In the hands of a controlling leader? Implications for employee well-being from a gender perspective

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Abstract

Leaders engaging in controlling leadership behaviours (CLB) has been connected to followers perceiving their basic needs thwarted. However, little research has been made in the organizational field to understand the implications of controlling leadership behaviours for employee well-being. The present study aimed to clarify this relation through understanding controlling leadership behaviours’ influence on employee health, as well as investigate the impact of both leader and employee gender on employees’ perception of controlling leadership behaviours. A sample of 818 employees, representing the Swedish labour market, completed a questionnaire including measures of perceived controlling leadership behaviours and well-being in terms of self-rated health, burnout, self-rated job satisfaction and vigour. Results confirmed the notion that leaders’ controlling leadership behaviours, like other negative leadership behaviours, is associated with lowered well-being. Results also indicate that male employees perceive male leaders as more controlling than female employees do, while female leaders are perceived as equally controlling by both male and female employees. The gender of leaders exhibiting controlling leadership behaviours seem to have no association with employee well-being. The implications of gender on controlling leadership behaviours is still a question unanswered. Future studies should therefore continue exploring both leader and employee gender influence on CLB.

Keywords: Controlling leadership behaviours, Self-determination Theory, Role Congruity Theory, Expectation State Theory, well-being, self-rated health, burnout, self-rated job satisfaction, vigour, gender

Abstrakt

Ledare som använder sig av kontrollerande ledarskapsbeteenden har visat sig underminera basala psykologiska behov hos sina följare. Trots detta saknas det forskning på hur chefers kontrollerande ledarskapsbeteenden påverkar anställda. Denna studie syftade till att klargöra hur kontrollerande ledarskapsbeteenden påverkar anställdas hälsa, och undersöka hur såväl anställdas kön och chefens kön påverkar de anställdas uppfattning av chefens kontrollerande ledarskapsbeteenden. Ett randomiserat urval på 818 arbetstagare svarade på frågor om uppfattat kontrollerande ledarskapsbeteenden hos sin chef och självskattad hälsa i termen av självskattad hälsa, utbrändhet, arbetstillfredsställelse och arbetsenergi. Resultaten bekräftade att kontrollerande ledarskapsbeteenden hos chefer är relaterat till sämre hälsa och arbetsprestation hos de anställda, samt ökar viljan att sluta. Manliga anställda uppfattar manliga chefer som mer kontrollerande jämfört med sina kvinnliga kollegor, medan kvinnliga chefer uppfattas lika kontrollerande av både manliga som kvinnliga anställda. Den kontrollerande chefens könstillhörighet var inte associerat med anställdas mående. Hur könsaspekter påverkar kontrollerande ledarskapsbeteenden är fortfarande inte klarlagt. Framtida studier bör därför fortsätta undersöka hur både chefer och den anställdas kön influerar CLB.

Nyckelord: Kontrollerande ledarskapsbeteenden, Self-determination Theory, Role Congruity Theory, Expectation State Theory, självskattad hälsa, utbrändhet, tillfredsställelse, arbetsenergi, kön, könsroller
In the hands of a controlling leader? Implications for employee well-being from a gender perspective

Due to its importance for employee well-being and organizational expenses, leaderships’ darker sides has recently been put in the spotlight of organizational psychology research (Gillet, Fouquereau, Forest, Brunault & Colombat, 2012; Schyns & Schilling 2013; Stempel & Rigotti, 2019; Tepper, 2000; Tepper, 2007). Derived from Self-determination Theory (SDT), controlling leadership behaviours (CLB) describes how leadership behaviours such as inducing guilt and manipulating subordinates (Moreau & Mageau, 2012) affect employees’ motivation and well-being (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017). CLB is known to lower profitability, performance and work engagement (Deci et. al., 2017) as well as lower need satisfaction and well-being among employees (Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Witte, Soenens, & Lens, 2010). Earlier research has shown that leadership behaviours are interpreted differently by different employees. Employees’ perceptions and attitudes towards leader behaviours are affected both by the characteristics of the employee-group as well as by the leader’s characteristics, e.g. gender (e.g., Eagly, Karau & Mischel, 2002; Parks-Stamm, Heilman & Hearns, 2008; Schieman & McMullen, 2008; Stempel & Rigotti, 2019).

While some research has shown that female leaders using authoritarian leadership cause lower job performance among employees, compared with male leaders doing the same (Wang, Chiang, Tsai, Lin & Cheng, 2013) no research has yet been made to understand how leader and employee gender impact the perception of CLB. There is also indications that the relationship between negative leadership behaviours and subordinate health differs depending on the gender of the supervisor, suggesting that leader gender might be a moderator for well-being outcomes (Stempel & Rigotti, 2019). Our understanding of how employee gender influence employees perception of their leaders using specifically CLB is however still limited. Further investigation on how gendered perceptions of leaders affects the relationship between CLB and well-being is therefore needed.

The aim of this master thesis was to investigate negative CLB implications for employee well-being. A gender perspective was added, partly to investigate employee gendered perceptions of CLB, and partly to study leader gender influence on employees’ well-being.

