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Preference for directive versus participative leadership: the role of regulatory mode and context quality definition

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ABSTRACT

Prior work showed that leadership preferences depend not only on followers' characteristics, but also on contextual features. We investigated how regulatory mode (assessment – a concern with “getting things right” vs. locomotion – a concern with “getting things done” in goal pursuit) and the definition of quality criteria (i.e. whether or not there are predefined standards to evaluate task or work performance) jointly influence followers' preferences for directive and participative leadership. We measured (Study 1, $N = 503$) and experimentally induced (Study 2, $N = 497$) followers' regulatory mode before presenting them with task instructions that either clearly defined quality criteria or left them undefined. In both studies, participants were led to believe that they would work on a task with a supervising leader and indicated their preferred leader style for the task. Contrary to predictions, results do not suggest that the definition of quality criteria moderates the influence of followers' regulatory mode on their leadership preferences. Independent of quality criteria conditions, both chronic assessment and locomotion predicted preferences for directive leadership; additionally, chronic locomotion strongly predicted preferences for participative leadership. However, the induced regulatory mode did not influence leadership preferences. Further work is needed to better understand the role of context in self-regulatory dynamics and leadership style preferences.

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A central tenet of organizations' success is leaders' ability to motivate their followers and, in turn, followers appreciating their leaders (Howell & Avolio, 1993). An obvious question resulting from this observation is which leadership style one should pursue. Accordingly, considerable attention has been paid to better understand what makes leadership successful (Avolio et al., 2003; Judge & Piccolo, 2004), with a special focus on identifying effective leadership styles, approaches, and behaviors that motivate followers (e.g. Derue et al., 2011; Yukl, 2012). The most intuitive answer – namely that it depends – has been supported by numerous studies, which in particular highlighted two factors having an important impact, namely characteristics of followers and of situations (e.g. Fiedler, 1964; Howell & Shamir, 2005; Lord et al., 1999; Sims et al., 2009).

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Regarding follower characteristics, much recent research has explained successful leadership as being based on matching leader and follower characteristics, and specifically as a correspondence of their self-regulatory preferences, which is called regulatory fit (Higgins, 2000). However, this research provided evidence for fit regarding some self-regulatory systems (i.e. regulatory focus, see Hamstra et al., 2011, p. 2014), but also revealed contradictory findings regarding other self-regulatory systems (i.e. regulatory mode, see Kruglanski et al., 2007; Pierro et al., 2009). We propose to shed light on the latter contradiction by examining how followers' regulatory mode might differently shape their preference for directive or participative leadership styles depending on contextual features, and more precisely whether the quality criteria for a task at hand are defined versus undefined. Specifically, we suggest that assessment oriented followers will more strongly prefer directive leadership when such quality criteria are well-defined compared to when they are not; and that they will instead prefer participative leadership when such quality criteria are ill defined or absent compared to when they are clearly defined. As we explain in more detail below, under both these contexts the respective leadership style should especially fit followers' main self-regulatory concerns, constituting an interpersonal regulatory fit. As such, if successful our efforts will allow to provide guidance on how to improve leadership success.

Regulatory mode theory

Regulatory mode theory (Higgins et al., 2003; Kruglanski et al., 2010, 2000) posits the existence of two self-regulatory modes: assessment and locomotion. Assessment is a facet of self-regulation concerned with critical evaluations and finding the best available option (Kruglanski et al., 2000). Consequently, high assessors prefer to weight positive and negative aspects of means or goals and compare them with alternatives in order to make sure that they complete tasks in an accurate manner, because what they are mainly concerned about is "doing it right" (Kruglanski et al., 2010, 2000). In addition, assessment mode also entails an inclination to compare oneself with others or with norms in terms of performance and success. Therefore, high assessors have strong self-evaluative concerns, often engage in self-criticism, and seek to prove to themselves and others that they can perform well (Komissarouk et al., 2019; Kruglanski et al., 2013).

Conversely, locomotion is a facet of self-regulation concerned with movement from state to state and change (Kruglanski et al., 2000). Therefore, high locomotors prefer to maintain a constant activity flow and avoid immobility (Higgins et al., 2003), precisely because this ensures alterations and because what they are mainly concerned about is "just doing it" (Kruglanski et al., 2010, 2000). Compared to assessment-oriented individuals, they do not have important self-evaluation concerns and are less likely to engage in self-criticism (Komissarouk et al., 2019).

The two orientations entail different implications regarding individuals' judgments, engagement in activities, and their decision-making process (Cavallo et al., 2016; Pierro et al., 2009). Of interest in the context of the current work, high assessors prize the value of goals, as they aim to achieve the best relative quality, whereas individuals high in locomotion prize goals' attainability, as this ensures they can move forward (Kruglanski et al., 2000). Additionally, high assessors emphasize performance to show that they can reach the best standards, whereas high locomotors, who are less concerned with proving

that they can reach certain standards, emphasize learning (Higgins et al., 2003). Furthermore, due to their concern with getting things right, assessors more strongly engage in counterfactual thinking and report more regret than locomotors when contemplating a decision with a negative outcome (Pierro et al., 2008). Moreover, they are more likely to adopt strategies that ensure they are going about things in the best possible way. For instance, high assessors seek to ensure that they reach the goal at hand in the best possible manner (rather than reaching it quickly) and therefore prefer multifinal to unifinal means (thus emphasizing value over instrumentality), whereas high locomotors display the opposite pattern (Orehek et al., 2012). In addition, and highlighting the importance assessors attach to ensuring that they proceed correctly, when providing help, they are more inclined than locomotors to tailor their help to match receivers' needs (Cavallo et al., 2016).

Leader-follower regulatory fit

According to the "regulatory fit" principle (Higgins, 2000), regulatory mode and other self-regulation strategies determine how people respond to the context they find themselves in. Individuals have more positive attitudes regarding objects, people, or messages, and show greater task engagement and persistence when they use strategies that fit their regulatory orientations (Higgins, 2000, 2005; Motyka et al., 2014). For example, past research at the intrapersonal level showed that regulatory fit influences activity enjoyment (Freitas & Higgins, 2002), value endorsement (Wolfin & Bardi, 2018), and the persuasiveness of messages (Cesario et al., 2004). At the interpersonal level such a fit between individuals sharing a similar self-regulatory orientation has been shown to influence the intensity of interpersonal evaluation (Hamstra et al., 2013), the experience of others' advice as beneficial, and people's willingness to forgive transgressors (Santelli et al., 2009).

