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The role of employees' OCB and leaders' hindrance stress in the emergence of self-serving leadership

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ABSTRACT

Media reports on self-serving leadership primarily focused on the negative consequences of such behavior for employees. However, much remains to be understood about the antecedents of self-serving behavior of leaders. In the present research we explore the role of employees' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in the emergence of self-serving leadership. Using one multi-source field study and three experiments, we showed that employees' OCB towards coworkers (OCBI) negatively impacted self-serving leadership. Moreover, we also examine the underlying mechanism for this relation. Results indicate that employees' OCBI mitigated leaders' hindrance stress, which mediates the relationship between OCBI and self-serving leadership. As such, our findings indicate that self-serving leaders are not necessarily inherently bad and that employees have an important role in shaping leaders' self-serving behavior.

Introduction

Even though leaders are expected to be responsible guides, various organizational scandals indicate that leaders sometimes act in a self-serving way by using the company's resources for personal gain. For example, Dennis Kozwalski of Tyco and Kenneth Lay of Enron made personal benefits at the expense of their company. In the present manuscript we will focus on such self-serving leaders, whom we define as "leaders who place their own well-being and interests above both their followers' needs and the goals of the organization" (Camps, Decoster, & Stouten, 2012, p. 49). Despite the potential harmful consequences of self-serving forms of leadership, much remains to be understood about the emergence of such leadership. One potential cause of self-serving leadership that has been largely overlooked is the influence of followers (Avolio, 2007). In this paper, we focus on followers' behaviors as an antecedent of self-serving leadership. More specifically, we propose that followers' lack of extra role behavior (i.e., low levels of organizational citizenship behaviors towards other individuals of the company (OCBI); Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983), can contribute to self-serving leader behaviors. Moreover, we also examine whether leaders' hindrance stress towards achieving their goals explains the relation between employees' OCBI and leaders' self-serving behavior.

The present research aims to contribute to the literature in four ways. First of all, little research has examined how self-serving leadership actually emerges. Furthermore, the few studies that explored the emergence of self-serving leadership focused on leader characteristics as antecedents of such self-serving behavior (e.g., a leader's self-concept, perceived power, or effective leadership beliefs; see Rus, van Knippenberg, & Wisse, 2010a,b, 2012; Wisse & Rus, 2012). In this study, we take an innovative

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approach as we explore followers' behavior as an antecedent of self-serving leadership. More specifically, we propose that followers' OCBI mitigates leaders' hindrance stress levels and their subsequent self-serving behavior.

Secondly, we add to the existing research on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) as we explore potential *consequences* of employees' organizational citizenship behavior. That is, the majority of research has explored why and when employees engage in voluntary helping behaviors, leaving the consequences of OCB rather unexplored (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009). We hope to address this gap by exploring how and why followers' OCB relates to self-serving leadership.

Thirdly, we examine the underlying mechanism through which follower OCB relates to self-serving leadership. We propose that leaders' hindrance stress towards achieving their goals explains the relationship between OCB and self-serving leadership. As such, in contrast of viewing self-serving leaders as inherently "bad", we propose a more context-based view where leaders' behavior is contingent on followers' OCB and leaders' own hindrance stress levels.

Finally, whereas most studies have relied on non-experimental designs in order to test mediation, we used an "experimental-causal-chain approach" to examine the causal ordering among the variables (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005). Recent research indeed showed that non-experimental studies – where the mediator is measured – might be misleading because making causal claims with such a design is unwarranted (e.g., Stone-Romero & Rosopa, 2004, 2008). Moreover, Stone-Romero and Rosopa (2004, p. 283) argued that "the only way that one can make credible inferences about mediation is to perform two or more experiments". Because we aimed to make causal inferences, we followed the guidelines of Stone-Romero and Rosopa (2008) to test for the mediation of hindrance stress.

Self-serving leadership

Research showed that leaders sometimes tend to act self-servingly at the expense of others (De Cremer, 2003; De Cremer & Van Dijk, 2005; Samuelson & Allison, 1994; Stouten, De Cremer, & Van Dijk, 2005). For example, leaders with a narcissistic personality type such as Kenneth Lay of Enron are, among other characteristics, known for their self-serving behaviors (Kramer, 2003). Such leaders are driven by an egoistical need for power and admiration without any concern for their followers (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Another example of self-serving leadership is leaders who misuse the departmental budget or public funds for personal gain (Wade, O'Reilly, & Pollock, 2006). Here, we will focus on such self-serving leaders, who place their own well-being and interests above both their followers' needs and the goals of the organization (see also Camps et al., 2012). That is, self-serving leaders are focused at enhancing their *own* well-being and this behavior is not necessarily directed towards (or harmful for) their followers. For example, a leader who appropriates corporate funds not only for personal use, but also for his/her team — even though (s)he may be "stealing" from the organization — may benefit his/her team at the expense of the organization, by spending more budget on the team's company travel and unnecessary training junkets, where considerable partying often occurs (Conlon, Porter, & Parks, 2004).

Previous research on negative leadership behavior has mainly focused on consequences for employees and the entire organization. These studies pointed out that negative leader behavior is linked to an array of harmful consequences. For example, such leaders have been shown to have a severe impact on employee outcomes such as affective commitment and job satisfaction (e.g., Aquino & Thau, 2009; Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007; Burris, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008). Previous research also revealed that negative types of leadership are related to lower levels of followers' OCB (e.g., Harris, Harvey, & Kacmar, 2011; Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). However, despite the increased media attention and the potential harmful consequences of self-serving forms of leadership, little is known about the antecedents of such leadership.