We intend to extend previous research on how gendered perceptions of leaders shape the relationship between CLB and employee well-being. By shifting the focus to CLB from other more commonly used harmful leadership styles (e.g. destructive, abusive and authoritarian), we provide new insights on the interplay between CLB, employee well-being and gender. We use four different indicators of well-being (self-rated health, burnout, self-rated job satisfaction and vigour) as our dependent variables. Thus, unlike variables such as performance or effectiveness which is more commonly investigated (Tepper, 2007), our outcomes are not suppose to be entangled with the actual tasks or achievements of the leader, instead we focus on employee well-being. Finally it is important to theoretically clarify and understand the effects of CLB, and to clarify the empirical harmfulness with CLB specifically to learn more about the effects of harmful leadership behaviours.

What is controlling leadership behaviours?

To grasp the concept of CLB and its’ motivational consequences, the theoretical framework of SDT needs to be understood. SDT aims to explain human motivation, suggesting that well-being is influenced by the type of motivation experienced in connection to an activity
A key assumption within SDT is that human motivation consists of three innate psychological needs: the need for autonomy, competence and relatedness respectively. In relation to the field of organizational psychology, the need for autonomy refers to employees need to feel unforced and autonomous while engaging in activities, as this results in an experience of inner motivation of these actions (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The need for competence is defined as the degree employees perceive their possibility to achieve goals, as well as the extent they experience opportunities to share competence and knowledge (Ryan & Deci 2001). The need for relatedness describes employees’ sense of belongingness and connectedness to others in the workplace (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to the theory, there is no gender differences in how motivation emerge (Guérin et. al., 2012; Ryan & Deci 2001; Vlachopoulos, 2008). There are various work-related factors potentially important to satisfy the basic needs described in SDT, one of which is leadership (Hetland, Hetland, Andreassen, Pallesen & Notelaers 2011).

Leaders who provide a rationale for tasks, promote employee autonomy rather than control and are attentive to employee well-being is said to be autonomy-supportive (Gillet et al., 2012). Autonomy-support has been connected to fulfillment of the three basic needs, resulting in employees experiencing autonomous (i.e., intrinsic) motivation, engaging in activities with a sense of willingness, ownership and autonomy (Deci, Olafsen and Ryan 2017). In an organizational context, autonomy support from supervisors causes employees to report work satisfaction and better psychological health (Moreau & Mageau, 2012). Employees working for leaders exhibiting CLB perceive their basic needs thwarted (Gillet et al., 2012). CLB is defined as subordinates perception of leaders tendencies to give orders, induce guilt, using threats and manipulating others by offering rewards (Moreau & Mageau, 2012). In controlling contexts employees could be used as a mean to attain a certain outcome for the leader, and might therefore be pressured into behaving in certain ways in order to achieve this. Their motivation is hence externally regulated (i.e. extrinsic) through CLB (Deci et al., 2017), and leadership behaviours could therefore be seen as the origin of controlled motivation among employees. The impact of leadership behaviours on employee need satisfaction is well established in sports and educational contexts. Less is however known about CLB in an organizational context (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, & Thogersen-Ntoumani, 2009; Gillet et al., 2012).

The existing literature regarding CLB in an organizational context has shown that leaders who engage in controlling behaviours can be linked to a lowered sense of competence among employees (Hetland, Skogstad, Hetland & Mikkelsen, 2011). In other contexts, such as sport, rewards used as means of control has been shown to impair intrinsic motivation and promote controlled motivation (Bartholomew et al. 2009; Vansteenkiste & Deci, 2003). Athletes experienced less intrinsic motivation when coaches used a potential scholarship to motivate them rather than merely inform them (Amorose & Horn, 2000). Parental research illuminates how psychologically controlling behaviours by parents such as inducing guilt and pressure for change of behaviour, was linked to depression and delinquency among adolescents as they perceived their need for autonomy threatened (Barber, 1996). In educational research, perceived controlled teaching has also been linked to need frustration, which in turn, was negatively related to autonomous motivation as well as connected to an increased fear of failure, contingent self-worth, and challenge avoidance among students over time (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Mouratidis, Katartzi, Thogersen-Ntoumani, Vlachopoulos, 2018).

Research in various areas supports the notion that leaders should aim to fulfill the basic psychological needs as this not only predicts motivation and job-satisfaction but also employee well-being (Van Hooff & De Pater, 2019). In conclusion, this highlights the importance of investigating CLB influence on health and well-being further in the field of organizational psychology, as this is a potential source of ill-being among employees.
Controlling leadership behaviours and employee well-being

Well-being is a broad concept going beyond physical and/or psychological symptoms related to health. The definition includes measures of life experiences (e.g. self-rated health), generalized job-related experiences (e.g. job satisfaction and vigour) and more specific dimensions (e.g. satisfaction with leadership) (Danna & Griffin, 1999). Leadership has shown to be an important determinant of both employee well- and ill-being (Kuoppala, Lamminpää, Liira, & Vainio, 2008; Wilson, Dejoy, Vandenbergh, Richardson & McGrath, 2004). For example, autonomy supportive leadership is known to increase employee well-being, individual growth and job satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Kuoppala et al., 2008; Lyons & Schneider, 2009; Mullen & Kelloway, 2011; Piccolo et al., 2012; Schmidt et al., 2014; Skakon, Nielsen, Borg & Guzman, 2010; Tuckey, Bakker & Dollars, 2012; Van Dierendonck, Haynes, Borrill & Stride, 2004).