Regulatory fit is particularly relevant in a leadership context. In fact, leaders' behaviors and instructions indicate to followers what strategies they should use to complete their objectives (e.g. Hamstra et al., 2014; Kark et al., 2018). Followers' commitment and appreciation of their leaders, in turn, vary depending on whether or not leaders' indications and suggestions fit followers' own regulatory preferences (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007; Sassenberg & Hamstra, 2017). In other words, if leadership in various contexts provides the basis to let individuals pursue goals in the manner they most prefer, followers more strongly enjoy what they are doing and appreciate their leaders more than when this is not the case. Evidence for such so-called leader-follower regulatory fit can be found in the literature on regulatory focus (Higgins, 1998). Like regulatory mode theory, regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1998) posits two self-regulatory systems operating within individuals: a promotion focus concerned with ideals and aspirations (entailing a motivation to ensure gains) and a prevention focus concerned with security and safety (entailing a motivation to avoid losses). Research provided evidence for positive effects of regulatory fit between followers' promotion focus and transformational leadership (i.e. leaders communicating a shared vision of the future and encouraging initiative and change; Bass, 1985; Lowe et al., 1996) and between followers' prevention focus and transactional leadership (i.e. leaders communicating clear expectations regarding task performance and rewards). For example, individuals indicated fewer turnover intentions (Hamstra et al.,

2011) and felt more valued (Hamstra et al., 2014) when their leaders displayed a leadership style that fit their own regulatory focus (for a review, see Sassenberg & Hamstra, 2017).

However, the evidence for interpersonal regulatory fit is less clear cut regarding regulatory mode, with the limited available research on leader–follower fit reporting rather inconsistent findings. First, research on transformational and transactional leaderships did not provide clear preference patterns for regulatory mode. Specifically, high locomotors evaluated more positively transformational leadership than transactional leadership, but assessment did not predict preferences for any of these leadership styles (Benjamin & Flynn, 2006). Moreover, on the one hand, a strong assessment mode is positively associated with preferences for an advisory/participative leadership style (i.e. a style whereby leaders consult with their followers and encourage them to influence work unit decision-making; House, 1996) for followers, but this is not the case for a forceful/directive leadership style (i.e. a style whereby leaders clearly indicate to followers what they have to do and how they should do it). These relationships reversed for followers with a strong locomotion mode (Kruglanski et al., 2007). On the other hand, students high in assessment mode were more satisfied with teachers creating a “controlling” learning climate (where teachers seek to regulate others’ behavior, for instance, through the use of sanctions and rewards; Black & Deci, 2000) compared to an “autonomy-oriented” learning climate (where teachers consider others’ perspective and share necessary knowledge, without seeking to control others’ behavior). Students high in locomotion mode showed the opposite preferences (Pierro et al., 2009). However, teachers seek to influence and guide students (akin to leaders seeking to influence followers). Thus, whilst both contexts are compatible in terms of them focusing on leader–follower relations, the results regarding what style of leadership is appreciated by followers as a function of their regulatory mode seem contradictory. To illustrate, an advisory/participative leadership style is incompatible with a controlling leadership style – yet both were preferred by high assessment followers/students. Similarly, a forceful/directive leadership style is incompatible with an autonomy-oriented leadership style – yet both were preferred by high locomotion followers/students. In the present research, we propose that these contradictory or at best inconclusive results are likely to stem from potential contextual effects not taken into account in the past research.

Considering context: definition of quality criteria

Several past and more recent studies show that preferences for different leadership styles are context-dependent (e.g. Hofmann et al., 2003; Klein & House, 1995; Sims et al., 2009). For instance, face-to-face and virtual interaction (Purvanova & Bono, 2009), followers’ experience with tasks or lack thereof (e.g. Somech, 2005), as well as task complexity (e.g. Sims et al., 2009) differently influence the leadership style sought for by followers, indicating that individuals’ leadership preferences fluctuate depending on different contexts. This resonates with calls stressing that context should be taken more strongly into account when considering leadership (e.g. Avolio, 2007; Fiedler, 1964).

Regulatory mode influences individuals not only in their goal pursuit, but also in how they deal with different contexts in line with the principle of regulatory fit. To illustrate, assessors were willing to pay more for the same product when the context allowed for

a full evaluation strategy (i.e. all products are considered in every step of the selection process; fitting their concern with evaluation) rather than when the context required a progressive evaluation strategy (i.e. products are progressively eliminated in the selection process; fitting locomotors' concern with change); for locomotors, the opposite was the case (Avnet & Higgins, 2003). High assessment followers seek to do the right thing and thus to make sure their work and performance are of the best possible quality. Therefore, clearly defined quality criteria are likely to be a particularly relevant information for them as such criteria clearly serve this aim. Indeed, clear quality criteria are an important source of information for improving one's quality of work and the presence of detailed evaluation systems, for instance, predict better performance of employees (Hall, 2008; Yuliansyah & Khan, 2015). It stands to reason that the presence or absence of situationally predefined quality criteria not only affects how assessors' approach tasks, but also influences their preference for a specific leadership style that guides them in their completion of tasks.

Specifically, faced with clear quality criteria that are predefined and available prior to commencing a task, high assessors should especially appreciate a leadership approach that facilitates them attaining the best quality. When criteria are clear, a leadership style emphasizing what has to be done and how, whilst also monitoring followers' work to make sure they are keeping in line with such predefined criteria, should positively resonate with and fit assessors' regulatory concern to "do the right thing" and to perform well. Consequently, in such a context assessor should especially appreciate working under a directive leadership, which includes making clear what followers need to do and how to do this by closely overseeing their work (House, 1996; Li et al., 2018). Such a preference would be consistent with Pierro et al. (2009) finding that students prefer a controlling school climate, as in this context the grading and evaluation system in place provides a clear and established "quality scale."

In contrast, when a given situation does not provide clear and predefined quality criteria, high assessors should instead especially prefer a leadership approach that allows them to appraise all available information in a manner that ensures they approach and accomplish a given task in the best possible manner. When criteria are unclear, a leadership style that not only allows but encourages people to consider different options and to discuss various possible approaches to a given task should resonate with and fit assessors' preference to "do the right thing" and to perform well. Consequently, in such a context assessor should especially appreciate working under a participative leadership, which includes consulting with followers and eliciting their opinions (House, 1996). This preference would be consistent with Kruglanski et al. (2007) findings: In their studies participants were firefighters, police officers, and bank clerks – and thus working in contexts in which it is difficult, if not impossible, to predefine one sole best approach or to establish prior of what would constitute the best outcome in terms of quality.

Contrary to assessors, locomotors are much less concerned with achieving the best quality and rather value movement and change, dislike action inhibitors, and want to get on with the task at hand and "just do it" (Kruglanski et al., 2013). For these reasons, the presence or absence of clear quality indicators should have little or no influence on leadership preferences among locomotion-oriented followers, as neither leadership style would especially fit their main regulatory concern in both respective contexts (i.e. whether or not clear predefined quality criteria are present).

Overall, investigating how predefined quality criteria might influence the preference for different leadership styles among followers who differ in their regulatory mode seems especially relevant to advance current research in this field, potentially reconciling earlier contradictory findings.

The present research

In this research, we seek to examine how followers' regulatory mode (assessment vs. locomotion) influences preferences for directive versus participative leadership styles depending on the context providing quality criteria or not (defined vs. undefined). This investigation thus jointly considers the three pillars of leadership success: leadership style, followers' characteristics, and context (Avolio, 2007).

We conducted two studies in which participants were employees recruited online. We either measured their chronic regulatory mode (Kruglanski et al., 2000; Study 1) or experimentally induced regulatory mode (Avnet & Higgins, 2003; Study 2) and manipulated the definition of quality criteria by presenting participants with either a project characterized by clear evaluation criteria or a project that had no clear evaluation criteria. We then measured participants' preferences for directive and participative leadership styles.

