

# How Employees React to a Narcissistic Leader? The Role of Work Stress in Relationship between Perceived Leader Narcissism and Employees' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors to Supervisor

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**Abstract:** This study aims to understand how leader narcissism predicts employees' organizational citizenship behaviors to supervisor (OCB-S). Based on the transactional model of stress, we argue that perceived leader narcissism triggers employees' OCB-S through hindrance stress. We also consider how employees' self-monitoring moderates the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and OCB-S. By collecting data from a matching questionnaire survey 48 leaders and 183 employees, we tested our conceptual model using adopted hierarchical regression method and plug-in Process. The results showed that perceived leader narcissism imposed a negative effect on employees' OCB-S through hindrance stress. Moreover, we found that self-monitoring moderated the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and employees' OCB-S, as well as the indirect effect of perceived leader narcissism on employees' OCB-S through hindrance stress. Specifically, when the level of self-monitoring was low, the positive relationship between perceived leader narcissism and hindrance stress as well as the indirect effect of perceived leader narcissism on employees' OCB-S through hindrance stress got stronger. When the level of self-monitoring was high, perceived leader narcissism had a negative effect on hindrance stress, and the indirect effect of perceived leader narcissism on employees' OCB-S through hindrance stress became weaker. We discuss theoretical and practical implications.

**Keywords:** Narcissism leadership; hindrance stress; self-monitoring; OCB-S; transactional theory of stress

## 1 Introduction

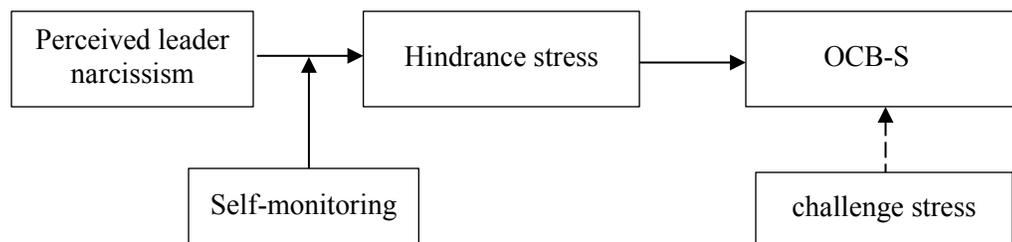
The topic of leader narcissism holds an important place in the management literature [1,2]. Research shows that the unique charm of narcissists often overlaps with the ideal implicit leadership prototype [3]. Therefore, narcissists are more likely to become leaders [4]. Narcissists, however, may have special needs as leaders. They indulge in self-enhancement, and regard others as a source of self-enhancement [5]. The attention and special treatments from others not only strengthen narcissists' deserved feeling, but also meet the need of the narcissists' self-enhancement, allowing them to create more job involvement and yield better performance [6,7]. Therefore, narcissistic leaders often expect employees to do extra concerned behaviors for themselves, such as Organizational Citizenship Behavior-Superior (OCB-S). OCB-S refers to a kind of non-mandatory extra-role behavior aiming at the leader, including offering help when the leader is busy [8]. These behaviors have special meanings for narcissistic leaders and will meet their unique needs [9], which can not only effectively promote narcissistic leaders' leadership, but also enable employees to get better work support [10], forming a benign interaction between leaders and employees.

However, it remains unknown as to whether employees participate in OCB-S when they perceive leadership narcissism. On the one hand, previous studies on OCB generally focused on its extra-role nature [11], ignoring to different implementation objects of OCB. Most studies have focused on OCB-O for organizations and OCB-I for colleagues [12], while the attention on OCB-S for superiors is still lacking.

On the other hand, Previous studies on narcissistic leaders and subordinates' participation in OCB have presented inconsistent results and failed to clarify the internal mechanism between leader narcissism and OCB-S [13]. Scholars called for further exploration of the internal mechanism linking leader narcissism and OCB-S [14]. Based on the previous literature, this study intends to uncover the relationship between perceived narcissism leadership and employee OCB-S.

According to the transactional model of stress [15], individuals assess environmental stimuli and mark stress as harm, threat or challenge according to the assessment results, and give corresponding coping attitudes and behaviors. Due to narcissists' self-serving personality, narcissistic leadership may bring some negative stress to employees [2], which may be regarded as a hindrance stress by employees, leading to some self-preservation behaviors, such as silence and flinch behaviors. Hindrance stress is a kind of stress that employees without enough resource to control, which would evoke employees' pessimistic mood and passive behaviors [16,17], reducing their OCB-S. The self-monitoring of employees helps to alleviate the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and hindrance stress. Self-monitoring refers to individuals' self-control and self-regulation towards the situation, so as to make their own emotions and behaviors reach a state suitable for the situation [18]. When employees' self-monitoring is higher, they show good emotional control and adjustment ability, which will help to relieve their stress in the workplace [19]. Therefore, to reveal the underlying mechanism between perceived leadership narcissism and OCB-S, this study explored the mediating effect of obstructive stress and the moderating effect of self-monitoring. The theoretical model of this study is shown in Fig. 1.