In contrast, leading through controlled motivation causes ill-being among employees (Deci et al., 2017; Hetland et al. 2011; Stempel & Rigotti, 2019). The more abusive employees perceive their leader, the greater emotional exhaustion they report (Stempel & Rigotti, 2019; Tepper, 2000). Thus, poor employee-leader relationship is an antecedent of both stress and burnout (Wu & Hu, 2009; Yagil, 2006). Controlled motivation has also been associated with poor self-rated health independent from e.g. work-related stress (Schmidt et al., 2014) and lowered employee engagement (e.g. Breevaart, Bakker, Hetland, & Hetland, 2014; Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhave & Christian, 2015; Kirrane, Kilroy and O’Connor, 2019; Leary et al., 2013; Poon, 2011). Need frustration caused by controlled motivation has also been shown to have a negative relationship with vigour (Vander Elst, Van Den Broeck, De Witte & De Cuyper, 2012).

In summary, previous studies suggests that controlled motivation is associated with ill-being in various ways, and affects both employees and organizations in a negative manner. As CLB causes controlled motivation and need frustration we propose that CLB will reduce employee well-being in terms of self-rated health, self-rated job satisfaction, vigour and burnout.

Hypothesis 1
Controlling leadership behaviours is negatively associated with employee well-being in terms of self-rated health, self-rated job satisfaction and vigour, and positively associated with burnout.

Implications of gender

Earlier research suggests that leader and employee gender could be an important aspect to investigate closer in regard to CLB and well-being, as gender previously have been considered one of the most salient characteristics not only shaping the perceptions of leadership behaviour, but also affecting the impact of leadership behaviour (Eagly et al., 2002; Eagly, 2007; Mohr & Wolfram, 2008; Parks-Stamm et al., 2008; Stempel & Rigotti, 2019; Ye et al., 2016).

The concept of gender described in this study refers to the biological sex of the respondent, and the perceived biological sex of the leader. Biological sex corresponds with expectations of attributes one need to fulfill in order to be perceived as man or woman by one’s surrounding, understood as gender roles (Eagly et al., 2002). To understand leader gender roles and gendered expectations for leaders, Role Congruity Theory (RCT) and Expectation State Theory (EST) were used as theoretical frameworks.
Leadership research studying gender differences (e.g. Eagly et al., 2002; Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly, 2007; Mohr & Wolfram, 2008; Parks-Stamm et al., 2008; Stempel & Rigotti, 2019; Ye et al., 2016) has shown that female leaders are attributed less leadership characteristics when compared with male leaders (Eagly et al., 2002). RCT explains this through the degree of incongruence between female gender roles and leadership roles. Two types of biases are proposed towards female leaders, explaining why employees’ both evaluate their potential for leadership and their leadership behaviours as less favourably in comparison with evaluations of male leaders. Firstly, when compared to men, women are regarded as having less potential for leadership due to leadership ability being seen as a stereotypically male attribute. Secondly, actual leadership behaviours exhibited by female leaders are rated as less positive compared to male leaders exhibiting the same behaviours, as these behaviours are traditionally seen as less desirable in women. Women are traditionally attributed communal characteristics such as being affectionate, helpful, supportive and gentle. Characteristics attributed to men are in general more agentic, e.g. ambitious, dominant, independent and prone to act as a leader (Eagly et al., 2002). Stereotypes regarding leaders generally coincide more with masculine stereotypes and therefore, people are more prone to credit men with leadership characteristics (Eagly, 2007). In contrast, female leaders are perceived as incongruent with the expected gender role for a leader, generating unfavorable perception and prejudice from others, as well as causal attributions on their success (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra 2006; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Heilman et al., 2004; Lyness & Heilman, 2006), in line with RCT. Hence, female leaders face greater obstacles than male leaders (Lyness & Heilman, 2006), thus they are more disliked and are found to be less desirable as bosses (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). This is especially prominent when female leaders use agentic leadership behaviours traditionally assigned male leaders (i.e. assertion, control, competitiveness, and striving for achievement approx. controlling leadership behaviours), (Eagly et al., 2002).

In conclusion, female leaders are perceived as using CLB to a higher degree when compared to male leaders, even if they behave equally controlling. Prior studies have shown that this pattern is especially salient when male employees rate female leaders. In line with this, we propose that this will also be true in regards to CLB. Thus, male employees will to evaluate female leaders as using more CLB compared with their male colleagues.

Hypothesis 2
Employee and leader gender are associated with employees perception of controlling leadership behaviours such that male employees will evaluate female leaders as more controlling compared with female employees, while male leaders will be evaluated as equally controlling regardless of employee gender.