Our predictions were twofold. First, we expected that high assessment followers will prefer directive leadership more strongly when the quality criteria are defined compared to when they are undefined (Hypothesis 1). We also predicted that high assessment followers will prefer participative leadership more strongly when the quality criteria are undefined compared to when they are defined (Hypothesis 2). We will examine and report results regarding locomotion mode, although this is done in an exploratory manner, not based on specific predictions, as a priori we did not have reasons to assume that leadership preferences of followers high in locomotion would be influenced by (un)defined quality criteria. Both studies received ethical approval from the ethic committee of the university this research was conducted at. All items and materials, data, and analysis scripts of Studies 1 and 2 are available at: https://osf.io/34a8q/?view_only=babd81e973814815bd71de82fbbfaef9.

Study 1

Method

Participants

To determine our sample size, we conducted a power analysis using R and following recommendations of Beaujean (2014). We used the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012) to fit the models and the simsem package (Pornprasertmanit et al., 2016) to run Monte Carlo simulations. The population model was determined based on regression coefficients from Kruglanski et al. (2007) and expected regression coefficients were based on our hypotheses (see https://osf.io/34a8q/?view_only=babd81e973814815bd71de82fbbfaef9 for the power analysis R script). This power analysis indicated that 415 participants would be required for 80% power ($1-\beta$) and $\alpha = .05$. However, to test Hypotheses 1 and 2, we need to examine whether the regression coefficients for the relation between the

assessment mode and preferences for the two leadership styles vary across the two quality criteria definition conditions. To do this, we need to compare a model with freely estimated regression coefficients against a model restricting the regression coefficients to be equal across both conditions. Therefore, in addition, we used the *semPower* package (Moshagen & Erdfelder, 2016) to run an *a priori* power analysis for comparing models. This further analysis indicated that 510 participants would be required for 80% power ($1-\beta$) and $\alpha = .05$ in order to detect a difference of fit between a constraint model (in which regressions coefficients are fixed to be equal between groups) and an unconstraint model (in which regression coefficients are not fixed). Consequently, we set our target sample size to 510 in order to have sufficient power to also compare models.

We recruited 533 participants online on Prolific Academic (prolific.co). However, before we validated participants' responses on Prolific, we first checked whether they passed at least one attention check successfully and whether they responded consistently with the same value to all items measuring the dependent variables, two of our preregistered exclusion criteria that can be detected prior to any analysis. In case of these exclusion criteria being met, responses were rejected, and further data collected until we reached 510 valid responses (i.e. our target sample size based on power analyses). To participate, participants had to fulfill a series of inclusion criteria, namely to be a native English speaker, between 18 and 65 years old, employed (at least 50% part-time) with a direct manager or leader supervising them, to not have supervisory responsibilities themselves, and to have an approval rate on Prolific of at least 97%. As CRSP-preregistered (see https://osf.io/34a8q/?view_only=babd81e973814815bd71de82fbbfaef9), we excluded participants who failed two attention checks embedded in the study (Oppenheimer et al., 2009; $n = 1$), responded consistently with the same answer to all items of a scale ($n = 10$; initially 21, but 11 of them contacted us after being rejected to indicate that their response pattern was not due to a lack of concentration when filling out the questionnaire but that it indeed reflected their opinion and they were consequently not excluded), scored higher than 5 on a lie scale (which forms part of the Regulatory Mode Questionnaire; cf. Woltin & Yzerbyt, 2020; $n = 2$), were outliers (studentized residuals $> |3|$, Cohen et al., 2003; Judd et al., 2011; $n = 4$), or took more than 3 standard deviations of the average time needed to complete the study ($n = 13$). There were no participants who guessed the aim of the study. The final sample thus comprised 503 participants (322 females, 178 males, two nonbinary, and one who preferred not to say; $M_{\text{age}} = 35.52$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 10.84$, range: 18–65 years old).

Procedure and materials

All participants received £0.70 as a monetary compensation for their participation in the study, which on average took 7 minutes to complete. After agreeing to participate, participants answered demographic questions, including questions regarding their occupation, field, how many hours a week they usually work, how often they interact with their leader, and how long they had been working with their current leader. We then assessed chronic regulatory mode using the Regulatory Mode Questionnaire (Kruglanski et al., 2000). Next, we informed participants that they would watch a video of a meeting for which they were asked to subsequently write a report. They learned that they would be paired with one of our task supervisors, who would be their leader and as such guide

them during task completion. To ensure that participants indeed believed that they would be matched with a supervisor, the study was only running during weekday working hours (i.e. between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., Central European Time).

We manipulated the definition of quality criteria by randomly assigning participants to one of two conditions. In the *defined quality criteria* condition ($n = 249$), we presented participants with clear task instructions, containing a detailed but easily accessible evaluation grid. In the *undefined quality criteria* condition ($n = 254$), task instructions did not include such an evaluation grid (for details see https://osf.io/34a8q/?view_only=babd81e973814815bd71de82fbbfaef9). Next, we measured leadership preferences by asking participants to indicate which type of leadership style their task supervisors should adopt in supervising them during the following task. Finally, participants answered a quality criteria manipulation check. The study ended with additional demographic questions (i.e. age, gender, native language, nationality, and highest level of education completed) before participants were debriefed and thanked.

Measures

Chronic regulatory mode. We assessed chronic regulatory mode using the well-established Regulatory Mode Questionnaire (Kruglanski et al., 2000). This measure consists of two 12-item subscales measuring people's assessment (e.g. "I am a critical person") and locomotion mode (e.g. "I feel excited just before I am about to reach a goal"). Participants indicated to what extent they agreed with these different statements, answering on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). We aggregated the responses to the 12-item subscales to compute a mean assessment ($M = 3.91$, $SD = .72$; $\alpha = .81$) and a mean locomotion score ($M = 4.16$, $SD = .70$; $\alpha = .85$) for each participant. As mentioned above, we also assessed the six-item lie subscale (e.g. "I always make the right decision"), which has the same response format and for which we similarly computed a mean score ($M = 2.45$, $SD = .69$; $\alpha = .62$).

Leadership style preferences. We measured participants' preferences for directive and participative leadership styles by asking them how they would like their task leader to behave and act ("I would like my leader for this task to be someone who ..."). We used two five-item subscales, comprising items adapted from the Path-Goal Leadership Questionnaire (Northouse, 1997) and from Li et al. (2018). Kruglanski et al. (2007) also used adapted items from the Path-Goal Leadership Questionnaire. Participants indicated to what extent they would like their task leader to adopt certain behaviors, representing either a directive leadership style (e.g. "... lets me know precisely what is expected of me") or a participative leadership style (e.g. "... consults with me when facing a problem"), using a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). We aggregated the responses to create a mean preference score for directive ($M = 5.32$, $SD = .93$; $\alpha = .79$) and for participative leadership ($M = 5.61$, $SD = .89$; $\alpha = .83$) for each participant.

