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Authentic and laissez-faire leadership as drivers of employees wellbeing: The moderating role of resilience and self-efficacy

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**Authentic and laissez-faire leadership as drivers of employees wellbeing: The moderating role of resilience and self-efficacy**

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## **Authentic and laissez-faire leadership as drivers of employees wellbeing: The moderating role of resilience and self-efficacy**

### **Abstract**

Purpose-. Public police professionals must deal with complex and disruptive social, political and organizational environments. This fact highlights the key role that leadership can play in effectively managing their work, while also ensuring their well-being. The aim of this research is to analyze the influence of laissez-faire versus authentic leadership on the work engagement of police professionals, considering the mediating role of emotional exhaustion and the moderating role of resilience and self-efficacy.

Design/methodology/approach-. Structural equation modeling and hierarchical multiple regression analysis were used in a sample of 184 public police professionals.

Findings-. The results show that emotional exhaustion partially mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement, and fully mediates the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and work engagement. Moreover, resilience moderates the relationships between authentic leadership, emotional exhaustion and work engagement; and self-efficacy moderates the relationships between laissez-faire leadership and emotional exhaustion and between laissez-faire leadership and work engagement.

Originality/value-. This study highlights that constructive leadership is an important driver of positive experiences at work; it is necessary to change from passive to constructive leadership; and it is important for the combination of psychological resources and positive leadership to improve police professionals' well-being.

**Keywords:** Laissez-faire leadership, authentic leadership, emotional exhaustion, work engagement, resilience, self-efficacy.

## Introduction

‘Global human movements’ that are mainly motivated by people’s fundamental rights result in security being a highly desirable value. This is one of the reasons that confirms the substantial importance of the work of public police professionals. Public police work is recognized as being dynamic, demanding, and challenging and, therefore, very complex (Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023a). As a public service, police professionals play a vital role in maintaining national security and social stability, with a substantial emphasis on protecting the rights and liberties of citizens (Zhou, 2022). Currently, social changes, unexpected events and global movements arising around the world lead public police professionals to feel that they need to show more dedication to their work and energy in conducting it. For this reason, the demands and challenges of police work, along with the increasing pressure caused by recent global changes make the well-being and service quality top priorities of police professionals.

The vocational and public nature of police work, entailing the desire to do something meaningful and in the public interest, are top priorities, can lead these professionals to be more engaged with their job (Cohen et al., 2019). Work engagement refers to an individual’s state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption at work (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003). However, the police profession is high-risky, and professionals are exposed to violence, confrontation, human misery, and trauma, and even the risk of serious injury or death (Jackman et al., 2020). Moreover, public police organizations are highly bureaucratized structures with considerable formalization, hierarchy, and authority, making adaptation to change very difficult (Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023b). All of this can lead public police professionals to be exposed to risk and suffer negative experiences at work, developing feelings of emotional exhaustion (Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023b). Emotional exhaustion refers

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3 to feelings of fatigue, exhaustion, irritability, frustration, and wearing out caused by  
4 interpersonal demands (Maslach and Jackson, 1986). Emotionally-exhausted employees  
5 become worn out, and feel unable to give any more of themselves in the workplace, with  
6 destructive consequences for them, **their** organizations and society **as a whole** (Maslach and  
7 Leiter, 2017). Precisely the demanding and complex nature of **police work** can deepen and  
8 intensify the feelings of emotional exhaustion.

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18 Police professionals **thus** need to adopt a different way of acting, and the **appropriate**  
19 leadership style can help **to** achieve this (Fors Brandebo et al., 2019). A priori, constructive  
20 leadership such as authentic leadership, based on adaptation, effectiveness, learning and  
21 autonomy, can help improve the quality of the service offered and **well-being of police**  
22 **professionals**. Thus, authentic leaders, who promote both positive **psychology** skills and  
23 ethical climates (Walumbwa et al., 2008), seek to engage police professionals with their work  
24 (Hoch et al., 2018; Pastor Alvarez et al., 2019) and alleviate their feelings of emotional  
25 exhaustion (Fors Brandebo et al., 2016) by strengthening identification between the leader  
26 and the team through **an** emphasis on values, ethics and common interests (Avolio and  
27 Gardner, 2005). Conversely, passive leadership such as laissez-faire leadership, in which  
28 leaders do not participate in decision-making or assume the responsibilities that the  
29 organization requires of them (Bass and Avolio, 2004), can lead police professionals to  
30 decrease their engagement and become more emotionally exhausted (Fosse et al., 2019;  
31 Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023b). Therefore, and in line with the job demands-resources (JD-R)  
32 theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017), leadership style can significantly influence employees'  
33 work experiences, becoming a crucial variable **in determining** employee performance and  
34 well-being. These relationships have **barely** been studied previously, so **that** an in-depth  
35 analysis on the influence of leadership style on employee well-being is needed.