Employee’s perception of their leader’s role congruity has been shown to affect a variety of aspects of employees’ work life. A stronger negative relationship have been found for female leaders exhibiting authoritarian leadership behaviours (i.e. asserting strong discipline and authority; approx. controlling leadership behaviours) and creativity and altruism towards colleagues respectively, compared to male leaders. Benevolent leadership (i.e. caring about subordinates well-being; approx. autonomy-supportive leadership behaviours) seem on the other hand to enhance performance among employees working for male leaders exhibiting these behaviours compared to performance among employees’ working for female leaders behaving the same way (Wang, et al., 2013). The influence of leaders’ role congruity on creativity, altruism towards colleagues and performance suggests that there might be other aspects of employees’ work life that could be affected by leader gender as well.
Male leaders seem to have stronger influence over employees well-being compared with female leaders (Stempel & Rigotti, 2019). EST explain this through beliefs about status being associated with a variety of social roles in society. Beliefs about leaders are coloured by institutionalized social hierarchy, where men are given higher status in groups compared with women, and therefore more often seen as leaders (Ridgeway, 2001; 2011). It has been suggested that this is due to male leaders still being ascribed higher influence and legitimacy compared to female leaders, who employees’ judge harshly for violating gender expectations (Stempel & Rigotti, 2019). The leader role is therefore more available for the one who is associated with power, and who is more readily ascribed as the leader - in this reality - the men (Kulich, Trojanowski, Ryan, Haslam & Renneboog, 2011). In line with EST, these social hierarchies and gender roles cause implicit assumptions about performance for both employees and leaders.

Devaluation of leaders are especially common when the leader is female and the subordinates are male. Male leaders are rated equally by employees, regardless of employee gender (Ayman, Korabik & Morris, 2009). Female employees value communal leader behaviours to a higher degree compared to male employees, while both male and female employees appreciate agentic leadership behaviours (Collins, Burros & Meyer, 2014). This points to men and women emphasising different leadership behaviours, but also suggest that employees have different expectations of leaders depending on leader gender. This goes hand in hand with EST, suggesting that there is a social hierarchy between leaders in addition to the organizational status gap between employees and leaders (Ridgeway 2001; 2011).

In summary, the status of the leader seem influence employees’ ratings of perceived CLB along with leaders’ role congruence. As prior research points out, employee perception of leaders’ role congruence also seems to affect leadership style impact on employee work environment. As mentioned above, male leaders seems to influence employees well-being more strongly, yet, the question of how gender coloured pattern affects employee well-being remains. To answer this we propose, in line with prior research, that male leaders exhibiting CLB affects employee well-being more negatively in both employee gender groups, when compared to female leaders.

Hypothesis 3
Leader gender moderates the relationship between controlling leadership behaviours and employee well-being in terms of self-rated health, burnout, self-rated job satisfaction and vigour, such that the relationship is stronger for male than for female leaders regardless of employee gender.

Method

Sample and procedure

The context of this study is the Swedish labour market and it’s different sections during 2012, with a sample of employed Swedes during the same time period. Registered Swedish residents aged 20-65 years old were included in the sample. Self-employed Swedish residents in the same age-span were excluded, as they did not have a direct leader. Two thousand participants were randomly selected and a questionnaire was distributed to the participants’ home address by mail, provided with a postage-paid, pre-addressed envelope, so that they could mail their surveys back to Statistics Sweden.
Before sending out the survey an information letter was sent by post to the randomly selected participants, which described the study and its aim. The participants was also informed that this study was a collaboration between Ledarskapscentrum, Umeå University and Statistics Sweden. Researchers at Umeå University designed the survey and the data collection was administered by Statistics Sweden. The information letter was followed up by the survey.

By answering the survey, the participants approved that the answers were to be omitted to Ledarskapscentrum in a de-identified data file. Participation was of voluntary nature, anonymous and the data was handled according the Swedish Data Protection Act as well as the public access to information- and secrecy-act.

The first survey dispatch was made in September 2014. Subsequently, two reminders was sent out to the participants who had not responded to the survey. The first reminder was a combined thank you- and reminder-card was sent after two weeks. The second reminder was sent out a month after the first survey dispatch, and included another copy of the survey. The data collection was concluded in November 2014. Sweden Statistics carried out controls to ensure that all answers were valid and that the correct person answered the survey. The latter control was conducted through comparing the age and gender reported by the participant with the information in the database over registered residents in Sweden.

The project was ethically approved by the regional ethics board in Umeå (Dnr: 2013/46731Ö). In the information letter sent to the participants before the study contained information regarding the nature of the project and the parties to be involved in the data processing. No personal data about the participants were available when the statistical analyses in this study were performed.

In the end, ninety two participants who either were self-employed in year 2014 or had retired between 2012-2014 were excluded when the data was processed. This left 818 responders in total, yielding a response rate of 41 per cent. The sample in our study included 57 % (n=467) women and 43 % (n=351) men. The average age for women was 46 years, and 45 years for men. Mean tenure with leader was 4 years. The sample was representative of the population, the entire labour market, with respect to gender, age and tenure.