Manipulation check. Participants completed two items as manipulation check of the definition of quality criteria manipulation ("There are clear criteria regarding how to do the task" and "How the task is going to be evaluated is clear to me"; scale range: 1 = *totally disagree* to 7 = *totally agree*; correlation between the items $r = .75$, $p < .001$).

Results

Manipulation check

We ran a *t*-test with the definition of quality criteria as independent variable and the mean score of the two items as dependent variable. This revealed a main effect of quality criteria condition $t(482.16) = 7.18, p < .001, d = 0.65$, such that participants in the defined quality criteria condition scored higher ($M = 5.60, SD = 1.32$) than participants in the undefined quality criteria condition ($M = 4.65, SD = 1.65$), attesting to the success of our manipulation.

Preregistered analyses

To test our hypotheses that assessment followers prefer directive leadership more strongly when the quality criteria are defined than when there are undefined (Hypothesis 1) and that they prefer participative leadership more strongly when the quality criteria are undefined rather than when there are defined (Hypothesis 2), we conducted multiple-group path analyses. We tested a model in which assessment and locomotion mode predict preferences for directive and for participative leadership and investigated whether the definition of quality criteria is a moderator of the model by comparing a constrained to an unconstrained model (Rosseel, 2021).

Regarding the paths among the entire sample, the estimates of the constrained model indicated a good fit to our data ($\chi^2[7] = 14.447, p = .044, RMSEA = .065, CFI = 0.954, SRMR = .049$), with values of the $RMSEA \leq .08, CFI \geq .90$ and $SRMR \leq .08$ (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The nested model comparison indicated that the unconstrained model did not improve the model fit, $\Delta \chi^2 = 5.377, \Delta df = 4, p = .251$ (unconstrained model estimates of fit indexes: $\chi^2[3] = 9.070, p = .028, RMSEA = .090, CFI = 0.962, SRMR = .032$). This latter analysis suggests that the definition of the quality criteria is not a moderator of the proposed model. Instead, regardless of quality criteria conditions, assessment was positively associated with a preference for directive leadership ($b = .16, CI_{95\%} [.05, .27], SE = .06, p = .004$) and also for participative leadership ($b = .10, CI_{95\%} [.01, .20], SE = .06, p = .038$). In addition, and also regardless of conditions, locomotion was positively associated with preferences for directive leadership ($b = .25, CI_{95\%} [.14, .37], SE = .05, p < .001$) and more strongly so for participative leadership ($b = .52, CI_{95\%} [.42, .62], SE = .05, p < .001$), see (Figure 1).

Exploratory analyses

Individuals can be high or low in both regulatory modes, but because the two modes entail opposing strategies, individuals will tend to favor strategies that match their predominant mode. Therefore, we decided to explore assessment predominance effects to gain further insights into what leadership style might be preferred by individuals who prioritize assessment over locomotion. We calculated a predominance score ($M = -0.26, SD = 0.96$) by subtracting the locomotion from the assessment mean score, as commonly done to analyze regulatory mode effects (see, e.g. Higgins et al., 2008; Orehek et al., 2012; Webb et al., 2017; Woltin & Yzerbyt, 2020; Zee et al., 2018). Results for this alternative model also indicated a good fit to our data ($\chi^2[3] = 2.189, p = .534, RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00, SRMR = .029$). However, the unconstrained model again did not improve the model fit, $\Delta \chi^2 = 0.473, \Delta df = 2, p = .789$ (unconstrained model estimates of fit indexes: $\chi^2[1] = 1.715, p = .190, RMSEA = .053, CFI = 0.989, SRMR = .025$), thus suggesting that also for this

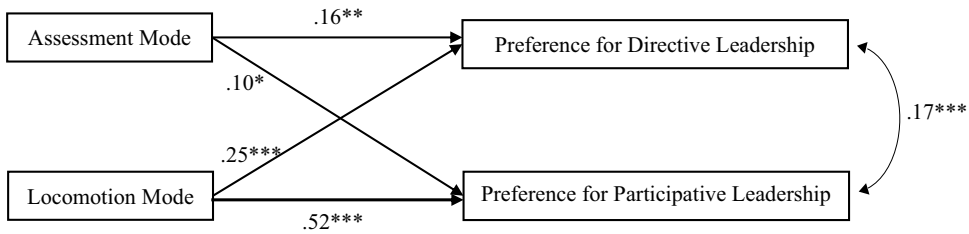


Figure 1. Model of assessment and locomotion modes predicting preferences for directive and participative leadership styles.

alternative model the definition of the quality criteria is not a moderator of the proposed model. Regardless of conditions, assessment predominance was not significantly associated with preferences for directive leadership ($b = -.03$, $CI_{95\%} [-.12, .04]$, $SE = .04$, $p = .341$), but it was significantly and negatively associated with preferences for participative leadership ($b = -.20$, $CI_{95\%} [-.28, -.12]$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$), see (Figure 2).

Discussion

The results of Study 1 do not support our predictions, as the definition of quality criteria did not seem to influence assessors' leadership preferences. Moreover, findings suggest that assessment and locomotion modes are positively associated with preferences for both leadership styles, and that locomotion particularly predicts preferences for participative leadership. This dovetails with the results of Pierro et al. (2009), who found locomotion-oriented students to report preferences for an autonomy-oriented, rather than a control-oriented, teaching style.

One limitation of this study might be that it relied on participants chronic regulatory mode. In fact, individuals can be high or low in both regulatory modes, and as the two modes prioritize opposing strategies, the presence of both modes in participants might have interfered with their task approach and reported preferred leadership. The additional analyses looking at the assessment predominance score aimed to address this limitation. Nonetheless, these analyses are exploratory and require further support. Moreover, and regardless of specific analyses, results of the present study are correlational and do not allow a causal interpretation. Hence, the next study, whilst including similar measures and procedures, manipulated participants' regulatory mode to maximize chances of participants having only one mode in the forefront/predominantly operating and allow the conclusion of a causal relationship.

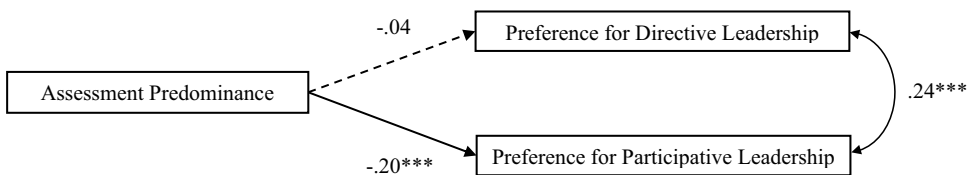


Figure 2. Model of assessment predominance predicting preferences for directive and participative leadership styles.