This study contributions to the existing literature from the following aspects. First, this study represents the first study to explore relationship between perceived leader narcissism and OCB-S. Prior studies have only generally discussed the effects of leader narcissism on employee citizenship behavior to colleagues or organizations, i.e., OCB-I and OCB-O [13,14]. To narcissistic leaders, employees' OCB-S might be critical meaningful, because it meets the needs of narcissistic leaders' unique needs, creating a benign interaction between leaders and employees. Second, based on transactional model of stress, this study examined the mediating effect of hindrance stress between perceived leader narcissism and OCB-S, it enriches our knowledge about the underlying mechanism of how perceived leader narcissism impacts employees OCB-S. Finally, although recent studies have shown that leader narcissism have some negative impacts on employee's behaviors [20], few studies have told us when facing a narcissistic leader, why employees react differently in the same situation. From the perspective of stress evaluation, this study propose that employees' stress evaluation depends on their self-monitoring, employees with high self-monitoring would alleviate the negative effects of perceived leader narcissism on them. This study enriches our understanding of how employees react to a narcissistic leader in the shoe of employees.



**Figure 1:** Theoretical model

## 2 Literature Review of Narcissistic Leader

The term of Narcissism originates from Greek mythology. It is said that Narcissus, a beautiful man, was addicted to his reflection in the water and couldn't get out of it. Later, Freud [21] introduced narcissism into psychology, which refers to a kind of pathological psychology in which individuals invest all their emotions in themselves. Although clinical psychologists regard narcissism as a mental disorder, it is seen as a personality trait that is normally distributed in the population in the social personality literature,

including a sense of superiority, entitlement, and inflated view of oneself [22,23]. DE Vries [24] developed the concept of narcissism leadership and introduced narcissism into management for the first time. Current studies have not unified the concept of narcissism leadership. Scholars holding the trait perspective focus on narcissistic characteristics of leaders and argue that narcissism leadership has the style of narcissists, such as the love of adventure and the pursuit of gorgeous projects [25,26]. Scholars holding the behavioral perspective believe that a narcissistic leader's behavior is driven by his or her own narcissistic needs, rather than the organizational interests that he or she should pursue [2]. In this study, we combine the two and define narcissism leadership as a style of leadership that has a narcissistic personality and ultimately displays narcissistic behaviors, such as cheating and self-serving behavior [27].

Although there have been abundant studies of narcissistic leaders on subordinates' work, such as employee performance, creativity, and proactive behavior, the conclusions are inconsistent [28]. In line with social exchange perspective, researchers have suggested that interpersonal communication is based on the principle of reciprocity. With respect to the supervisor-subordinate relationship, employees will only do extra work when they obtain positive returns from their communication with leaders (such as trust and respect) [29–31]. As a typical self-interested leadership, Narcissistic leadership will reduce the OCB of employees. For example, Liu et al. [32] found that when narcissistic leaders perceived injustice, they reduced team voice behavior and team pro-social behavior by increasing self-interested behaviors. However, other scholars argue that when leaders are narcissistic, employees may conduct impression management, in order to maintain a positive image in front of leaders and obtain organizational resources [33], thereby increasing OCB behavior [34]. In addition, some studies failed to find a significant relationship between narcissistic leaders and team OCB [13].

Although previous studies have explored and explained the possible behavioral consequences of narcissistic leaders on employees from different perspectives, most of the existing studies have largely focus on employees' postpositive behavioral strategy and neglected employees' pre-pressure evaluation caused by their perception of leaders. Only when employees make a reasonable evaluation of the pressure brought by the leader can they make a strategic choice of subsequent impression management or social exchange. According to the transactional model of stress, the direct precipitating factor of employees' behavioral reaction to external environment is not the environmental condition (stress factor), but the individual's evaluation of external stimuli. Individuals examine the significance and importance of the situation through the primary assessment, judge the situation as harm/loss or threat/challenge, and then consider their own resources and strategies [15]. At the same time, there are individual differences in the stress assessment process. When facing the same situation, employees may generate different stress evaluations due to their own individual characteristics. For example, when employees are faced with narcissistic leaders, their' self-monitoring ability, namely their self-control and self-regulation in this situation, can adjust their emotions and behavior to suitable condition [18], may help them to show a good control and regulation of their emotion, and could change cognition of the stress situation [19]. Based on this, this study explores the internal relationship between perceived leader narcissism and employee OCB-S on grounds of the transactional model of stress. Meanwhile, we investigate the moderating effect of employee self-monitoring to supplement previous studies.