Measures

Controlling leadership behaviours. CLB was measured with a translated version of Perceived Autonomy Support Scale for employees (PASS-E), originally developed by Moreau and Mageu (2012). PASS-E is a validated instrument and measuring controlling leadership according to four operationalised theoretical dimensions - induce guilt (ig), using threats (ut), manipulating others (m) and give orders (go) (Moreau & Mageu, 2012). These dimensions was measured by twelve items in the questionnaire, each dimension corresponded with three questions each. Respondents were asked to rate in what degree their leader engages in controlling behaviours on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (not correct at all) to 7 (totally agree). For the subdimensions the internal consistency was as follows: induce guilt (α = .90), using threats (α = .88), manipulating others (α = .90) and giving orders (α = .88). The internal consistency of the twelve items together was α = 0.93.

Self-rated health. Self-rated health was measured with Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ) (Pejtersen, Kristensen, Borg & Bjorner, 2010). The single item used for this study is well validated and a much used question to measure a person's general health condition (Aguilar-Palacio, Gil-Lacruz, Sánchez-Recio & Rabanaque, 2018), the scale contains the item: “How would you rate your health in general?”. The response scale ranged from 1 (“Bad”) to 5 (“Extraordinary good”).
**Burnout.** Two different scales from Copenhagen Burnout Inventory was used for this study. The scales measures burnout through, high quantitative demands, emotional demands and relational factors (Kristensen, Borritz, Villadsen, & Christensen, 2005), resulting in physical and psychological tiredness and/or exhaustion. The degree of burnout was measured by seven items. Respondents were asked to rate their physical and psychological exhaustion on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (to a very low extent) to 5 (to a very high extent) as well as their physical condition in more detail in relation to their work and spare time from 1 (Never, or almost never) to 5 (Always). The internal consistency of the seven items together was $\alpha = 0.88$.

**Job satisfaction.** A subscale from Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (Pejtersen, Kristensen, Borg, & Bjorner, 2010) was used in order to measure job satisfaction. The scale included four items, measuring perceived job satisfaction in connection to the respondents degree of satisfaction with work outlook, work environment, how their knowledge was used and work in general. The response scale range from 1 (Very unsatisfied) to 5 (Not relevant). The internal consistency of the four items together was $\alpha = 0.80$.

**Vigour.** The scale to measure vigour was derived from Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). UWES is measuring work engagement as a construct through three dimensions, one of which is vigour (De Bruin, G., & Henn, C. 2013). Vigour refers to high levels of energy, resilience, the willingness to invest effort, not being easily fatigued and persistence in the face of difficulties (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006). The scale used contains three items, e.g. “At my work, I feel bursting with energy”. The response scale ranged from 1 (Never) to 7 (Every day). The internal consistency of the three items together was $\alpha = 0.90$.

**Statistical analysis**

Following compilation of the internal consistency regarding each of the subscales, bivariate correlation analysis was made between all the individual dimensions of CLB, CLB total, the well-being variables, and the background variables age, employee gender, leader gender and tenure with leader. Subsequently, moderated regressions was performed in order to establish the predictive power of CLB total on work engagement, job satisfaction, vigour, burnout and self-rated health, in accordance to Hypothesis 1. The individual dimensions of CLB was excluded in favour for CLB total in order to avoid suppressor effects. Suppressor effects cause variables to compete against one another to explain variance in the regression, possibly causing interpretation difficulties (McFatter, 1979; Tzelgov & Henik, 1991), and might appear when variables are highly correlated, as is the case with the individual CLB dimensions. The analysis was made in two steps; age, gender and tenure with leader were included in step one, while CLB total was added in step two.

T-tests were then performed in order to establish employee gender influence on CLB-ratings according to Hypothesis 2. To determine the leader gender influence, the t-tests were performed with male and female leaders isolated respectively. To test the moderating effect of leader gender on CLB and well-being variables in accordance to Hypothesis 3, a moderated hierarchical regression analysis with interaction was performed. The interaction and main effect models was performed through a three step process. The leader gender variable was recoded into a dummy variable. Thereafter, the CLB variable total was mean centered in accordance with Aiken and West (1991). Lastly, the interaction variable was created through multiplying the new leader gender variable with the new CLB total variable. The analysis was made in three steps; the centered CLB variable was added in the first step, next the new leader
gender variable was added in the second step. In the last step, the interaction variable was included. All statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 24.