Study 2

The goal of Study 2 was to test if expected relations between regulatory mode and leadership style preferences would emerge when considering experimentally induced assessment versus locomotion mode. To this end, we used the same measures and procedures as in Study 1, but instead of measuring participants' chronic regulatory mode it was induced by means of a well-established situational recall task. Even though Study 1 (considering chronic regulatory mode) did not produce the predicted effects, this second study nonetheless could prove to be informative as it allows investigating the influence of regulatory mode more directly. Specifically, with induced regulatory mode only one of the two modes is temporarily in the foreground. This might prevent/circumvent potential conflicts between the two modes that followers chronically high (or low) in *both* modes might experience in their strategies and task approach (cf. Cesario & Higgins, 2008; Orehek et al., 2012; Righetti et al., 2011; Webb et al., 2017). Furthermore, to the best of our knowledge only one previous work has investigated followers' leadership preferences as a function of induced regulatory mode, but it focused on different dimensions of leadership behavior (i.e. Benjamin & Flynn, 2006). The current study thus aimed to contribute to the scarce research on induced regulatory mode in the leadership context. It again tested our hypotheses regarding the moderating role of quality criteria on the relation between assessment mode and leadership style preferences.

Method

Participants and design

We conducted a power analysis using the PANGEA webapp (Westfall, 2016), specifying a design with one within-subjects factor (leadership style: directive vs. participative), and two between-subjects factors (regulatory mode: assessment vs. locomotion; quality criteria definition: defined vs. undefined). As CRSP-preregistered (see https://osf.io/34a8q/?view_only=babd81e973814815bd71de82fbbfaef9), we aimed for being able to detect a small effect size (i.e. $d = .20$), which at the same time constitutes our smallest effect size of interest (Lakens, 2021). In order to detect this effect size, the power analysis revealed that 528 participants would be required to ensure 80% power ($1-\beta$) with $\alpha = .05$. As in Study 1, we recruited participants online on Prolific Academic (prolific.co). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four different conditions (assessment mode/defined quality criteria; assessment mode/undefined quality criteria; locomotion mode/defined quality criteria; locomotion mode/undefined quality criteria).

In total, 542 participants completed the study. As pre-registered, we excluded participants who failed an attention check item embedded in the study (Oppenheimer et al., 2009; $n = 7$), responded consistently with the same answer to all items of a scale ($n = 10$; initially 15, but as in the previous study, 5 of them contacted us after being rejected to indicate that their response pattern indeed reflected their opinion and they were consequently not excluded), were outliers (studentized residuals $> |3|$, $n = 1$), took more than 3 standard deviations of the average time needed to complete the survey ($n = 7$), or who did not comply with instructions of the regulatory mode induction task and instead wrote about something different from what was asked for ($n = 20$). There were no participants

who guessed the aim of the study. The final sample thus comprised 497 participants (339 females, 154 males, three nonbinary people, and one who preferred not to say; $M_{\text{age}} = 35.13$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 10.72$, range: 18–65 years old).

Procedure and materials

All participants received £0.99 as a monetary compensation for their participation in a survey, which on average took 13 minutes to complete. After participants agreed to participate, they completed the same demographic questions as in Study 1. Subsequently, they completed the regulatory mode induction, which consisted of a well-established recall task (e.g. Orehek et al., 2012; Pierro et al., 2008; Woltin & Yzerbyt, 2020) from Avnet and Higgins (2003). This induction consisted in writing short paragraphs about three different situations that, depending on experimental conditions, entailed concerns of either assessment or locomotion mode, thus making situationally salient one or the other mode. Specifically, in the locomotion condition participants were asked to write about the three following situations: “Think back of a time when you ... ” 1) “ ... successfully acted like a ‘doer,’” 2) “ ... waited too long and an opportunity passed,” and 3) “ ... decided to do something and could not wait to get started.” Contrary, in the assessment condition participants were asked to write about the three following situations: “Think back of a time when you ... ” 1) “ ... successfully acted like a critical person,” 2) “ ... did not carefully enough evaluate different options and made an erroneous decision” and 3) “ ... critiqued work done by others or yourself.” For each answer, participants had to write at minimum 150 characters and had to spend a minimum of one minute on the page prompting them for the respective situation before they were able to continue.

Subsequently, we implemented the exact same procedures and measures as in Study 1 (i.e. participants learnt that they would watch a video of a meeting and would have to write a report about it; they were asked to state their leadership preferences, etc.), including the same manipulation of the definition of quality criteria, the same measures of directive ($M = 5.39$, $SD = .97$; $\alpha = .80$) and participative leadership preferences ($M = 5.66$, $SD = .92$; $\alpha = .85$), and the same quality criteria manipulation check items. In addition, at the end of the experiment, participants had to answer two questions regarding the regulatory mode manipulation (see details below).

Manipulation checks

Definition of quality criteria. Participants completed the two same items as in Study 1 (correlation between items: $r = .73$, $p < .001$).

Regulatory mode. We created two items that served as a manipulation check for the regulatory mode manipulation (“I had to remember situations where I acted like a critical person” and “I had to remember situations where I acted like a doer,” reversed item; scale range 1 = *totally disagree* to 7 = *totally agree*; correlation between items: $r = .79$, $p < .001$). To the best of our knowledge, the present regulatory mode induction has always been used without a manipulation check, which we deem problematic. We therefore proposed these items, which admittedly constitute a content recall, as a proxy for a manipulation check as there are no existing manipulation checks for this regulatory mode induction task.

Results

Manipulation checks

We ran a *t*-test with the definition of quality criteria as independent variable and the mean score of the two quality criteria manipulation check items as dependent variable to check if the manipulation of the definition of quality criteria was effective. The *t*-test revealed a strong main effect of the quality criteria condition, $t(476.64) = 9.99$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.91$ (defined criteria: $M = 5.67$, $SD = 1.27$; undefined criteria: $M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.63$), again attesting to the success of our quality criteria manipulation.

We ran a *t*-test with the regulatory mode condition as independent variable and the mean score of the two regulatory mode manipulation check items as dependent variables. As the index was formed such that higher scores denote higher assessment, the manipulation is successful if this mean score is significantly higher in the assessment compared to the locomotion condition. This was indeed the case, with the *t*-test revealing a main effect of the regulatory mode manipulation in the expected direction, $t(412.97) = 49.179$, $p < .001$, $d = 4.84$ (assessment: $M = 5.94$, $SD = 1.24$; locomotion: $M = 1.26$, $SD = 0.83$), supporting the success of the regulatory mode manipulation.

Preregistered analyses

To test our hypotheses that assessment-oriented followers prefer directive leadership more strongly when the quality criteria are defined than when there are undefined (Hypothesis 1) and that they prefer participative leadership more strongly when the quality criteria are undefined rather than when they are defined (Hypothesis 2), we submitted participants' preference for directive and participative leadership to a mixed 2 (leadership style: directive vs. participative) $\times$ 2 (regulatory mode: locomotion vs. assessment) $\times$ 2 (definition of quality criteria: defined vs. undefined) ANOVA, with the first factor varying within participants and the two others varying between participants.

There was a significant main effect of leadership style, with participants indicating a stronger preference for participative ($M = 5.66$, $SD = .92$) than directive leadership ($M = 5.39$, $SD = .97$). There was no main effect of regulatory mode, nor of the definition of quality criteria. Also, there were not significant two-way interactions among factors considered. More central to our research, the leadership style $\times$ regulatory mode $\times$ definition of quality criteria interaction was not significant (see [Table 1](#) and [Figure 3](#) for detailed results, including means and standard deviations).