Followers' OCB and self-serving leadership

A factor that has been overlooked in the emergence of self-serving leadership is followership. More generally, the impact of followers on their leaders has largely been ignored in the organizational literature (e.g., Avolio, 2007; Howell & Shamir, 2005; Kellerman, 2007). Here, we argue that followers play a crucial role in the emergence of self-serving leadership. Indeed, followers may be viewed as essential for leaders to achieve their goals or to promote their mission, as followers serve as a main source of feedback for the leader (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Rather than being separate, leadership and followership exist in a reciprocal, interdependent manner (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Yukl, 1998). Indeed, relational leadership theory argues that leader–follower relations consist of interdependent and highly connected relations (Uhl-Bien, 2006). For example, as part of such an interdependent relation, it has been argued that followers can advance their personal goals by influencing their leader, for example by rational persuasion (Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Drawing on this research detailing the importance of followers' influence, we suggest that leaders do not only influence their followers, but that leaders' behavior also is *affected by* the interdependent relation with their followers.

An important aspect in this relation is what followers will do beyond their regular tasks and work hours. In organizations, such voluntary prosocial behavior or OCB is highly recognized and encouraged. Organizational citizenship behaviors are discretionary behaviors that, although not critical to the task or job, contribute to organizational functioning (Lee & Allen, 2002). For example, such behavior entails the voluntary helping of coworkers or putting in extra effort beyond the daily duties (Konovsky & Organ, 1996). Employees' OCB, such as helping coworkers after work hours, contributes significantly to an organization's success (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). We argue that followers' OCB offers an incremental value for leaders as it frees up time and reduces their work load (Meurs & Perrewe, 2011). Employees engaging in OCB indeed offer relief for leaders as they help manage critical situations in the work place.

Williams and Anderson (1991) suggested a distinction between OCBs directed towards the organization (OCBO) and those directed towards individuals (OCBI). OCBO concerns behaviors that are not directed towards specific individuals, but that are more related to sustaining high standards for attendance, punctuality, and conservation of organizational resources and time (Organ, 1997). In contrast, OCBI immediately benefits specific individuals in the organization. We focus on the interpersonally oriented forms of organizational citizenship, rather than those directed towards the organization because OCBI has previously been labeled as more leader-relevant whereas OCBO has been labeled as more organization-relevant (Aryee et al., 2007; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000).

In order to understand how employees' OCB can contribute to self-serving leader behavior we draw upon social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). This theory states that the leader–follower relation is characterized by a social exchange process in which both actors aim to balance costs and benefits (Homans, 1961). That is, according to social exchange theory, the social interaction between leader and followers creates implicit obligations to return positive or negative social interactions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Folger & Cropanzano, 2001). As such, when leaders receive valued outcomes, they are expected to reciprocate these outcomes with sustained loyalty (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Leaders value good citizenship because these behaviors do not only benefit the follower's colleagues, but they also indirectly contribute to the leader and the entire organization. That is, when followers demonstrate OCB, they facilitate the leader's tasks such as supporting the team, managing conflict, delegating, and mentoring (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994). For example, when followers voluntarily help others to facilitate their tasks or goals, or when they assist each other with a heavy workload, followers contribute to organizational goals and prevent the occurrence of work related problems, which facilitates the leader in performing his/her tasks and reaching his/her goals. Because followers' OCB should elicit feelings of reciprocal obligation, when followers do not engage in OCB (e.g., by not voluntary helping their coworkers), this will signal to the leader that followers are not primarily interested in collective outcomes for the team, but that they are more concerned about their own personal outcomes. That is, followers who do not engage in OCB go against the goals and expectations of the leader who might appraise this situation as a hindrance (Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, Shorr, & Johnstone, 2001); especially because such follower behavior results in less valuable resources for the leader (Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003). Because the leader's goals are thwarted by followers' lack of OCB, this constitutes a negative exchange. Specifically, if one's goals are thwarted this has been argued to elicit increased self-serving behavior (Zitek, Jordan, Monin, & Leach, 2010). In sum, as a result of this negative social exchange and its negative appraisal in terms of a hindrance, leaders are expected to reciprocate to low levels of OCB by also putting their own agenda – hence, their own interests – first (Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007).

These predictions are also in line with research on antisocial behavior drawing on social learning theory (e.g., Bandura, 1977). This line of research pointed out that individuals who are exposed to forms of antisocial behavior are likely to behave accordingly (Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). Indeed, followers' antisocial behaviors may have an impact on the leader's behaviors (Winkler, 2009; Yukl, 1998). More specifically, followers' lack of OCB may provide a kind of normative context where putting one's own interest first is an acceptable way of getting ahead (McCabe & Treviño, 1993). As such, because such a context promotes selfish behavior, leaders are expected to engage in more self-serving behavior.

Hypothesis 1. Employees' OCBI will negatively impact leaders' self-serving leadership.