### **3 Theory and Hypothesis**

#### ***3.1 OCB-S Perceived Leader Narcissism and OCB-S***

In the social personality literature, narcissism is a relatively stable individual difference, and scholars label it as grandiose, complacent and vain [23]. The core characteristics of narcissists are a sense of entitlement, arrogance, and self-achievement [35]. Emmons [22] classified narcissism into four categories, i.e., Exploitativeness/Entitlement, Leadership/Authority, Superiority/Arrogance, and Self-absorption/Self-admiration. Among them, Exploitativeness/Entitlement means expecting unconditional and special treatment from others, using and exploiting them. Leadership/authority refers to enjoying the sense of authority and pursuing the attention from others. Superiority/Arrogance is about the grandiose self-concept of narcissists. Self-absorption/Self-admiration refers to the excessive recognition and the good feeling of

oneself. Leader narcissism is a style of leadership with narcissistic personality and narcissistic behavior. The characteristics of leader narcissism include prevailing patterns in narcissistic personality, i.e., arrogance, fantasies of unlimited success and power, excessive needs for praise, lack of empathy, etc. [2]. As a result, narcissistic leaders crave not only verbal praise from their employees, but also possible behavioral demands for additional, civic behaviors that are especially designed for them.

Leader narcissism might negatively affect the probability of employees' participation in OCB-S. Organizational citizenship behavior to superior (OCB-S) is a new concept developed by Malatesta [8], who was inspired by Williams and Anderson's two-dimensional division of organizational citizenship behavior [8,36]. OCB-S refers to employees' behavior that goes beyond their roles requirements and is beneficial to the supervisor [8]. For example, when the leader is busy, the employees take the initiative to help the leader to share the task. Scholars focus on individual differences, leadership behavior, organizational characteristics, and task characteristics when exploring the cause of OCB [37]. A meta-analysis has shown that when an employee felt fair treatments, satisfied with his or her job, or supported by his or her supervisor, he or she will perform OCB [38]. However, Narcissistic leaders have a low empathy and a high level of tendency of exploitation [22], they will also reduce employee's self-esteem which is based on organization [14], and lead to negative emotions and a series of negative attitudes and behaviors of employees. For example, employees may engage in supervisor-targeted counterproductive work behavior [39], deliberately ignore leaders' demands, and even bellow their leaders to others [14]. These negative effects reduce employees' sense of satisfaction with their leader. As a result, the existence of narcissistic leaders makes employees shrink and less likely to engage in OCB-S. In addition, Martin's study [13] also showed that narcissistic leaders can have a negative impact on the citizenship behavior of the team. Carnevale [40] confirmed that leader narcissism can reduce employees' helping and voice behavior, and even increase employees' negative evaluation and functional resistance to leaders.

Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis.

H1: Perceived leader narcissism is negatively related to employees' OCB-S.

### ***3.2 Mediating Effect of Hindrance Stress***

The transactional model of stress provides a reasonable explanation for the negative impact of perceived leader narcissism on employees' OCB-S through hindrance stress. Based on the transactional model of stress, stress is a relationship between people and the environment, that is, an environmental stimulus cannot be satisfied by the existing resources of individuals, and endangers the well-being of individuals [15,41]. Cavanaugh et al. [16] divided stress into two dimensions to better predict the relationship between stress and work outcomes. He pointed out that pressure can be divided into challenge stress and hindrance stress. Challenge stress refers to a demand for work that is beneficial to future outcomes and personal growth and development, while hindrance stress refers to a demand for work that has no effect on personal growth and goal realization, or even hindering personal development [16,42].

According to the transactional model of stress, combining the characteristics of narcissistic personality, leader narcissism may bring more negative effects to employees [2], which may be regarded as stress in the evaluation and further evaluated as a harm or a threat, thus reducing employees' involvement in OCB-S. On the one hand, employees' perceived leader narcissism will threaten their self-concept, because narcissistic leaders pay too much attention to themselves and lack empathy and caring for employees [43]. Not only won't they recognize the advantages and efforts of employees, but they may also publicly belittle employees in order to maintain a positive image of themselves [44]. When employees are denied by leaders, their sense of belonging will be threatened and their self-esteem, based on the organization, will reduce [14,45]. Under such influences, employees will resist their narcissistic leaders and deny the significance of the current task assigned by the leader. Therefore, we articulate that perceived leader narcissism will be evaluated as stress by employees, and it is difficult for employees to solve the threat brought by the leader's narcissism with their own resources. Furthermore, perceived leader narcissism may increase employees' hindrance stress. On the other hand, different from other leadership styles, narcissistic leaders tend to be viewed as controlling rather than supportive [46]. Perceived leader narcissism will bring greater

psychological burdens to themselves, because they lack empathy and show lower tolerance [47]. Employees who perceived leader narcissism will have more pressure at work, because they are afraid of being criticized by leaders for not completing tasks perfectly. As a result, hindrance stress on employees may increase under this influence.

Hindrance stress leads to a series of negative attitudes and behaviors of employees. A survey of academic performance shows that hindrance stress can reduce learners' motivation to study, which leads to a decline in academic performance [48]. In the workplace, hindrance stress not only reduces employees' job satisfaction, psychological well-being and organizational commitment, but also leads to their intention and behavior to quit [17]. It also reduces employee citizenship behavior [49,50]. To sum up, this study predicts that perceived leader narcissism will increase their hindrance stress and thus reduce employee's OCB-S. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: The effect of perceived leader narcissism on employee's OCB-S is mediated by employees' hindrance stress.