Results

The means, standard deviations and correlations between all variables are presented in Table 1. As expected, CLB was negatively associated with employee well-being in terms of self-rated health, job satisfaction and vigour, and positively related with burnout. CLB (i.e. manipulating and order giving) and employee gender was negatively associated with each other. No negative association was found between CLB and leader gender.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1.</th>
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<th>11.</th>
<th>12.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Leader gender</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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<td>2. Employee gender</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>.42*</td>
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<td>3. Age</td>
<td>45.31</td>
<td>11.93</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<td>4. Tenure with leader</td>
<td>38.17</td>
<td>44.82</td>
<td>-1.2**</td>
<td>-0.8*</td>
<td>.14**</td>
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<td>5. CLB total</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-1.0**</td>
<td>-1.5**</td>
<td>.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. CLB ig</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-1.2**</td>
<td>.10**</td>
<td>.86**</td>
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<td>7. CLB ut</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.10**</td>
<td>.61**</td>
<td>.58**</td>
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<td>8. CLB m</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-0.9**</td>
<td>-0.8*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.64**</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
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<td>9. CLB go</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-1.0**</td>
<td>-1.3**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.85**</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
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<td>10. Job satisfaction</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.34**</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>-.30**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Vigour</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Burn out</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.13**</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>-.57**</td>
<td>-.51**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Self rated health</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.09*</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.20**</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
<td>-.13**</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>-.49**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01. Tenure with leader in months, CLB total = Controlling leadership behaviours total scale, CLB ig = Controlling leadership behaviours inducing guilt-index, CLB ut = Controlling leadership behaviours using threats-index, CLB m = Controlling leadership behaviours manipulation-index, CLB go = Controlling leadership behaviours giving orders-index.

Next a hierarchical regressions were conducted to test Hypothesis 1. In support of Hypothesis 1, CLB significantly predicted negative ratings of employee well-being and positive ratings of burnout (see Table 2). For example, CLB predicted 18% of the variance in burnout ($\beta = .39, p = 0.01$) supporting Hypothesis 1.
Table 2
Results of hierarchical regression analyses (N = 769 - 776)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self-rated health</th>
<th>Burnout</th>
<th>Vigour</th>
<th>Job satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>−.09*</td>
<td>−.13**</td>
<td>.11**</td>
<td>.10**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee gender</td>
<td>−.06</td>
<td>.10**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure with leader</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>−.10**</td>
<td>−.11**</td>
<td>.10**</td>
<td>.08*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee gender</td>
<td>−.06</td>
<td>.11**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>−.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure with leader</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>−.06*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLB total</td>
<td>−.23**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>−.22**</td>
<td>−.31**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p < .05; ** p < .01. Tenure with leader in months, CLB total = Controlling leadership behaviours total scale

Group comparison was then performed to test Hypothesis 2. The hypothesis proposed that employee and leader gender are associated with employees’ perception of CLB such that male employees will evaluate female leaders as more controlling compared with female employees, while male leaders will be evaluated as equally controlling regardless of employee gender. An examination of the group comparison revealed a significant difference for male employees and CLB-ratings for male leaders, for two of the CLB-subscases: manipulating others (m) and giving orders (go), which is contrary to what was expected (see Table 3). For example men (M = 1.34, SD = 0.94) reported significantly higher levels of perceived manipulation from their male leaders than female employees (M = 1.17, SD = .0.54), t(1) 421, p = .04. No significant difference was found for female leaders. Thus, no support was found for Hypothesis 2.
### Table 3

**Group comparison analyses** ($N = 772$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male leaders</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Female leaders</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLB total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male employees</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female employees</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td></td>
<td>281</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLB ig</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male employees</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female employees</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td></td>
<td>281</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLB ut</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male employees</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female employees</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td>281</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLB m</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male employees</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>.04*</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female employees</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td></td>
<td>281</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLB go</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male employees</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>.04*</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female employees</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>281</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * $p < .05$. CLB total = Controlling leadership behaviours total scale, CLB ig = Controlling leadership behaviours inducing guilt-index, CLB ut = Controlling leadership behaviours using threats-index, CLB m = Controlling leadership behaviours manipulation-index, CLB go = Controlling leadership behaviours giving orders-index.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that leader gender would moderate the relationship between controlling leadership and well-being (in terms of self-rated health, burnout, self-rated job satisfaction and vigour), such that the relationship is stronger for male than for female leaders regardless of employee gender. Moderated regression analyses were conducted to test the relationship between the variables in Hypothesis 3. Table 4 reports a non-significant moderator effect for leader gender between controlling leadership and the outcomes. Male leaders did not predict stronger outcomes, as the changes in the multiple squared correlation coefficient ($\Delta R^2$) associated with leader gender and its interaction with controlling leadership were not statistically significant. Therefore, no support was found for Hypothesis 3.
Table 4

Results of moderated hierarchical regression analyses (N = 757-764)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self-rated health β</th>
<th>Burnout β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: CLB Total</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Leader gender</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3: Interaction</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δ$R^2$ at last step</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vigour β</th>
<th>Job satisfaction β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: CLB Total</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Leader gender</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3: Interaction</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δ$R^2$ at last step</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p < .05, ** p < .01, CLB total = Mean centered Controlling leadership behaviours total scale. Leader gender: men = 0, women = 1, Interaction = centered CLB total scale x Leader gender

Discussion

In this study controlling leaders were found to have a negative impact on employee well-being. Further, our findings revealed that male employees perceived male leaders as more manipulating and order giving, in comparison with females employees’ and female leaders. Leader gender were not associated with the perception of CLB and negative well-being.