Followers' OCBI and leader's hindrance stress

Given that reduced levels of follower OCB signal an imbalance in the leader–follower relationship, we argue that leaders will perceive this as stressful and hindering. Hindrance stress can be defined as "stress associated with job demands or work circumstances that involve excessive or undesirable constraints that interfere with or hinder an individual's ability to achieve valued goals (demands that produce distress)" (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, & Boudreau, 2000, p. 67). The concept of hindrance stress has its origins in the Lazarus and Folkman's cognitive theory of stress (1984), which argues that when an individual is exposed to a potential stressor, (s)he engages in a process of cognitive appraisal in which the individual evaluates how the stressor is related to his or her well-being. Next, these cognitive appraisals lead to an individual's subsequent behavior and attitudes (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, 1987). If a stressor is perceived as threatening, it is appraised as having the potential to harm personal growth or gain, which results in a possible loss (LePine, Podsakoff, & LePine, 2005). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggest that this first cognitive step, where the stressor is appraised as a hindrance, leads to the emotional component of the stressor. Hindrance stress is characterized by negative emotions, such as fear, anxiety, and anger. Such negative emotions can thus arise when people appraise a situation as a threat or loss with regard to their goals (Lazarus, 1991).

Researchers on organizational behavior have extended the cognitive theory of stress to examine how hindrance stress is related to a broader scope of attitudes and behaviors. More specifically, they showed that hindrance stress towards achieving one's goals is negatively related to desirable outcomes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and is positively related to undesirable outcomes, such as turnover, exhaustion, and burnout (e.g., Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010; LePine et al., 2005; Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine, 2007).

Building upon the cognitive theory of stress, we propose that employees engaging in low OCB incite hindrance stress on the leader. Previous research already showed that leaders value OCBs and that they take these into account when evaluating followers' performance (Allen & Rush, 1998; Mackenzie, Podsakoff, & Fetter, 1993). That is, although OCBs are perceived as "discretionary" and not always formally rewarded by the organization, leaders' perceive OCBs as an expected and required part of followers' jobs

(Morrison, 1994). Followers demonstrating OCB make the leader's job easier as OCBs enhance the leader's productivity by freeing up his/her time (Allen & Rush, 1998). Moreover, leaders do not only value followers' OCB because it reduces the workload, but followers' OCB also signals that the interpersonal relations between followers are healthy. That is, when followers show OCB, the leader considers that the relations between coworkers are positive and benevolent, which may lower his/her stress. Indeed, OCBs reduce conflicts between followers (Podsakoff et al., 2000), which are a source of stress and frustration for the leader (Harris et al., 2011). In sum, OCBs allow the leader to "avoid falling into a pattern of 'crisis' management" (Podsakoff et al., 2000, p. 544). In contrast, if followers refrain from OCB, leaders have to take up extra tasks which hinder them in reaching objectives and goals. That is, it requires added supervision and takes up more of the leader's time that (s)he otherwise could spend on productive tasks (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Indeed, reduced followers' OCB is related to increased effort and longer working hours for the leader (Meurs & Perrewe, 2011). When leaders are confronted with such high workload, this will likely result in an experience of hindrance stress (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985).

Even though it could be argued that followers engaging in OCB also might increase the leader's workload, this will only be the case if they ignore their daily tasks (Bolino & Turnley, 2005). Generally, research has argued that followers' OCB is perceived as a positive aspect of work behavior and is valued by supervisors. Hence, leaders who are confronted with followers who refrain from voluntary behavior, perceive this as a threat to their valued goals and may feel that followers do not possess the resources (e.g., less time, energy, and motivation) required to accomplish their goals, that is, successful job performance. Leaders are expected to appraise this situation as negative and constraining, which will induce hindrance stress towards achieving his/her goals.

Hypothesis 2. Employees' OCBI will negatively impact leaders' hindrance stress.

Hindrance stress as a mediator

Previous research pointed out that hindrance stress towards achieving one's goals in the workplace leads to negative consequences for the organization and its members (LePine et al., 2005; Podsakoff et al., 2007). Indeed, hindrance stress can prompt individuals to separate themselves mentally from the team, resulting in exhaustion, withdrawal behaviors, and disengagement from team interactions and responsibilities (Pearsall, Ellis, & Stein, 2009). Moreover, stressors at work have been found to be related to a variety of deviant behaviors (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001; Spector & Fox, 2005). These deviant behaviors may help individuals manage their hindrance stress by "evening the score" (Rodell & Judge, 2009). For example, Chen and Spector (1992) found that stress was positively related to theft, sabotage and withdrawal (see also Krischer, Penney, & Hunter, 2010; Meier & Spector, 2013).

Although research on the effect of stress on self-serving behaviors remains scarce, there is some evidence to support such a relationship. For example, Selart and Johansen (2011) pointed out that hindrance stress towards achieving one's goals reduces people's motivation to take others' interests into account because this requires effort, energy, and self-regulation. Self-regulation depends on a finite energy source that can be depleted by exposure to stressors (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Indeed, stress reduces people's capacity for self-regulation and consequently their ability to act in a pro-social or ethical way (see also Gino, Schweitzer, Mead, & Ariely, 2011). For example, depletion of self-control resources has been found to result in more selfish behavior (e.g., Barnes, Schaubroeck, Huth, & Ghumman, 2011; Baumeister & Exline, 1999). Therefore, we assert that leaders who suffer from hindrance stress regarding achieving their goals will seek salvation by adopting self-serving behaviors. For example, leaders who are confronted with hindrance stress tend to make more unethical decisions such as cutting corners, covering up incidents at work, or abuse sickness days (Selart & Johansen, 2011). In sum, we hypothesize that leaders' hindrance stress towards achieving their goals will increase self-serving behaviors.