### ***3.3 The Moderating Role of Self-Monitoring***

Self-monitoring refers to a kind of self-observation and self-control caused by the situation [18]. Individuals with high self-monitoring will adapt to the situation and respond to it. They adaptively conceal inappropriate emotional states and show appropriate emotional states according to the situation. Individuals with high self-monitoring sometimes have inconsistent inner attitudes and behaviors, while individuals with low self-monitoring do not consciously change their behaviors to adapt to the situation, and their inner attitudes and behaviors tend to have great consistency [18,51]. The transactional model of stress emphasizes the role of individual differences and believes that different individuals have different perceptions and evaluations of external situations [15]. We proposed that individuals with high self-monitoring can relieve the hindrance stress due to high perceived leader narcissism, while individuals with low self-monitoring can have more hindrance stresses in the case of perceived leader narcissism.

Self-monitoring may shape the influence of narcissistic leadership on employees' hindrance stress. Firstly, individuals with high self-monitoring tend to be successful in social interactions [52], because they are good at understanding clues in the social environment and adjusting their behaviors in time to adapt to the environment [18]. Narcissistic leaders crave praise. As a situational factor, perceived leader narcissism makes the high self-monitoring employees to react and may show some compliment leadership behavior so as to help leaders to get immediate self-concept, which is beneficial to improve leaders' evaluation of their employees [53]. In order to gain more resources, employees may feel less hindrance stress. On the contrary, when employees have low self-monitoring, they will act according to their inner attitude [51]. As mentioned before, employees' perception of leader narcissism leads to negative emotions and psychological states. Employees with low self-monitoring tend to be loyal to their own hearts, they will behave in accordance with their inner attitude in the social situation, thus they might take some actions that are against narcissistic leaders to release their negative emotions, which will also have a negative impact on the employees' assessment of environmental pressure. They are less able to find the development opportunities provided by work tasks, and more likely to treat work as a burden, thus causing hindrance stress.

In summary, this study predicts that self-monitoring moderates the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and hindrance stress. Employees with low self-monitoring are more likely to have hindrance stress in the case of perceived leader narcissism, while employees with high self-monitoring can relieve the hindrance stress brought by perceived leader narcissism. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: Self-monitoring moderates the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and hindrance stress. Specifically, when employees' self-monitoring is low, the relationship is negative; When employees' self-monitoring is high, the relationship is positive.

Taking H2 and H3 into consideration, we suggest that self-monitoring also moderates the indirect effect of perceived leader narcissism on OCB-S through hindrance stress, so the following hypothesis is proposed.

H4: Self-monitoring moderates the indirect effect of perceived leader narcissism on OCB-S through

hindrance stress. When self-monitoring is low, perceived leader narcissism will have a stronger negative and indirect effect on OCB-S through hindrance stress. When self-monitoring is high, perceived leader narcissism will have a weaker indirect effect on OCB-S through hindrance stress.

## 4 Methods

### 4.1 Participants and Procedures

The data was collected from two company in Wuhan, Hubei province. We contacted the top leader of each company in advance to explain the purpose and significance of the research. With the approval of the company's top leader, our team and the company's human resources department sent questionnaires to leaders and their employees. We informed participants that the data would only be used for the research and would be absolutely confidential.

The questionnaire assessed perceived leader narcissism, self-monitoring, hindrance stress, challenge stress, and OCB-S. We distributed the survey in two waves with a one-month interval for the concern of common method biases [54]. Employees filled out the first wave of questionnaires, including perceived leader narcissism, self-monitoring, hindrance stress and challenge stress, and demographic information. A month later, we sent out the second wave of questionnaires to the direct leaders of the employee who filled in the first round, and direct leaders were told to evaluate their employee's OCB-S. After matching the data collected from the two waves and eliminating missing items and ineffective questionnaires, the final samples were 48 leaders and 183 employees, and the effective rate of the questionnaire was 74.75%. Among them, 49.4% were males and 50.6% were females. 32.0% of the employees have a bachelor's degree or above, 75% have two years of working experience or above, and 80% have worked with their direct leaders for more than one year.

### 4.2 Measures

In this study, we adopted established and validated scales and used Likert five-point scoring method (1 = completely inconsistent to 5 = completely consistent). In order to prevent some misunderstanding in foreign scales, this study adjust relevant statements of those scales through translation and back-translation [55]. Employees rated perceived leader narcissism, self-monitoring, hindrance stress and control variables, while supervisors rated employees' OCB-S.

*Perceived leader narcissism* was assessed by Hochwarter and Thompson's 6-item scale [20]. A sample item is "my direct leader boasts about himself to get others' praise." The Cronbach's alpha was 0.97.