Exploratory analyses

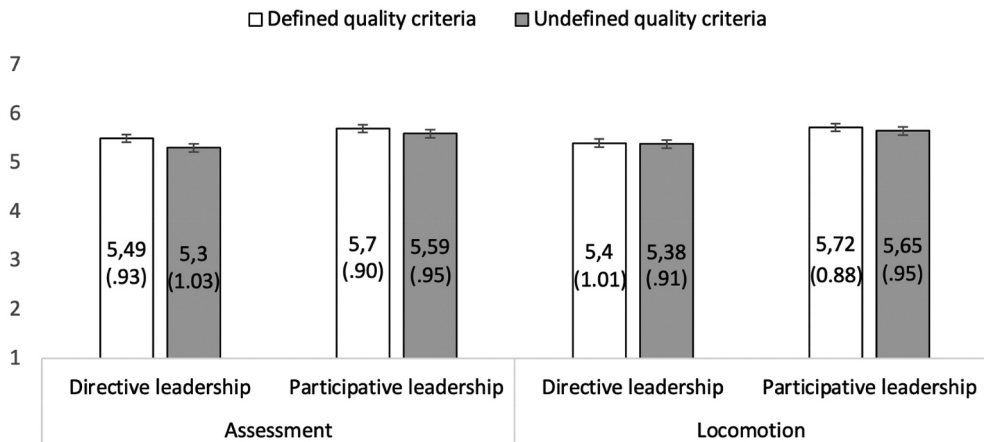
To check whether indeed both quality criteria and regulatory mode were successfully and independently manipulated, we conducted additional analyses, submitting participants' answers to the quality criteria manipulation check and to the regulatory mode manipulation check to two separate 2 (regulatory mode: locomotion vs. assessment) $\times$ 2 (definition of quality criteria: defined vs. undefined) ANOVAs.

Regarding the definition of quality criteria manipulation check, the ANOVA revealed that there was, as expected, a significant main effect of the definition of quality criteria, $F(1, 493) = 97.76$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .17$ (defined criteria: $M = 5.67$,

Table 1. Results overview of main analyses.

Predictors	F	β	SE	CI _{95%}	p	η_p^2
Leadership Style (LS)	29.66	-.27	.05	-0.37, -0.17	<.001	.06
Regulatory Mode (RM)	.08	-.02	.07	-0.15, 0.12	.783	< .001
Quality Criteria (QC)	1.93	.10	.07	-0.04, 0.23	.166	< .01
LS $\times$ RM	.19	.04	.10	-0.15, 0.24	.666	< .001
LS $\times$ QC	.02	.02	.10	-0.18, 0.21	.891	< .001
RM $\times$ QC	.62	.11	.14	-0.16, 0.38	.431	< .01
LS $\times$ RM $\times$ QC	.33	.11	.20	-0.28, 0.51	.568	<.001

Degrees of freedom are (1, 493).

**Figure 3.** Means (and standard deviations in parentheses) of preferences for directive and participative leadership and standard errors of means (as error bars) as a function of regulatory mode and the definition of the quality criteria.

$SD = 1.27$; undefined criteria: $M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.63$). There was no main effect of regulatory mode $F(1, 493) = 1.64$, $p = .202$, $\eta_p^2 < .01$, and no significant interaction between the two factors, $F(1, 493) = 0.20$, $p = .758$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$. These further results support the success of our quality criteria manipulation, independently of the regulatory mode manipulation.

Regarding the regulatory mode manipulation check, the ANOVA revealed that there was, as expected, a significant main effect of regulatory mode, $F(1, 493) = 2484.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .83$ (assessment: $M = 5.94$, $SD = 1.24$; locomotion: $M = 1.27$, $SD = 0.83$). There was no main effect of the definition of quality criteria, $F(1, 493) = 0.02$, $p = .878$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$, and no significant interaction between the two factors, $F(1, 493) = 3.84$, $p = .051$, $\eta_p^2 < .01$. These further results support the success of our regulatory mode manipulation, independently of the quality criteria manipulation. However, the interaction almost reached significance and for further explorative purposes we decomposed the interaction. It showed that in the defined criteria conditions, the manipulation was successful, $F(1, 493) = 1115.16$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .69$ (assessment: $M = 5.85$, $SD = 1.22$; locomotion: $M = 1.36$, $SD = 0.64$). In the undefined criteria condition, the manipulation was also successful, $F(1, 493) = 1372.16$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .74$ (assessment: $M = 6.03$, $SD = 1.26$; locomotion: $M = 1.17$, $SD = 0.99$), albeit stronger.

Discussion

Contrary to our hypotheses, the definition of quality criteria did not influence the relation between followers' induced regulatory mode and their leadership style preferences. In addition, the induced regulatory mode – regardless of quality criteria – did not influence leadership preferences, either. This is surprising given that previous work demonstrated a relationship between individuals' situationally induced regulatory mode and their task approach as well as their interpersonal preferences (e.g. Pierro et al., 2013; Zee et al., 2018). The absence of a regulatory mode main effect might be due to the influence of the regulatory mode manipulation waning with time spend on the quality criteria manipulation and/or it being somehow undermined by this second manipulation. To this point, the exploratory ANOVA conducted on the regulatory mode manipulation check indicated that the manipulation tended to be stronger in the undefined compared to the defined quality criteria condition. The defined quality criteria condition required participants to read a detailed evaluation grid, which takes time and entails additional reflection. Overall, this suggests that studies features implemented after the regulatory mode induction, including other manipulations, might differently interfere with this induction and should thus be considered with caution in future studies.

Overall, our findings suggest that the influence of regulatory mode on followers' leadership preferences is not moderated by the absence or presence of clear quality criteria. However, the analyses we applied do not allow drawing conclusion on these null results. Therefore, we conducted additional equivalence testing analyses to potentially draw more precise conclusions based on the present results.

Additional exploratory analyses regarding both studies

Because no predicted effects emerged in either of our two studies, we performed equivalence testing (Lakens, 2017; Meyners, 2012) in order to test whether the observed effects were significantly smaller than a preset smallest effect size of interest (SESOI); effects smaller than the SESOI are considered equivalent to zero. This statistical approach allows drawing conclusions regarding null or small effects and, therefore, allows rejecting the presence of an effect considered worthwhile.

Study 1

In Study 1, we applied the Anderson and Hauck equivalence test (AH; Anderson & Hauck, 1983), as recommended by Counsell and Cribbie (2015; R function developed by Dick et al., 2019) to examine whether the difference between the regression coefficients in the two quality criteria conditions could be considered equivalent to zero. We set our equivalence bounds to $\delta = -0.2$ to $+0.2$, considered as a weak effect size (Acock, 2014). The null hypothesis of the AH equivalence test is that the difference between two regression coefficients falls outside of our equivalence bounds. The test calculates a confidence interval (CI) for the parameter estimate; for the difference between the two regression coefficients to be considered equivalent to zero, the $CI_{90\%}$ of β should fall within the set equivalence bounds, that is $\delta = -0.2$ to $+0.2$ in our case.