Hypothesis 3. Leaders' hindrance stress will positively impact leaders' self-serving leadership.

In addition, given that followers' OCBI is expected to negatively impact leaders' experienced hindrance stress, and that hindrance stress is expected to increase self-serving leadership, we argue that leaders' experienced hindrance stress will mediate the negative relation between OCBI and self-serving leadership. As such, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 4. Leaders' hindrance stress will mediate the effect of employees' OCBI on leaders' self-serving leadership.

We tested these hypotheses using one multi-source field study and three scenario experiments. We used both experimental and field research because each has its own strengths and weaknesses, and the strengths of the one may compensate for the weaknesses of the other (see also De Cremer & Van Knippenberg, 2002). This strategy where a variety of methods are used is referred to as methodological triangulation. First, in order to test Hypothesis 1, we relied on a scenario experiment. Such an experiment creates the advantage of controlling the predictors of interest, thereby making it possible to draw causal inferences (Greenberg & Folger, 1988). In Study 2, we aimed to replicate these findings (Hypothesis 1) and to test the mechanism underlying this relation (Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4). Study 2 is a field study in an organizational setting, thereby enhancing the external validity of the results (Greenberg & Tomlinson, 2004). We used a multi-source design where ratings from multiple sources are assessed to reduce same-source bias. That is, followers, coworkers and leaders responded to different measures in order to reduce same-source bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Next, we conducted two scenario experiments in order to be able to draw causal inferences concerning Hypothesis 2 (Study 3a) and Hypothesis 3 (Study 3b).

Study 1

Method

Participants and design

Seventy three undergraduate students (9 men and 64 women) from the University of Leuven participated voluntarily in the study. Participants were assured that their answers would be processed anonymously. Participants' mean age was 18.33 years ($SD = 1.43$) and their mean work experience was 7.98 months ($SD = 11.11$). They were randomly assigned to a between-subjects factorial design (Followers' OCBI: low vs. high).

Procedure

Participants were welcomed in the laboratory and seated in separate cubicles. They were given a scenario and were asked to imagine themselves as much as possible in the given situation. In this scenario, participants learned that they were a leader of a team of employees. Participants in the high (low) OCBI condition learned that "Followers in this team (do not) help each other and they are (not) willing to give up their own time to help others who have work-related problems. Followers in this team also (do not) go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group. They (do not) show genuine concern and courtesy towards coworkers, even under the most trying business or personal situations." The manipulation was constructed in order to contain elements of validated OCBI measures (cf. Lee & Allen, 2002).

Measures

After participants read the situation, they were asked to what extent they would engage in self-serving behavior. All items were completed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (=*strongly disagree*) to 5 (=*strongly agree*).

Self-serving leadership. Self-serving leadership[2] was assessed with four items (Camps et al., 2012). Example items are "If I was the leader of this team, I would not show consideration for my followers, only for myself" and "I would forge a document when this could improve my position" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$).

Results

An ANOVA on self-serving leadership showed a significant effect for OCBI, $F(1, 72) = 5.01$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .07$. This effect showed that participants indicated they would behave more in a self-serving manner as a leader when followers' OCBI levels were low ($M = 1.55$, $SD = 0.55$) rather than high ($M = 1.28$, $SD = 0.44$). Hence, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

In sum, the first study shows that OCBI negatively affects leaders' intentions of self-serving leadership. However, Study 1 does not explain *why* leaders act in a self-serving manner. In order to identify the underlying mechanism that explains the negative association between employees' OCBI and self-serving leadership, we conducted Study 2. In this study, we suggest that the leader's hindrance stress towards achieving his/her goals mediates the relationship between employees' OCBI and the leader's self-serving behavior. Moreover, in order to enhance external validity, Study 2 is a field study.

Study 2

Method

Participants and procedure

Researchers sent out email invitations to the focal employees and requested their participation. More specifically, 250 employees were instructed to visit a website to complete a survey, and to send an electronic survey link to their direct supervisor, and to one coworker who was familiar with their work. Participation was voluntary and participants were assured that the answers would be processed anonymously. Focal employees were matched with their leader and their coworker using a specific code allowing for anonymous participation. In no case did a leader participate with respect to more than one focal employee. So, all triads were independent of one another. One-hundred forty-eight fully matched surveys were returned, yielding an overall response rate of 59.2%. After checking for missing values, of the 148 triads, 121 could be used for data analyses, resulting in a final sample size of 121 triads.

Respondents came from a variety of different organizations in Belgium, including industries such as telecommunication, health care, manufacturing, government, technology, and financial organizations. Of the focal employees' sample, 40.8% were male and they averaged 37.63 years ($SD = 10.25$) of age. Employees had an average job tenure of 8.08 years ($SD = 8.25$) and 76% of the employees worked full-time. Thirty-five percent of the employees only completed high school and 65% obtained a college degree.

Coworkers' (43.2% were male) average age was 38.55 years ($SD = 10.81$). Coworkers had an average job tenure of 8.57 years ($SD = 8.61$). Seventy-eight percent of the coworkers worked full-time, 37% of the coworkers only completed high school and 63% obtained a college degree.

[2] We also conducted the analyses with the self-serving leadership scale developed by Rus et al. (2010a,b), which was designed as a self-report measure of leaders' own self-serving behaviors (Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$). The analyses yielded similar results; $F(1, 72) = 13.40$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .16$.