*Self-monitoring*, similar to other measures of self-monitoring [56], was measured by Snyder and Gangestad's 8-item scale [57]. A sample item is "I can impromptu speech, even I almost didn't know any information of topic." The Cronbach's alpha was 0.93.

*Hindrance stress* was measured by Lepine and colleagues' 10-item scale [58]. A sample item is "In the past month, I needed insufficient resources to complete tasks." The Cronbach's alpha was 0.97.

*OCB-S*, similar to other measures of OCB-S [59], was assessed by Malatesta's 5-item scale [8]. A sample item is "The employee helped me with my workload." The Cronbach's alpha was 0.94.

*Control variables*: In line with previous OCB-S literature [59], we controlled for employees' age, gender, education, working years of employees, working years with leaders and working hours per week. We also controlled for the challenge stress.

## 5 Analysis and Results

### 5.1 Common Method Biases

Although this study adopted the method of pairing measurement between employees and leaders for data sampling, it is necessary to test common method biases, since the independent variables, mediating variables and moderating variables in this study were obtained by employees' self-evaluation. We used Harman One-Factor test to test the common method biases [60]. Five factors were reported by SPSS, the

cumulative interpretation variance was 77.98%, and the cumulative interpretation variance percentage of the first factor was 38.7%. Although the explanation percentage of the first factor is large, it does not exceed 50% [61], so it can be considered that there were no serious common method biases.

### 5.2 The Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In this study, Mplus 7.0 was used for the confirmatory factor analysis to test the discriminant validity of various variables, including perceived leader narcissism (PN), hindrance stress (HS), self-monitoring (SM), and OCB-S (OS). The results of confirmatory factor analysis are shown in Tab. 1. The results showed that the four-factor model (MODEL4) in this study fit best ( $\chi^2 = 527.72$ ,  $Df = 203$ ,  $\chi^2/Df = 2.600$ ,  $CFI = 0.924$ ,  $TLI = 0.913$ ,  $SRMR = 0.038$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.097$ ), and the fitting indexes all reach the ideal range. Therefore, the variables in this study have good discriminant validity.

**Table 1:** Results for the confirmatory factor analysis

MODEL	$\chi^2$	$Df$	$\chi^2/Df$	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
MODEL4 (PN; HS; SM; OS)	527.727	203	2.600	0.924	0.913	0.038	0.097
MODEL3 (PN; SM + HS; OS)	959.489	206	4.658	0.823	0.802	0.052	0.147
MODEL2 (PN + OS; SM + HS)	1714.602	208	8.243	0.646	0.607	0.159	0.206
MODEL1 (PN + OS + SM + HS)	2971.213	209	14.216	0.351	0.283	0.290	0.279

*Note:* Perceived leader narcissism (PN), hindrance stress (HS), self-monitoring (SM), and OCB-S (OS).

### 5.3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among study variables are shown in Tab. 2. From the intercorrelations among all variables, it can be seen that perceived leader narcissism was significantly positively correlated with hindrance stress ( $r = 0.245$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). There was a negative correlation between hindrance stress and OCB-S, but the correlation was not significant ( $r = -0.139$ , n.s).

**Table 2:** Means, standard deviations and correlation coefficients

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	36.725	10.039	1										
2. Gender	0.506	0.501	0.144	1									
3. Education	1.878	0.880	-0.516**	-0.428**	1								
4. Working years of employees	7.578	8.385	0.514**	-0.035	-0.142	1							
5. Working years with leaders	4.387	4.929	0.390**	0.027	-0.257**	0.583**	1						
6. Working hours per week	50.211	7.642	0.105	0.126	-0.385**	-0.110	0.012	1					
7. Perceived leader narcissism	2.332	1.098	-0.021	-0.152*	0.274**	0.045	-0.035	-0.188*	1				
8. Self-monitoring	3.374	0.876	0.118	0.128	-0.217**	-0.096	0.080	0.031	0.262**	1			
9. Hindrance stress	2.992	1.160	0.093	0.029	-0.057	0.013	0.106	-0.085	0.245**	0.678**	1		
10. Challenge stress	3.550	0.844	-0.006	0.036	-0.014	0.009	-0.004	0.074	0.113	0.369**	0.636**	1	
11. OCB-S	3.546	0.612	-0.049	-0.158*	0.135	-0.034	0.016	-0.076	-0.086	-0.165*	-0.139	0.019	1

*Note:*  $N = 183$ ; \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ ; \*,  $p < 0.05$ .

### 5.4 Hypothesis Testing

In order to test the hypotheses, based on the method of Preacher et al. [62], we used SPSS and process for data analysis, and Bootstrapping to obtain the confidence interval of indirect effect to test the indirect effect. In order to avoid the influence of multicollinearity, the independent variables and regulatory variables were standardized in this study [63].

