laissez-faire leadership than the female leaders.

However, the focus of our study was not to determine levels of a certain leadership
but to explore gendered relations of these behaviors with burnout. Thus, male leaders
answering in a more socially desirable fashion would have reduced the strength of the
relations and gender differences. In future studies, multilevel designs with employee ratings
of leadership behaviors could be used to reduce bias risks in this type of self-report study.
However, in studies of the associations between leadership and leader outcomes, using
employee ratings raises other problems, such as possible variation in leadership ratings related
to leaders’ gender (Ayman et al., 2009). Therefore, it has been suggested that using leaders’
self-reports may be more appropriate than employee ratings for testing the types of hypotheses addressed here (Arnold et al., 2017).

Second, we cannot draw robust conclusions about directions of relations from our study, due to the non-experimental design, even if the presented models suggest directions (i.e., leadership affecting leader burnout). As we did not account for baseline levels of burnout it is not possible to draw confident conclusions about whether leadership is related to changes in burnout either. However, the use of cross-lagged panel designs or autoregressors (especially in two-wave designs) to control for baseline values of outcomes has been criticized in recent literature. Use of such models is very likely to indicate spurious cross-lagged effects when they do not exist and (more frequently) underestimate them when they do, so they may be less appropriate for determining casual relationships (Lucas, 2023).

Moreover, our main objective was to illuminate effects of leaders’ gender on the relations between their burnout and the focal leadership styles (laissez-faire and self-sacrificial). In future research, use of stronger (e.g., experimental) designs and additional measurement points to probe longitudinal and reciprocal effects could advance our knowledge of these relations. In such studies, the timeframes of the depleting effects of addressed behaviors, and potential mediators, should also be considered. Theoretically, the links between leadership and leader outcomes are likely to be reciprocal (Kaluza et al., 2020), so examining either or both directions could be valid. Thus, robust causal conclusions cannot be drawn from our study, due to the research design and nature of the data acquired, but we believe that it may provide robust foundations for further exploration and make valuable contributions to understanding of the focal relations.

Third, we only studied POS as a possible modulator of the relations between male and female leaders’ behaviors and burnout. According to stress theory, social resources comprise an important type of resources that people can gain or regain, but there are others
(Hobfoll, 1989), and both the accessibility and effectiveness of some resources for buffering stress may depend on the setting and broader contextual factors. A potentially important factor here is that Sweden is one of the top five countries in the world in terms of gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2023). This could at least partly explain the lack of confirmation of Hypotheses 3 and 4 (as gender roles may be less distinct in our focal population than in many other populations).

In the future, investigations of the possible moderating effects of contextual factors (such as culture, or gender distributions in the workplace or specific industry) could help clarify what matters for both male and female leaders. Thus, they could assist the prevention or mitigation of leader burnout. Lastly, although beyond the scope of this study, the detected correlations between control variables and the leadership and burnout suggest that leaders’ age may influence both leadership behaviors and burnout. Thus, we recommend the inclusion of leaders’ age and appropriate theories, e.g., lifespan theory (Liu et al., 2021), in future research to elucidate why age influences these phenomena.

**Conclusions**

We took a gender perspective in researching the relations between two contrasting leadership styles, laissez-faire and self-sacrificial leadership, and burnout. The results of our study show that leader gender may play a role for these relations. Particularly female leaders seem to be at risk for burnout when acting laissez-faire. In addition, for female leaders, organizational support may exacerbate the relation between laissez-faire leadership and burnout. Therefore, we recommend that both researchers and organizations consider gender when addressing relations between leadership behaviors and leaders’ wellbeing. We also recommend more careful and specific formulation and implementation of supportive measures to counteract depletion for both male and female leaders. We hope this study provides foundations for elucidation of groups that are particularly at risk and factors that
influence relations between specific leadership behaviors and leaders’ wellbeing, thereby advancing our knowledge of ways to prevent or mitigate leader burnout.
References