Table 1
Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for the variables used in Study 2.

	M	*SD*	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Gender employee [a]	–	–	–				
2. Age employee	37.63	10.25	.23*	–			
3. Tenure employee	8.08	8.25	.03	.55**	–		
4. OCBI	4.01	.47	−.05	.10	−.06	–	
5. Hindrance stress	2.11	.68	−.18	−.19*	−.14	−.33**	–
6. Self-serving leadership	1.60	.81	.07	.12	.16	−.19*	.21*

Note. $N = 121$.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
[a] Coded 1 = female, 2 = male.

Leaders (50.0% were male) had an average age of 42.72 years ($SD = 8.71$). On average leaders had a job tenure of 7.79 years ($SD = 7.08$) and 77% of the leaders worked full-time; 13% only completed high school, and 87% obtained a college degree.

Measures

Employees completed measures of their leader's self-serving behaviors, coworkers rated employees' OCBI, and leaders responded to questions regarding their own experienced hindrance stress. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (=*strongly disagree*/*never*) to 5 (=*strongly agree*/*always*).

OCBI. Organizational citizenship behavior towards individuals was assessed with eight items (Lee & Allen, 2002). Coworkers were asked to indicate, for example, how often the focal employee "assists others with their duties", and "helps others who have been absent" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$).

Hindrance stress. Leaders' hindrance stress was measured with a 3-item measure constructed by Bardes (2009). A sample item is "In general, I feel that my job goals hinder my personal accomplishment" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$).

Self-serving leadership. Self-serving leadership was assessed with four items (Camps et al., 2012). Example items are "My superior is selfish and thinks (s)he is very important" and "My superior does not show consideration for his/her followers, only for him/herself" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$).

Control variables. Based on the literature, we identified three demographic variables[3] that could covary with followers' perceptions of self-serving leadership, and that should be controlled for (Becker, 2005). These variables were followers' age, gender, and job tenure (see also Aryee et al., 2007; Martinko, Harvey, Sikora, & Douglas, 2011; Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011).

Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of the measures used in Study 2. To test our hypotheses, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses.

Hypothesis 1 was tested by regressing leaders' self-serving leadership on employees' OCBI. OCBI was significantly negatively related to self-serving leadership ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .05$; Table 2). Hence, Hypothesis 1 is supported, even though only weakly given that we cannot be conclusive about the causal direction using a field study.

Next, we regressed leaders' hindrance stress on employees' OCBI. Results showed that OCBI was significantly negatively related to hindrance stress ($\beta = -.34$, $p < .001$). Therefore, similar to Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Hypothesis 3 was tested by regressing subordinates' perception of self-serving leadership on leaders' hindrance stress. Hindrance stress was significantly related to self-serving leadership ($\beta = .26$, $p < .01$; Table 3). Hence, Hypothesis 3 is confirmed.

To assess whether leaders' hindrance stress mediated the relationship between OCBI and self-serving leadership, we used bootstrapping techniques (5000 replications) following Preacher and Hayes (2008). Bootstrapping treats the sample as a population, and then resamples with replacement a number of times and computes relevant statistics for each replacement sample. As this technique does not require a normal distribution of the sample, a confidence interval is computed. In line with our own expectations, it could be shown that leaders' hindrance stress mediated the relation between OCBI and self-serving leadership (see Table 4). As such, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

In sum, in Study 2 we were able to replicate and extend the findings of Study 1. More specifically, in Study 2 we showed that followers' OCBI is negatively related to leaders' hindrance stress, which in turn is positively related to self-serving leadership. Study 2 was a multi-source field study, thereby enhancing the external validity of the results, and reducing the possibility of same-source bias. However, due to the cross-sectional nature of Study 2, this study did not allow us to draw causal inferences with regard to our mediating hypothesis.

[3] Analyzing the data without the control variables did not alter our findings.

Table 2
Regression of hindrance stress and self-serving leadership on OCBI (Study 2).

	Hindrance stress		Self-serving leadership	
Variable	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Gender employee [a]	−.15	−.18*	.06	.05
Age employee	−.12	−.05	.02	.06
Job tenure employee	−.07	−.13	.15	.12
OCBI		−.34***		−.19*
Δ R^2		.05**		.03*
R^2	.06	.17	.03	.07
Adjusted R^2	.04	.15	.01	.03
F	2.46	6.11	1.27	2.03

Note. $N = 121$. Standardized beta coefficients are reported.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.
[a] Coded 1 = female, 2 = male.

Recently, researchers argued that inferences about the causal connections in mediation models are most justified when they are based on experimental designs with random assignment of subjects, and least warranted when using non-experimental designs (MacKinnon, Coxe, & Baraldi, 2012; Spencer et al., 2005; Stone-Romero & Rosopa, 2008, 2010, 2011). More specifically, these researchers recommend the use of two separate experimental studies if one wants to conclusively test for the causality of a mediation model: a first study in which the independent variable is manipulated and the mediator measured and a second study in which the mediating variable is manipulated and the dependent variable measured. Therefore, we conducted two extra scenario experiments: Study 3a explores the impact of followers' OCBI on leaders' hindrance stress, and Study 3b explores the impact of leaders' hindrance stress on their intentions of self-serving behavior. There was no overlap between the samples of the experiments.