Regarding the regression coefficients of assessment on directive leadership, the presence of a meaningful effect was rejected, $CI_{90\%}$ of β $[-.13, .15]$, $p < .001$. This result indicates that the regression coefficients can be considered equivalent under both quality criteria conditions. However, the presence of a meaningful difference between the regression coefficients of assessment on participative leadership preferences was not rejected, $CI_{90\%}$ of β $[-.25, .01]$, $p = .150$. This indicates that the presence of an effect equal to or bigger than $\delta = \pm 0.2$ cannot be rejected. In addition, the presence of meaningful differences between the regression coefficients of locomotion on directive leadership preferences, $CI_{90\%}$ of β $[-.21, .07]$, $p = .068$, and participative leadership preferences, $CI_{90\%}$ of β $[-.25, -.01]$, $p = .179$, was also not rejected, indicating once again that the presence of an effect equal to or bigger than $\delta = \pm 0.2$ cannot be rejected.

Finally, the presence of a meaningful difference between the regression coefficients of assessment predominance on directive leadership preferences was also not rejected, $CI_{90\%}$ of β $[-.08, .21]$, $p = .060$, indicating that the presence of an effect equal to or bigger than $\delta = \pm 0.2$ cannot be rejected. However, concerning the regression coefficients of assessment predominance on participative leadership, the presence of a meaningful effect was rejected, $CI_{90\%}$ of β $[-.10, .17]$, $p = .022$, indicating that the regression coefficients can be considered equivalent in both quality criteria conditions.

Overall, the results regarding the influence of quality criteria on assessors' and locomotors' leadership preferences are mixed. The effect sizes are statistically not different from zero, but only partially equivalent to zero (specifically, only effect sizes for assessment mode on directive leadership preference and assessment predominance on participative leadership preference are considered not meaningful).

Study 2

Regarding Study 2, we applied a 2 one-sided test procedures (TOST procedure; Schuirmann, 1987; Westlake, 1972), as recommended by Lakens et al. (2020), to examine whether the mean scores in the different between-subjects conditions can be considered equivalent. We used our smallest effect size of interest (see above; Cohen's $d = 0.20$), to determine our equivalence bounds of $d = -0.20$ and $d = 0.20$ and conducted analyses using the TOSTER package (Lakens, 2017).

Comparing the means of leadership style preferences between the two quality criteria conditions of participants in the assessment condition, this analysis did not allow to reject effect sizes that we considered meaningful for both directive, $t(235.35) = -0.041$, $p = 0.484$, and participative leadership styles, $t(236.51) = -0.627$, $p = 0.266$. Similarly, comparing the means of leadership style preferences between the two quality criteria conditions of participants in the locomotion condition, this analysis did not allow to reject effect sizes that we considered meaningful for both directive, $t(245.43) = -1.433$, $p = 0.077$, and participative leadership styles, $t(255.93) = -0.993$, $p = 0.161$.

Overall, results regarding the moderating role of quality criteria on assessors' and locomotors' leadership preferences are thus inconclusive, as both effect sizes are statistically neither different from zero, nor equivalent to zero.

We also examined the main effect of regulatory mode on leadership style preferences, using the same equivalence bounds ($d = \pm 0.20$). The presence of a meaningful effect was rejected for both directive, $t(490.36) = -2.112$, $p = 0.018$, and participative leadership styles, $t(492.11) = 1.743$, $p = 0.041$. This indicates that the effect of regulatory mode on leadership preferences can be considered equivalent to zero.

Finally, we also examined the main effect of the definition of quality criteria on leadership preferences, using the same equivalence bounds ($d = \pm 0.20$). The presence of a meaningful effect could not be rejected for both directive, $t(493.06) = -1.074$, $p = 0.142$, and participative leadership styles, $t(494.94) = -1.140$, $p = 0.127$. Therefore, results regarding the influence of quality criteria on leadership preferences are inconclusive, as the effect sizes were neither statistically different from zero, nor equivalent to zero.

General discussion

The current research sought to identify a moderator of the relationship between followers' assessment mode and their leadership preferences, with the aim of reconciling previous inconsistent findings regarding this topic (see Kruglanski et al., 2007; Pierro et al., 2009). Specifically, in two experiments, we tested the hypothesis that the influence of followers' chronic (Study 1) and induced (Study 2) assessment mode on their leadership style preferences depends on the definition of task quality criteria.

Contrary to predictions, the definition of the task quality criteria did not moderate the relation between followers' assessment mode and their leadership style preferences. This is surprising given the general importance of contextual features on leadership preferences (Fiedler, 1964; Hofmann et al., 2003; Sims et al., 2009), and more specifically previous studies focusing on regulatory mode suggesting that such preferences vary by context. Indeed, assessment policemen were found to prefer a participative leadership style (Kruglanski et al., 2007), whereas assessment students were found to prefer a controlling teaching style (Pierro et al., 2009). Assessors are oriented toward performing well and attaining outcomes of the best possible quality (Higgins et al., 2003; Pierro et al., 2008). It is thus unexpected and somewhat surprising that in the present work they were not impacted by the absence versus presence of quality criteria in a given situation, as this is a factor that allows improving the quality of one's work and performance (Hall, 2008; Tyner & Fienup, 2016). The absence of a meaningful impact on the definition of quality criteria in the current work might at least in part stem from the quality criteria manipulation used. In fact, the manipulation was self-developed and had not been extensively pretested (caveats of this task are further developed in the limitations section below). At the same time, manipulation check results in both studies clearly indicated that it was indeed successful. In addition, exploratory analyses using equivalence testing failed to demonstrate that the moderation effect of the definition of quality criteria was equivalent to zero. As such, based on the current data and results, definitive conclusions regarding the absence or presence of a moderating effect of such criteria cannot be drawn. Future research is needed to better understand the potential influence of this (and other) contextual feature(s) on assessors' and locomotors' leadership style preferences.

Participants' chronic assessment mode predicted stronger preferences for both directive and participative leadership styles, and their chronic locomotion mode predicted preferences for directive leadership and more strongly so, preferences for participative

leadership. Further exploratory analyses showed that the more participants were assessment rather than locomotion oriented, the less they preferred participative leadership. Stated differently, the more participants were predominantly locomotion oriented, the more they preferred participative leadership. These results are rather opposed to the findings of Kruglanski et al. (2007), who found that locomotors prefer directive leadership but do not much appreciate participative leadership. At the same time, they are partially in line with results of Pierro et al. (2009), who found that locomotion-oriented students show a particular preference for an autonomy-oriented teaching style, which is akin and very similar to a participative leadership style. Moreover, these latter results mirror those of Benjamin and Flynn (2006): in their studies, locomotion-oriented followers indicated a preference for transformational over transactional leadership, whilst assessment-oriented followers did not show differences in leadership style preferences. Overall, the present findings highlight the importance of followers' *chronic* regulatory mode in shaping leadership style preferences and suggest that locomotion-oriented followers might experience interpersonal self-regulatory fit when working under participative leadership. Future research investigating this potential interpersonal regulatory fit for locomotion, and positive resulting effects such as greater motivation (Benjamin & Flynn, 2006) and reduced turnover intentions (Hamstra et al., 2011), might thus provide fruitful.