Table 1. Sample characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>T1 (N = 1331)</th>
<th>T2 (N = 767)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>48% female</td>
<td>48% female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>46.7 years</td>
<td>48.9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure in current position</td>
<td>6.2 years</td>
<td>7.2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure as manager</td>
<td>10.0 years</td>
<td>11.1 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector (private vs. public)</td>
<td>64% private</td>
<td>60% private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>46% middle or senior manager</td>
<td>47% middle or senior manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership training</td>
<td>85% yes</td>
<td>87% yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of education</td>
<td>70% university degree</td>
<td>72% university degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Span of control*</td>
<td>23 employees</td>
<td>24 employees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Self-reported characteristics, except for gender, age, and sector which was drawn from the Swedish occupational register. Respondent at T2 also constitutes the panel sample of the study. *Span of control = Number of direct reporting employees.
Table 2. Latent means, standard deviations, latent variable correlations, and scale reliabilities (omega)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>LF T1</th>
<th>SS T1</th>
<th>POS T1</th>
<th>Bout T2</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire leadership T1</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>⍺ = .71</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-sacrificial leadership T1</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>⍺ = .81</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived organizational support T1</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.09*</td>
<td>⍺ = .87</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnout T2</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.19***</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>-.31***</td>
<td>⍺ = .86</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.09*</td>
<td>-.10**</td>
<td>.15***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>48.93</td>
<td>10.33</td>
<td>-.10*</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.29***</td>
<td>-.10**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.07*</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.21***</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 767$, ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$. $M =$ mean, $SD =$ standard deviation. Reliabilities (omega) are presented on the diagonal. LF = Laissez-faire leadership, SS = Self-sacrificial leadership, POS = Perceived organizational support, Bout = Burnout. Gender: 1 = Male, 2 = Female.
Table 3. CFA, Invariance and Structural models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>90 % CI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CFA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All leaders</td>
<td>285.367</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.046 -.059</td>
<td>.937</td>
<td>.918</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male leaders</td>
<td>208.845</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.052 -.073</td>
<td>.924</td>
<td>.902</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female leaders</td>
<td>177.437</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>.045 -.067</td>
<td>.932</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Invariance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Configural</td>
<td>276.026</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.048 -.066</td>
<td>.947</td>
<td>.933</td>
<td>.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metric</td>
<td>285.261</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.046 -.063</td>
<td>.947</td>
<td>.938</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scalar</td>
<td>310.498</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.047 -.063</td>
<td>.942</td>
<td>.937</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All leaders</td>
<td>285.367</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.046 -.059</td>
<td>.936</td>
<td>.919</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scalar grouping</td>
<td>419.198</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.050 -.065</td>
<td>.923</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N=767$ (Male leaders = 398, Female leaders = 369). Laissez-faire leadership, Self-Sacrificial leadership and Burnout was included in the analyses. Gender, Age, and Education level were included in CFA model for all leaders and in the structural model for all leaders (as control variables regressed on both DV and IVs). Age and Education level were included in CFA for female and male leaders, and in the structural scalar grouping model. Control variables were allowed to co-vary in all structural models. Laissez-faire leadership, Self-Sacrificial leadership, and Burnout was included in the invariance analyses. *Using Mplus command: Model is CONFIGURAL METRIC SCALAR.
Table 4. CFA and Invariance models for the moderation analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>90 % Cl</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CFA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All leaders</td>
<td>655.465</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>[.044 .053]</td>
<td>.926</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male leaders</td>
<td>480.932</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>[.049 .062]</td>
<td>.912</td>
<td>.897</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female leaders</td>
<td>422.726</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>[.043 .058]</td>
<td>.924</td>
<td>.911</td>
<td>.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Invariance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Configural</td>
<td>717.809</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>[.045 .055]</td>
<td>.935</td>
<td>0.926</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metric</td>
<td>731.585</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>[.043 .054]</td>
<td>.936</td>
<td>0.930</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scalar</td>
<td>772.147</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>[.044 .054]</td>
<td>.932</td>
<td>0.928</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N= 767 (Male leaders = 398, Female leaders = 369). Laissez-faire leadership, Self-Sacrificial leadership, Perceived organizational support, and Burnout was included in the analyses. Gender, Age, and Education level were included in CFA model for all leaders and in the structural moderation model for all leaders (as control variables regressed on both DV and IVs). Age and Education level were included in CFA for female and male leaders, and in the structural scalar grouping model. Control variables were allowed to co-vary in all structural models. Laissez-faire leadership, Self-Sacrificial leadership, and Burnout was included in the invariance analyses. No model fit data is presented for the structural model as none is provided when using latent class analysis in Mplus. *Using Mplus command: Model is CONFIGURAL METRIC SCALAR.
Figure 1
Theoretical model with displayed Hypotheses (H) and Research questions (RQ)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender*</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Note. Control variables above the dotted line. ♂ = Male leaders, ♀ = Female leaders respectively. *= Gender is only used as control when testing H1 and H2 as it constitutes the grouping variable for testing H3, H4, RQ1 and RQ2. In H3 and H4 the relations are expected to differ in magnitude between male and female leaders, which is indicated by Δ.
Figure 2

Summary of the structural equation modeling results

(a) Main effect model (testing H1 and H2)

(b) Main effect multigroup structural equational model (testing H3 and H4)

(c) Multigroup structural equation moderation model (testing RQ1 and RQ2)

Note. Some paths (e.g., control variables) were omitted for presentation parsimony. Control variables above the dotted line. All leaders = 767, Male leaders (♂) = 398, Female leaders (♀) = 369. Statistically significant relations are displayed in black, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. In model 2b and 2c, none of the tests for difference in magnitude of the regression coefficients (i.e., between male and female leaders) were statistically significant.
Figure 3
Simple Slopes Illustrating the Latent Variable Interaction Between Laissez-Faire Leadership and Perceived Organizational Support in Female Leaders