The direct effect was tested by hierarchical regression method, as shown in Model 3 in Tab. 3. After controlling for employees' age, gender, education, working years, working years with leaders, weekly working hours and challenge stress, perceived leader narcissism was significantly negatively correlated with OCB-S ( $\beta = -0.182$ ,  $t = -2.176$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, H1 was supported.

Tabs. 3 and 4 presented the mediating effects of hindrance stress on perceived leader narcissism and OCB-S. According to the method of Hayes [64], this study used Model 4 in SPSS-process to verify the mediation effect. As shown in Tab. 4, the sample size of Bootstrap in this study was 5000. After controlling for employees' age, gender, education, working years, working years with leaders, weekly working hours and challenge stress, the coefficient of indirect effect value was significant ( $\beta = -0.043$ ; 95%CI [-0.104, -0.002]), excluding 0. Thus, H2 was supported, suggesting that hindrance stress mediated the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and OCB-S.

**Table 3:** Results of direct effect and mediating effect

	Hindrance stress				OCB-S			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t
Age	0.123	1.524	-0.019	-0.171	0.010	0.089	0.039	0.359
Gender	-0.031	-0.479	-0.114	-1.284	-0.116	-1.322	-0.124	-1.423
Education	-0.116	-1.402	0.074	0.671	0.137	1.214	0.109	0.973
Working years of employees	-0.182	-2.226*	-0.080	-0.710	-0.080	-0.715	-0.124	-1.102
Working years with leaders	0.144	1.992*	0.112	1.114	0.111	1.119	0.146	1.469
Working hours per week	-0.169	-2.652**	-0.066	-0.753	-0.078	-0.897	-0.119	-1.349
challenge stress	0.635	10.892***	0.076	0.959	0.104	1.304	0.257	2.444*
Perceived leader narcissism	0.180	2.929**			-0.182	-2.176*	-0.139	-1.636
Hindrance stress							-0.240	-2.196*
R2	0.504		0.045		0.074		0.102	
$\Delta R^2$	0.504		0.045		0.029		0.402	

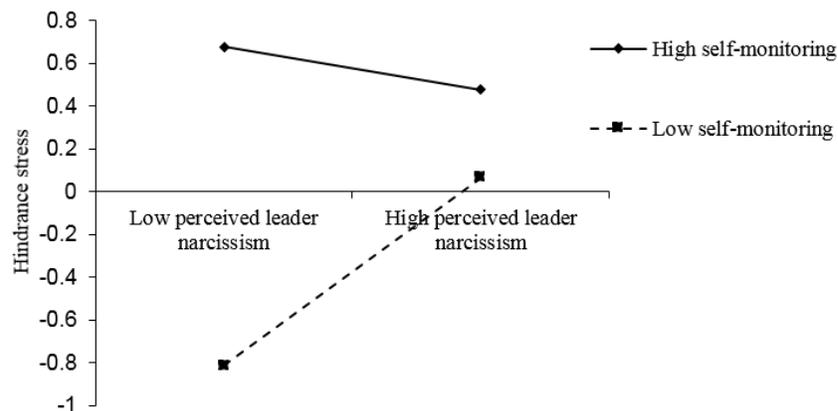
*Note:*  $N = 183$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ;  $\beta$  is the standardized regression coefficient.

**Table 4:** Results of the mediating effect for hindrance stress

Effect type	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCL	Boot ULCL
Total effect	-0.181	0.090	-0.364	0.005
Direct effect	-0.138	0.090	-0.316	0.033
Indirect effect	-0.043	0.026	-0.104	-0.002

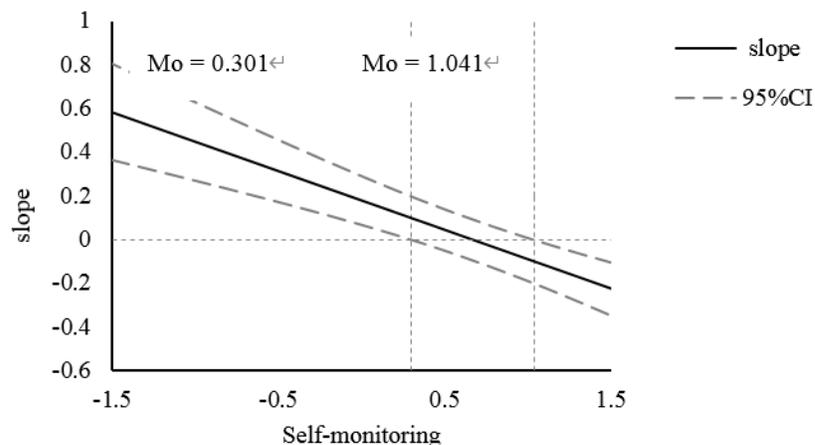
*Note:*  $N = 183$ ; Bootstrap  $N = 5000$ .