Study 3a

Method

Participants and design

Fifty two undergraduate students (12 men and 40 women; $M_{age} = 21.46$ years, $SD = 3.41$) from the University of Leuven participated voluntarily in the study. Participants had a mean work experience of 5.90 months ($SD = 6.72$). Participants were randomly assigned to a between-subjects factorial design (Followers' OCBI: low vs. high).

Procedure

We used the same procedure as in Study 1. That is, participants were asked to imagine being the leader of a team in which followers showed either high or low levels of OCBI.

Measures

After participants read the situation, they were asked to what extent they would experience hindrance stress. All items were completed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (=*strongly disagree*) to 5 (=*strongly agree*).

Table 3
Regression of self-serving leadership on hindrance stress (Study 2).

	Self-serving leadership	
Variable	Step 1	Step 2
Gender employee [a]	.06	.10
Age employee	.02	.05
Job tenure employee	.15	.17
Hindrance stress		.26**
Δ R^2		.06**
R^2	.03	.10
Adjusted R^2	.01	.06
F	1.27	3.06

Note. $N = 121$. Standardized beta coefficients are reported.
** $p < .01$.
[a] Coded 1 = female, 2 = male.

Table 4
The mediation of the relation between OCBI and self-serving leadership by hindrance stress (Study 2).

	Indirect effect	*SE*	Lower 95% bootstrap confidence interval	Higher 95% bootstrap confidence interval
Self-serving Leadership	−.130	.057	−.270	−.045

Manipulation checks. To test for the effectiveness of the OCBI manipulation, we asked the participants to report the extent to which their followers "willingly give their time to help others" and "show genuine concern and courtesy towards each other" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .99$).

Hindrance stress. Hindrance stress was assessed with four items based upon Bardes (2009): "I feel that my personal accomplishments are thwarted by the behavior of my team", "My personal goals and development are impeded by the behavior of this team", "My personal growth and well-being are hindered by the behavior of my team" and "I have difficulties in reaching my objectives due to my team's behavior" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$).

Results

Manipulation checks. An ANOVA on the scale consisting of the two checks on the OCBI manipulation showed that participants in the low OCBI condition indicated that their followers engaged in less OCBI ($M = 1.40$, $SD = 0.84$) than participants in the high OCBI condition ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 0.45$), $F(1, 50) = 317.99$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .86$. Hence, the manipulation was satisfactory.

Hindrance stress. An ANOVA on hindrance stress revealed a significant effect for OCBI, $F(1, 50) = 112.40$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .69$. More specifically, participants indicated that they would experience more hindrance stress when their followers displayed low levels of OCBI ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.76$) rather than high levels of OCBI ($M = 1.60$, $SD = 0.72$). This confirms Hypothesis 2 and is consistent with the findings of Study 2.

Study 3b

Method

Participants and design

Fifty five undergraduate students (28 men and 24 women, 3 participants failed to identify their gender; $M_{age} = 20.56$ years, $SD = 2.11$) from the University of Leuven participated voluntarily in the study. Participants had an average work experience of 4.83 months ($SD = 5.30$). We assigned the participants randomly to a between-subjects factorial design (Leaders' hindrance stress: low vs. high).

Procedure

Participants were asked to imagine being the leader of a team of employees. Participants in the high hindrance stress condition read: "You experience a lot of stress at work. You do not fully understand what is expected of you on the job and you get conflicting requests. Therefore, you have the feeling your career seems stalled." Participants in the low hindrance stress condition read: "You do not experience a lot of stress at work. You do fully understand what is expected of you on the job and you do not get conflicting requests. Therefore, you have the feeling your career does not seem stalled." This manipulation is constructed so that it represents close alignment with the measurement of hindrance stress of Cavanaugh et al. (2000), and Rodell and Judge (2009).

Measures

After participants read the situation, they were asked to what extent they would have the intention to behave in a self-serving way. All items were completed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (=*strongly disagree*) to 5 (=*strongly agree*).

Manipulation checks. To test for the effectiveness of the hindrance stress manipulation, we asked participants to report the extent to which they "would experience a lot of stress" and "would have a lot of stress at work" in the given situation (Cronbach's $\alpha = .98$).

Self-serving leadership. Self-serving leadership was assessed with the self-serving leadership scale of Camps et al. (2012) similar to Studies 1 and 2 (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$).

Results

Manipulation checks. An ANOVA on the two stress items revealed a main effect for hindrance stress, $F(1, 53) = 52.55$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .50$. Results show that participants in the high hindrance stress condition indicated that they would experience more stress ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.89$) than participants in the low hindrance stress condition ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 1.14$).

Self-serving leadership. An ANOVA on self-serving leadership showed a significant effect for hindrance stress, $F(1, 53) = 17.39$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .25$. This effect showed that participants indicated they would have the intention to behave more in a self-serving manner as a leader when they experienced high hindrance stress levels ($M = 2.38$, $SD = 0.83$) rather than low hindrance stress levels ($M = 1.63$, $SD = 0.46$). This confirms Hypothesis 3 and is consistent with the findings of Study 2.

Discussion

Despite frequent media reports about various organizational scandals where leaders make personal benefits at the expense of the organization, research has paid little attention to the reasons why leaders turn to such self-serving behaviors (for exceptions see e.g., Rus et al., 2010a,b, 2012; Wisse & Rus, 2012). In the present research we aimed to focus on a largely unexplored cause, that is, followers' behavior, to shed light onto this matter. More specifically, our findings revealed that followers' OCBI resulted in lower levels of self-serving leadership and that this relationship is mediated by leaders' experienced hindrance stress towards achieving one's goals. Below we will discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our findings in further detail.