At the same time, and surprisingly, in Study 2, *induced* regulatory mode did not predict leadership style preferences. Follow-up equivalence testing analyses indicated that the effect of induced regulatory mode on leadership style preferences can be considered equivalent to zero. This is an unexpected finding, as it is inconsistent with the results of Study 1 and the results of prior work demonstrating such and other self-regulatory fit effects in the context of leadership style preferences (e.g. Hamstra et al., 2014; Kruglanski et al., 2007; Sassenberg & Hamstra, 2017). Moreover, participants' preferences on how to approach a work task (Pierro et al., 2013) as well as their preferences for transformational leadership (Benjamin & Flynn, 2006) were influenced by the very same regulatory mode manipulation used in the present work. Additionally, past research demonstrated the impact of situationally induced regulatory mode on other preferences in the work context (e.g. Kanze et al., 2019).

A reason that could explain the current absence of induced regulatory mode effects is that participants might have been less impacted by the manipulation than one would hope for. The regulatory mode manipulation task is well established, and we checked each text produced by participants to make sure the induction task was properly executed; also, analyses regarding the manipulation check speak to the manipulation's success. However, the items used to gauge the success of the manipulation focused on the recall of content, and thus on what participants remembered rather than on their regulatory state. Participants might have remembered well the task without their regulatory mode state being influenced to a desired extent.

In addition, reading the task instruction and engaging with the definition of the quality criteria manipulation might have interfered with the regulatory mode manipulation and/or any potential effect of the regulatory mode induction might have faded over the time it took to complete these additional manipulations. Future research is needed to better understand when and why situationally induced regulatory mode influences followers' preferences in the work context. Induced regulatory mode might be sensitive to the

experimental design and specific procedures. This highlights that future research manipulating regulatory mode would benefit from using (more pertinent) manipulation checks to control for such undesired effects.

Limitation and future directions

A possible shortcoming of the present research concerns the definition of quality criteria manipulation. In fact, aspects relating to this manipulation in the present studies' setup might have worked against its potential effect. Specifically, participants never worked on the task the manipulation pertained to and, more importantly, nothing was at stake for them during the study or had they actually worked on it. Overall, this might have reduced their task commitment and engagement, which in turn might have limited the relevance of the difference in quality criteria provided and also of the leadership behavior they were to judge. In addition, although the manipulation check analyses indicated a significant difference between the two conditions, the mean score in the undefined quality criteria was quite high (Study 1: $M = 4.65$, Study 2: $M = 4.37$ on a 7-point scale). This could indicate that participants in this condition considered that the expectations for the task were clearer than we expected them to be. Hence, desired effects might have not emerged because of the quality criteria appearing rather clear to participants in both conditions. According to several authors (e.g. Fiedler, 1964; House, 1996), followers prefer directive leadership when task expectations are unclear. Following this logic, and though not part of our core research question, a possible main effect of the definition of the quality criteria on leadership style preferences – with participants preferring more directive leadership in the undefined quality criteria condition than in the defined condition – could have been expected. However, such an effect did not emerge, which speaks to the above interpretation of the quality criteria manipulation having been too weak. Further research should focus on developing stronger quality criteria manipulations and their application in contexts with participants being strongly invested in the task at hand, for example in relation to people's actual work tasks rather than in an experimental setup. Such efforts might contribute to a clearer understanding of the role of the definition of quality criteria on leadership style preferences.

Second, the present work sought to contribute to a clearer understanding of how a given, specific context might influence the relation between followers' regulatory mode and their leadership style preferences. However, it only addressed one possible contextual moderator. Other contextual features could play an important role in assessors' and locomotors' leadership style preferences. For example, assessors are sensitive to how others perceive and evaluate them (Giacomantonio et al., 2013; Zee et al., 2018), and their leadership preferences might accordingly differ depending on whether they work alone or with someone else on a given task.

Other possible limitations of this study are related to characteristics of the regulatory mode manipulation that might have rendered it less impactful than desired. First, the induction task – in line with the previous work (Avnet & Higgins, 2003) – consisted of describing three events, based on three items each from the 12-item subscales used to measure both modes. This task thus focuses on certain aspects of the modes, but might not situationally induce them as broadly as they are captured by the chronic measure. For example, the induction of assessment particularly

focuses on the evaluation of different options, but not on the social comparison focus additionally considered by the measure. However, this is an important component of an assessment orientation. In fact, assessors are concerned with self-evaluation and reaching the best possible outcomes and are sensitive to how they are perceived regarding their performance and when compared to others (Giacomantonio et al., 2013; Kruglanski et al., 2010). This, but not the critical evaluation of options focused on in the induction task, leads them to prefer invisible compared to visible help from others (Zee et al., 2018). In the present work, the facet of assessment particularly likely to react to differences in the definition of the quality criteria is the concern for doing things right and performing well. However, the situations used to induce assessment focus on its critical evaluation facet but emphasize less its perfectionism facet. Future experiments could manipulate regulatory mode with tasks that capture both modes more broadly (e.g. by requiring participants to report more life events associated with the respective mode and considering several of their facets).

In addition, the regulatory mode manipulation in Study 2 took place prior to any task instructions and the introduction of quality criteria (or lack thereof) and, as such, was independent of and not embedded in the task at hand. However, for the mode induction to influence later measures, it needs to carry over and remain active over time. In the current study, this might not have been the case: both time and specific subsequent task features might have weakened the regulatory mode induction. Future work could circumvent such difficulties by implementing the regulatory manipulations within the context of the actual study and/or task at hand, and additionally through the use of mode-specific vocabulary in task instruction (Kanze et al., 2019). In short, future experiments inducing regulatory mode might consider using approaches that encompass all facets of each mode and that maximize the chances of it operating throughout the study.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that the present results are only correlational (Study 1) and did not receive experimental support (Study 2). Therefore, they do not allow for concluding causal relationships between follower's regulatory mode and their leadership preferences. In fact, although our reasoning led us to expect regulatory mode, in conjunction with contextual variables, to influence leadership preferences, the direction of causality could also be reversed. Moreover, any association between regulatory mode and leadership style preferences might have resulted from a third variable operating. For instance, individuals' intrinsic motivation might have played a role here, as it is positively correlated with locomotion mode (Pierro et al., 2006) and could also entail preferences for participative leadership. Further research is needed to gain more insights into causal relationships.

Conclusion

The current work highlights the importance of followers' chronic regulatory mode in shaping their leadership style preferences. Chronic locomotion mode is strongly and positively associated with a preference for participative leadership. At the same time, based on the reported findings, it unfortunately remains unclear whether the definition of quality criteria, a contextual factor, moderates assessors' and locomotors' leadership preference. A further open question concerns whether the correlations between chronic regulatory mode and leadership style preferences generalize to situationally induced

regulatory mode. Future research aiming to shed further light on the relationship between regulatory mode, contextual features, and leadership style preferences is advised to do so directly in work contexts rather than in a somewhat artificial and hypothetical experimental setting.

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