According to H3, self-monitoring plays a moderating role in the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and hindrance stress. Based on the method of Hayes [64], this study used Model1 in SPSS-process to verify the moderating effect. The results showed that the interaction of perceived leader narcissism with self-monitoring had significant effects on hindrance stress ( $\beta = -0.269$ ,  $t = -5.771$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The simple slope analysis showed that the negative relationship between perceived leader narcissism and hindrance stress was alleviated when the self-monitoring degree was high ( $\beta = -0.100$ ,  $t = -1.9767$ ,  $p = 0.049 < 0.05$ ), while the positive relationship between perceived leader narcissism and hindrance stress was more positive when the self-monitoring degree was low ( $\beta = 0.440$ ,  $t = 4.925$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) In order to demonstrate the moderating effect of self-monitoring on perceived leader narcissism and hindrance stress, A plot of this interaction (at plus/minus one standard deviation) depicted in Fig. 2. To sum up, H3 is supported.



**Figure 2:** Moderating effect of self-monitoring on the relationship between leader narcissism and hindrance stress

When self-monitoring was high, the correlation between perceived leader narcissism and hindrance stress was low ( $\beta = -0.100$ ,  $t = -1.9767$ ,  $p = 0.049 < 0.05$ ). Therefore, we used Johnson-Neyman to test the moderating effect of self-monitoring [65,66,67]. As shown in Fig. 3, when the self-monitoring was 0.301 standard deviations below the mean or lower, the 95% confidence interval did not include 0 and the slope was positive; When self-monitoring was 1.041 standard deviations above the mean or higher, the 95% confidence interval did not include 0, and the slope was negative. H3 was further verified.



**Figure 3:** Results of the moderating effect of Johnson-Neyman technology on self-monitoring

In order to test the moderated mediation model proposed by H4, Monte Carlo method was used to construct the confidence interval in this study. The sample size of Bootstrap was 5000, and the hypothesis was determined by testing whether the 95% confidence interval included 0. According to the method of Hayes [64], this study used Model 7 in SPSS-process to verify the moderated mediation model. As shown in Tab. 5, when self-monitoring was high, the indirect effect of perceived leader narcissism on OCB-S through hindrance stress was not significant ( $\beta = 0.023$ ,  $SE = 0.020$ ,  $CI = [-0.007, 0.069]$ ), excluding 0. When self-monitoring was low, perceived leader narcissism had a significantly negative effect on OCB-S through hindrance stress ( $\beta = -0.103$ ,  $SE = 0.052$ ,  $CI = [-0.216, -0.010]$ ), excluding 0. The differences ( $\beta = 0.12$ ,  $SE = 0.064$ ,  $95\%CI = [0.012, 0.264]$ ) and index ( $\beta = 0.063$ ,  $SE = 0.032$ ,  $95\%CI = [0.006, 0.132]$ ) were equally significant. In summary, these results supported H4.

**Table 5:** Results of moderated mediation effects

Mediator	Effect type	Moderator	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCL	BootULCL
Hindrance stress	Indirect effect	M + 1SD	0.023	0.020	-0.007	0.069
		M - 1SD	-0.103	0.052	-0.216	-0.010
		Diff	0.126	0.064	0.012	0.264
	Index		0.063	0.032	0.006	0.132

*Note:*  $N = 183$ ; *Bootstrap*  $N = 5000$ .

## 6 Discussion

Based on the transactional model of stress, we proposed that perceived leader narcissism would predict employee OCB-S through hindrance stress, and the relationship would be moderated by employees' self-monitoring. In accordance with the hypotheses, the results showed that perceived leader narcissism had a significant negative impact on OCB-S through hindrance stress, and the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and hindrance stress was affected by employees' self-monitoring. When employees' self-monitoring was high, perceived leader narcissism had a negative effect on hindrance stress; while when employees' self-monitoring was low, perceived leader narcissism had a positive effect on hindrance stress. Moreover, we found that employee self-monitoring also moderated the indirect effects of perceived leader narcissism on OCB-S through hindrance stress. That is, when employees had lower self-monitoring, perceived leader narcissism had a stronger negative impact on OCB-S through hindrance stress.

### 6.1 Implications for Theory

This study has several theoretical implications. First, this study explores the relationship between perceived leader narcissism and OCB-S. Although scholars are aware of the importance of organizational citizenship behavior, current studies have just focused on the citizenship behavior of colleagues or organizations [14,68], such as employees helping colleagues to complete their duties, or employees participating in some unnecessary activities that contribute to the company's image. Due to narcissists' demand for attention [6,7,22], OCB-S could be considered important to narcissistic leaders. However, previous literature has not addressed the question of whether an employee understands and caters to the leader's need for OCB-S when faced with leader narcissism. Our results show that when facing with leader narcissism, employees will not engage in leader-oriented organizational citizenship behavior. This study expands the research on leader narcissism's influence on employees' behavior and contributes to the literature on leader narcissism.