Theoretical implications

Firstly, our findings contribute to the leadership literature as we explore the emergence of self-serving leadership behavior. That is, whereas previous research has mainly focused on the negative *consequences* of self-serving leadership, here we focus on *antecedents* of such behavior. Furthermore, the research that did explore antecedents of leadership behavior has paid little attention to followers' role in the emergence of specific leader behavior (e.g., Howell & Shamir, 2005; Kellerman, 2007). Indeed, "most leadership research has considered the follower a passive or nonexistent element when examining what constitutes leadership" (Avolio, 2007, p. 26). Therefore, a detailed understanding of how followers' behavior may influence leadership behaviors remains speculative.

Our findings indicate that followers' behavior plays a significant role in the emergence of leadership behavior. We showed that followers' enactment of organizational citizenship behavior negatively impacts leaders' experienced hindrance stress towards achieving their goals, as well as their self-serving behavior. Therefore, we contribute to leadership research as we acknowledge leaders' influence on followers, but we also highlight followers' influence on the emergence of leadership behavior. Future research should examine which other follower behaviors have a positive or negative impact on the emergence of self-serving leadership. In this manuscript, we focused on relationships *between followers*. Future research could focus on other examples of relationships between followers that might influence the leader's behavior (e.g., follower conflicts). Next, future research should also focus on interpersonal relationships *between followers and their leader*. For example, previous research pointed out that leaders value the trustworthiness and fairness of their followers (e.g., Zapata, Olsen, & Martins, 2013). Therefore, leaders' fairness perceptions about how they are treated by their followers (i.e., perceived fairness), and leader–follower trust might also play a role in the emergence of self-serving leadership (Aryee et al., 2007; Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006). For example, it may well be that leaders' trust in their followers might buffer the negative impact of followers' lack of OCB on leader self-serving behavior, because trust functions as a part of a long-term trusting relationship. For example, in such a case leaders might be more likely to attribute the lack of followers' OCB to circumstances rather than to the deliberate intentions of the followers (Robinson, 1996).

Secondly, our findings contribute to the existing knowledge regarding the beneficial effects of employees' organizational citizenship behavior. Research largely focused on antecedents of OCB such as personality traits, employee attitudes, or leader behaviors (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006; Podsakoff et al., 2000). For example, followers' trust in their leader and leader–member exchange (LMX) have been found to be related to higher OCB levels (e.g., Deluga, 1994). We add to this knowledge by focusing on the outcomes of OCB. That is, previous research revealed that OCB has a positive impact on those who engage in extra-role behaviors themselves (e.g., in terms of performance evaluations), their fellow colleagues (e.g., decreased turnover intentions), or the organization as a whole (e.g., in terms of organizational effectiveness or customer satisfaction) (Organ et al., 2006; Podsakoff et al., 2000, 2009). Here, we expand this knowledge by showing that followers' OCB is also related to leadership behavior. More specifically, we showed that a lack of followers' OCB was related to leaders' self-serving behavior.

Finally, we examined the underlying mechanism through which follower OCB relates to self-serving leadership and we proposed that leaders' hindrance stress – which restrains leaders from reaching their objectives – explains this relationship. Therefore, this study contributes to the stress literature by showing that hindrance stress is related to leadership behavior, and more specifically self-serving leadership. As such, these findings extend prior research that showed that hindrance stress is associated with a broad range of undesirable consequences such as increased turnover and withdrawal behavior (e.g., Boswell, Olson-Buchanan, & LePine, 2004; Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Podsakoff et al., 2007). Moreover, our findings focus on the relevance of leaders' hindrance stress for their behavior towards followers. Future research should also focus on other possible *antecedents* of leader's hindrance stress such as social loafing or conflicts between followers (Harris et al., 2011). Also, a lack of clarity regarding a leader's goals, and negative relationships with colleague–leaders are possible antecedents of a leader's hindrance stress, and consequently self-serving leadership (Hendrix, Ovalle, & Troxler, 1985).

Practical implications

Voluntary organizational behaviors, such as OCB, are valuable to organizations. Indeed, followers contribute to organizational effectiveness in ways that go beyond their "jobs" (Allen, Facteau, & Facteau, 2004). The lack of such OCB has been documented as creating an environment of competition and conflict (Podsakoff et al., 2009). Moreover, our findings suggest that even leaders, who as part of their role specifically should act in the best of the collective interest, turn to themselves and nurture their personal interest first in such circumstances. Because followers' lack of OCB is related to leaders' self-serving behavior, it is essential that organizations encourage followers to exhibit OCB. One way to promote followers' OCB is to increase their fairness perceptions (Moorman, 1991). As long as followers trust the long-term fairness of the organization, they worry less about direct compensation for a particular act of citizenship (Pearce & Gregersen, 1991). For example, a good working atmosphere, where the interactions between coworkers are perceived as fair, is expected to promote OCB. Therefore, organizations should focus on the fairness of treatment by coworkers by incorporating a fair and just culture or by using consistent and bias-free procedures for promotion or other procedures (Blader & Tyler, 2009).