In line with Hypothesis 1, we found evidence connecting CLB to employee well-being. Prior research primarily focused on controlled motivation, which on one hand is closely linked to CLB but on the other hand can be caused by other factors than leadership behaviours. Controlled motivation have been connected to need thwarting, lowered job satisfaction, self-rated health, vigour and increased emotional exhaustion (Deci et al., 2017; Gillet et al., 2012; Schmidt et al., 2014; Stempel & Rigotti, 2019; Tepper, 2000; van den Broeck et al., 2010). The co-occurrence of these consequences in CLB and controlled motivation suggests that the concepts are as closely linked as SDT stipulates (Ryan & Deci 2001; Deci et al., 2017). As recommended by Stempel and Rigotti (2019), our study examined both negative and positive indicators of well-being. The results show an interesting difference in explained variance between the two. Negative indicators of well-being, eg. burnout, had higher explained variance compared with the positive indicators such as job satisfaction and vigour. This makes sense, as negative behaviour would cause negative outcomes to a higher degree rather than buffer for positive aspects of well-being (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Our findings confirm the notion that CLB has the same negative impact on employee well-being as other negative leadership behaviours (Gillet et al., 2012; Stempel & Rigotti, 2019; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Tepper, 2000; Tepper, 2007) and can be connected to higher costs for organizations as the risk for sick leave and turnover increases (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). This actualize the importance of good leader-employee relationships, as it influences both the well-being of employees’ and the well-being of organizations.
Contrary to what was expected in Hypothesis 2, male employees perceive male leaders as more manipulating and order giving when compared to female leaders. Our results are line with Stempel and Rigotti’s (2019) findings regarding abusive supervision; The effect for male leaders were significant despite them being the minority in the sample. These results together, propose that male leaders get higher ratings, when both being the minority, and the majority - as in our sample. However, most prior research propose the opposite, suggesting that female leaders are more harshly judged while using e.g. controlling behaviours, and employees working for female leaders perceive their well-being as lowered (Ayman et al., 2009; Collins et al., 2014; Eagly et al., 2002; Moreau & Mageau, 2012; Wang et al., 2013). This inconsistency with prior research could be caused by the language used to measure CLB in PASS-E, as the questions could be interpreted as masculine encoded (Moreau & Mageau, 2012) eg. giving orders (“My supervisors/colleagues do not take the time to ask me to do something, they order me to do it”) and manipulation (“When my supervisors offer me a reward, I have the unpleasant feeling that I owe them something in return”). The PASS-E questions in this study were literally translated into Swedish, and therefore cultural aspects of leader behaviours might have been over-seen as the Swedish instrument was not validated to Swedish norms. This might cause Swedish employees’ to attribute the behaviours in question to male leaders in greater extent than to female leaders. Leader gender seem to play a part in employees’ perception of harmful leadership as male leaders are attributed more CLB than women. This corresponds with RCT, since social expectations for men allows them to behave in a more power assertive way (Eagly et al., 2002; Stempel & Rigotti, 2019). Surprisingly, female employees did not perceive male leaders as controlling as male employees did. This could however also be understood through RCT. Female employees might expect male leaders to give orders and behave manipulative, causing them to not react as much when this is done. Male employees might on the other hand react when they perceive their male leaders to behave in a more controlling manner than they would themselves, and therefore report them as more manipulative and order giving.

Inconsistent with our expectations in Hypothesis 3, no interaction was found for male leader gender as a moderator between CLB and outcomes. Employees’ seem to suffer the same health consequences by CLB regardless of leader gender. This is in contradiction to what Stempel and Rigotti (2019) found in a German context, since they reported male leaders as a moderating factor between perceived abusive supervision and increased emotional exhaustion and somatic stress. Our results indicates that leader behaviours outweighs the importance of leader gender and that other factors might explain it better, e.g. employee gender. Connecting the results on Hypotheses 2 and 3, employees who perceived their male leaders’ behaviours as harmful does not seem to experienced negative health effects in higher degree than employees working for female leaders exhibiting CLB. Looking at these findings together through RCT (Eagly et al., 2002) and EST (Ridgeway, 2001; 2011), we suggest that masculine gender roles and male leader status might be an explanation for this as well. RCT suggests that there is more room for assertive behaviours in the male gender role (Eagly et al., 2002). This in combination with the higher social status ascribed to men according to EST might cause employees to more readily downplay the significance of male leaders CLB. Employee well-being might therefore not be affected by the male leaders CLB, as they are more in line with what employees expect compared with when female leaders exhibit CLB, even though they both have negative effects on employee well-being. It is important to investigate this further, as controlling leadership seems to be more common and accepted for male leaders and overlap with stereotypical masculine behaviours (manipulative and giving order) than female coded behaviours.
Theoretical and practical implications

Outcomes earlier only investigated in connection to controlled motivation has through this study also been connected to specific leadership behaviours. The accordance between health consequences of CLB and consequences of controlled motivation shown in other studies verify the relationship between the two in organizational context. Hence, this study extended the understanding of SDT as a theoretical framework important for improving work environment and employee well-being. What’s more, the construct validity of CLB has now been tested on the Swedish labour market, strengthening the importance for well-being. This study has also been able to show that CLB implicate employee well-being the same way other negative leadership behaviours do (Gillet et al., 2012; Schyns & Schilling 2013; Stempel & Rigotti, 2019; Tepper, 2000; Tepper, 2007). This extends the understanding of leadership behaviours importance for employee well-being and organizational consequences as a whole, and highlights the importance of further research into this matter.