Secondly, this study explores the dark side of leader narcissism from the perspective of stress. Previous studies have discussed and explained the possible behavioral results of narcissism of leaders to employees from different perspectives. However, most of these theories predominantly emphasized on employees' postpositive behavioral strategy, neglecting the evaluation of employees' pre-pressure caused by their perception of leaders. Starting from the transactional model of stress and based on the two-dimensional structure of stress, we proposed the mediating role of obstructive stress, indicating that narcissistic leaders

had a negative impact on OCB-S by increasing obstructive stress. This study does not only enrich the mechanism of the influence of leader narcissism on employee behavior, but also respond to scholars' appeal of exploring the relationship between leadership style and stress [58].

Finally, recent studies have shown that in the face of narcissistic leaders, employees can use personal control to minimize their own resource losses [20]. This study explores the moderating effect of employee self-monitoring. The destructive effect of narcissistic leaders in the workplace has been confirmed by many studies [69]. Based on the perspective of leaders, previous clarified that leaders' humility traits [73], leaders' use of negotiation strategies [40], and low visibility of leaders can reduce the negative impact of narcissism on employees [3]. However, few studies have explored how employees can mitigate such a negative impact. Although Grijalva et al. [70] proposed that the combination of a compliant subordinate and narcissistic leader might produce positive effects, they also lack of empirical studies. In this study, self-monitoring of employees was introduced as a moderating variable, and the results showed that in the face of narcissistic leaders, the higher the self-monitoring of employees was, the lower the perceived hindrance stress was, and the more likely they were to participate in OCB-S. This study illustrates that employees with high self-monitoring can alleviate the negative effects of perceived leader narcissism, and provides a new way for employees to deal with leader narcissism.

### ***6.2 Implications for Practice***

This study also provides several practical implications for managers. Firstly, although good interaction between leaders and subordinates is very important, the results of this study indicate that employees' perceived leader narcissism has a negative impact on OCB-S through hindrance stress. Organizations need to provide opportunities to enhance communication and understanding between leaders and subordinates, in order to enhance interaction and reduce employees' stress. In particular, the organization should provide opportunities for leaders and employees to communicate, such as regular opportunities for the construction of departments and groups, to enhance the non-work communication between employees and leaders and enhance the relationship. Moreover, measures should be taken to reduce employees' pressure from work, such as improving the working environment and conditions of the organization, providing employees with a subscription to a magazine to maintain their mental health, and providing employees with training on how to relieve pressure.

Secondly, the results of this study suggest that leader narcissism can bring about hindrance stress to employees, thus reducing the possibility of employees to participate in OCB-S. Leaders should be organized to participate in more training courses, provided with informal communication and exchange environment, so as to understand their real leadership style in the training class, and get opportunities to reflect on their behavior at work. As DE Vries says, leadership training "turns them into more effective leaders in the process of providing feedback to each other," and in the process "narcissistic leaders become less self-centered and begin to recognize the complexity and value of others".

Finally, self-monitoring can relieve the hindrance stress caused by narcissism of leaders. It is an effective survival strategy to deal with narcissistic leaders in the organizational context. Under the context of Chinese culture, the influence of leader narcissism could be salient in the workplace. The results of this study show that the combination of high self-monitoring employees and narcissistic leaders can alleviate the negative effects of leader narcissism. Therefore, for the narcissistic leaders in the enterprise, employees with high self-monitoring can be designated as their subordinates, so as to generate positive interaction.

### ***6.3 Limitations***

The current research has some limitations. Firstly, in the first stage, this study simultaneously measured perceived leader narcissism, obstructive stress, and self-monitoring, which may lead to common method bias. Although some measures have been taken in this study to reduce the influence of common method biases, such as data collection in two stages, staff's OCB-S using their direct leadership evaluation and Harman One-Factor test to test common method biases, the concern of common method biases cannot be fully excluded. In the future, the robustness of the conclusion can be tested by text analysis or experiment.

Secondly, employees with high self-monitoring have higher levels of hindrance stress under different perceived leader narcissism. This study speculated that self-monitoring may have some conflicting effects. On the one hand, people with higher self-monitoring can adapt to the environment and avoid inappropriate self-presentation, which can reduce harm caused by external environment. On the other hand, high self-monitoring employees are like “chameleon”, their way to present themselves changes with the situations [71], which would cause depletion and reduce their resources to resist against external pressure [72], resulting in a lower threshold of perceived stress. In addition, the findings of this study suggest that when people with high levels of self-monitoring are exposed to more narcissistic leaders, they experience less hindrance stress than those with low levels of self-monitoring. This is probably because employees with a high level of self-monitoring understand that narcissistic leaders need applause, so they may perform some ingratiating behaviors to make narcissistic leaders to provide better resource preference and performance evaluation for them. But these possibilities were not evaluated in this study. Therefore, further research will be conducted to explore this issue.

Finally, this study only discusses the moderating effect of self-monitoring, focusing on the moderating effect of employees’ characteristics on the negative impact of “bad leadership”. However, the influence of the leader himself and the team atmosphere should also be considered. For example, narcissistic leaders with humility can mitigate the negative effects of narcissism [73], which may reduce the hindrance stress on employees brought by narcissism of leaders.

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