Another way to promote followers' OCB is to improve followers' perceptions of the quality of exchange relationships with the members of their work group (i.e., team–member exchange, or TMX; Love & Forret, 2008). That is, the exchange relationships among coworkers can be limited to exchanges required for the completion of work tasks (low TMX), or they can extend these strictly necessary exchanges (high TMX). When TMX is high, followers go above and beyond their job requirements to provide assistance to their coworkers (i.e., they show higher OCBI levels). Therefore, organizations should try to improve the quality exchanges among group members so that group members are more devoted to each other and are more willing to help each other.

Although here we focused on the impact of followers' OCB on leaders' behavior, we also acknowledge that leaders, in their turn, play a key role in the emergence of followers' OCB (e.g., Pearce & Gregersen, 1991; Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005). For example, transformational (Bass, 1985) and supportive leader behaviors have been found to be positively related to followers' OCB. Indeed, the heart of transformational leadership is "the ability to get employees to perform above and beyond expectations" (Podsakoff et al., 2000, p. 532). In line with this, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990) showed that when followers are confronted with transformational leaders, they are willing to perform beyond the minimum levels specified by the organization. Their results indicate that transformational leadership is related to followers' trust, which explains the pattern of results. Therefore, organizations should encourage leaders to behave in a supportive way to their followers because this promotes followers' OCB.

Finally, previous research showed that leaders have stressful work schedules (e.g., Ganster, 2005; Hambrick, Finkelstein, & Mooney, 2005). Our results suggest that leaders who suffer from hindrance stress tend to make more self-serving decisions. Therefore, organizations should try to reduce or eliminate the presence of hindrance stressors towards achieving one's goals in the workplace (LePine et al., 2005). Moreover, when reducing hindrance stress is not possible, organizations could help leaders to cultivate their coping skills and to better shield themselves from the negative consequences of hindrance stress. For example, when the organization shows that it values leaders' contributions and cares about their well-being, the organization can reduce the negative consequences of leaders' stressors at work (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Also stress management intervention programs may reduce the severity of stress because these interventions can provide the leader with positive opportunities to cope with the hindrance stress (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008).

Limitations and future research

Despite the theoretical and practical contributions of our research, it is not without limitations. Firstly, the samples of Study 1 and Study 3a were predominantly female. Therefore, we conducted supplemental analyses which revealed that gender did not alter the hypothesized relationships. As controlling for gender did not affect the results, it seems unlikely that gender biased our results. This finding is in line with existing meta-analyses on hindrance stress (LePine et al., 2005; Podsakoff et al., 2007), and studies on self-serving leadership (Rus et al., 2010a,b, 2012). Secondly, the experimental design of our scenario experiments can elicit concerns about the external validity. Notwithstanding these concerns, recent meta-analyses showed that psychological laboratory studies can be successfully replicated in the field (Anderson, Lindsay, & Bushman, 1999), and that especially experiments in the field of industrial-organizational psychology produced the highest external validity in the results (Mitchell, 2012). Moreover, experimental settings are appropriate to test and advance leadership theories because they can reveal causal mechanisms between leadership processes and outcomes (Gooty, Connelly, Griffith, & Gupta, 2010; Mook, 1983). A method that has been found to promote the external validity of the results is the methodological triangulation, that is the use of a variety of methods to examine the research questions (Scandura & Williams, 2000). Therefore, we used a field study as well as experiments. The results of the multi-source field study (Study 2) are in line with the experimental studies. Stone-Romero and Rosopa (2010, p. 700) noted that such "convergent evidence strengthens external validity inferences". In all, we believe we can be confident of the external validity of the results.

Thirdly, due to the cross-sectional nature of Study 2, this study does not allow us to draw causal conclusions regarding the proposed relationships. As a result, reverse causality might be possible. Yet, it is theoretically less plausible that followers'

perceptions of self-serving leadership cause leaders to experience more hindrance stress. In order to provide evidence for the causal direction of our hypotheses, the results of our three scenario experiments could be shown to be in line with the findings obtained in Study 2. Yet, even though we feel confident about the suggested direction of our findings, additional research should use longitudinal studies, randomized laboratory experiments, or experiments in organizational settings to further assess the nature of the causal relationships of employees' OCBI and self-serving leadership (MacKinnon et al., 2012).

Finally, in the present research we focused on followers' OCB. Yet, followers who engage in OCB also tend to perform well, and receive better performance evaluations of their leader (Podsakoff et al., 2000). However, recent research shows that sometimes OCBs might also have negative effects on performance (Bolino, Klotz, Turnley, & Harvey, 2013). Therefore, future research should also look at cases where followers do engage in OCB as a way to withdraw from their regular duties. In such a case, it is quite likely that leaders respond negatively to followers who do engage in OCB because too much OCB is expected to result in lower performance levels. Moreover, followers might even use OCBs as a form of impression management, or to fulfill self-serving motives (Spitzmuller & Van Dyne, 2013). In such circumstances, it might well be that leaders respond differently to their followers' OCBI.

Conclusion

In the present research, we explored the role of followers' organizational citizenship behaviors as an antecedent of self-serving leadership. More specifically, using three scenario experiments and one multi-source field study we showed that followers' lack of OCB towards their fellow colleagues predicts self-serving leader behavior. Moreover, our findings showed that leaders' hindrance stress explained this effect. As such, our research signals that leaders' self-serving behavior is influenced by the context in which these leaders operate. More specifically, we showed that followers' behavior is an antecedent of self-serving leadership.

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