Contrary to what was suggested by earlier research (Stempel & Rigotti, 2019) leader gender had no implication on employee well-being. Our findings points to the fact that leader behaviours had higher importance for employee well-being than leader gender in regards of CLB. In addition to what Stempel and Rigotti (2019) found, we show that other factors such as employee gender, or the congruence between leader and employee gender, could affect the ratings of a leader rather than leader gender alone. In hand, this could depend on cultural gender differences between Sweden and Germany, as the social expectations of leaders is more coloured by masculine norms in Germany (Hofstede, Minkov & Minkov, 2010).

Event though CLB seems to be low in frequency on the Swedish labour market, it has big implications for employees subjected to it. To prevent increased ill-being among employees’ and unnecessary organizational costs caused by lowered job performance, augmented sick leave and turnover, it is crucial to identify leaders using CLB within any organization. It is crucial for organizations to clearly communicate that CLB is not welcome in the workplace. To address the issue of CLB it is also important to continuously survey perceived leader support and work environment. Additionally, organizations should offer leaders appropriate training aiming to increase their knowledge about CLB and how it affects subordinates (Gonzalez-Morales, Kernan, Becker & Eisenberger, 2016; Stempel & Rigotti, 2019). As closely related concepts such as abusive supervision and destructive leadership has been shown to be affected by eg. organizational injustice (Aryee et al., 2007; Mackey, 2017; Klaussner, 2014), it is important to ensure that leaders are not subject to this. Lastly, in this rapidly growing field it is important to keep up to speed with the latest research in order to forge interventions in line with new findings.

Limitations and future research

As neither the connection between CLB and well-being outcomes, nor the gendered aspects of CLB had been investigated in an organizational context before, this study contributed with new knowledge. Unlike other leadership research, commonly studying performance or effectiveness (Tepper, 2007), our outcomes were not entangled with the actual tasks or achievements of the leader but rather leader behaviours influence on employee well-being.

However, our study was not without limitations. One of the most prominent limitations of the study was the instrument measuring CLB (PASS-E, Moreau & Mageau, 2012) not being validated in to Swedish norm, possibly causing employees’ to report higher CLB among male leaders compared to female leaders due to its masculine coded language. This highlights the need for a culturally validated measure to examine CLB in order to fully understand it’s
gendered aspects in different cultures. The question of how gender differences influence in the perception of leadership behaviours in Sweden therefore remain unresolved. Along with this, this study only tell one side of the story as solely employees’ perception of their leader was considered. This is partly due to the way CLB is defined as employees perception of CLB prevalence (Moreau & Mageau, 2012), and partly due to the fact that employee ratings have been shown to be important for employee well-being (Perko, Kinnunen, Tolvanen & Feldt, 2016). Even so, future studies could add important knowledge through clarifying the relationship even more between employees’ perception of CLB and leaders reported use of CLB as this would increase the possibility to detect and prevent CLB. Employee gender might also be an interesting variable to investigate further to understand its effect on leader perception in connection to CLB, as well as other contextual aspects possibly influencing the incidence of CLB, such as organizational injustice (Aryee et al., 2007; Mackey, 2017; Klaussner, 2014) or leaders well-being and fulfillment of basic needs (Deci et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci; 2001). Another limitation is the cross sectional nature of this study. To fully understand the impact by CLB on well-being, longitudinal studies is crucial as they could contribute with important information on the changing or lasting effects of CLB.

When studying gender in organizational contexts it’s important to be aware of the gender distribution of the sample. In this study the incidence of male (n=423) and female leaders (n=350) was uneven, possibly affecting our statistical power. Future research with evenly distributed leader gender groups is crucial to understand gendered aspects of CLB.

Lastly, an important direction for future studies is to understand factors behind why male employees perceive their male leaders as more controlling. This knowledge would be important as destructive leadership styles has been breeding on masculinity norms for a long time. More attention should be paid on the relationship between leadership styles and gender roles, as female leaders more often are linked with positive leadership styles compared with male - but still are not perceived having the same leadership potential (Eagly et al., 2002; Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafr 2006; Heilman et al., 2004; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Lyness & Heilman, 2006; Wang et al., 2013).

**Conclusion**

This study verifies the consequences of CLB and therefore controlled motivation for employees well-being, indicating that it is important to identify leaders using CLB in organizational contexts. The results highlights the connection between CLB and well-being outcomes in Swedish labour market. Both leader and employee gender are proposed to influence the perception of CLB. No support was found for a stronger negative relationship for female leaders exhibiting CLB - but there is still research proposing the opposite. Seen from a bigger perspective, employees seem to have a divided view of who the female leader is. The picture that emerges from this study as well as previous studies points out that there is no gender neutral leadership style, which causes stereotypical perceptions about leaders. It seems to be time for employees and organizations to experience a more flexible leadership style - not born out of social norms dependent on employee or leader gender identity, as this would be fruitful for leader and employee well-being.
Reference list