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3 Leader behaviors can influence employee well-being positively or negatively. To mitigate  
4 potential negative effects, police professionals end up resorting to positive psychological  
5 resources to cope with such a demanding work environment (Janssens et al., 2021).  
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7 Resilience refers to an individual's capacity to cope **effectively** with and adapt to loss,  
8 hardship or adversity. Self-efficacy refers to individual coping skills in the face of a wide  
9 range of challenging and stressful situations (Luthans et al., 2007). The JD-R theory justifies  
10 the choice of these two individual psychological resources, since resilience in combination  
11 with authentic leadership can be an effective formula **for developing** the essential strengths to  
12 deal with adversities and challenges at work, even if it is very demanding and risky; and self-  
13 efficacy can help employees cope with the negative consequences stemming from the  
14 influence of laissez-faire leadership on their well-being.

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16 Using structural equation modeling and multigroup analysis, the study: (i) analyzes what type  
17 of leadership, authentic or laissez-faire, may be more appropriate **for strengthening** employee  
18 work engagement and **reducing** emotional exhaustion; (ii) **analyzes the moderating role of**  
19 **resilience and self-efficacy in the relationships between authentic and laissez-faire leadership,**  
20 **and employees' emotional exhaustion and work engagement.** Previous research has focused  
21 on analyzing the influence of leadership on employee well-being (Harms et al., 2017;  
22 Inceoglu et al., 2018). However, none has analyzed the mediating role of emotional  
23 exhaustion between authentic or laissez-faire leadership and work engagement. And none has  
24 analyzed the moderating role of resilience and self-efficacy on employee well-being, which is  
25 particularly **relevant** in the work context of police **work**.

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27 This study contributes significantly to the advancement of knowledge in the field. First, it  
28 emphasizes the need to use constructive leadership to improve employee well-being. Thus, it  
29 addresses the need to change avoidance-based leadership **in favor of a constructive approach,**  
30 especially in the context of complex and high-risk professions. Second, it provides depth

insight into the type of personal resources that best fit with each leadership style and their moderating role on employee well-being. **Third, it highlights** the usefulness of JD-R theory **in addressing** the relationship between leadership, employee well-being and personal resources.

HR professionals and policy makers should develop strategies focused on **a shift** from traditional operating patterns based on passive leadership to new ones based on constructive leadership **in order to avoid** employees' emotional exhaustion, while fostering work engagement, well-being, growth, and development.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. **The** first section describes the conceptual framework; **the** second section the methodology; **and** third section the main findings. **The** fourth section discusses **these issues**, and fifth section points out the practical implications and **suggests** future lines of research.

### **Theoretical background**

The public police considered in this research is a type of law enforcement that operates within a **basically** military structure and whose main objective is the prevention and detection of crime, together with the maintenance of law and order (Zhou, 2022). More specifically, police professionals have to carry out activities ranging from the detection and prevention of criminal activities to helping citizens (López-Cabarcos et al., 2023b). The largely public nature of police institutions and the vocational nature of police work make **professionals** willing to do something meaningful, help others and serve the public interest (Cohen et al., 2019). This, in turn, drives them to perceive their work as challenging and engaging, **which** can generate positive experiences (Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023a).

Work engagement can be defined as 'a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption' (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003; p. 4). Work engagement can drive work motivation, improving productivity, performance and well-being

(De Clercq et al., 2022). Therefore, engaged employees are active participants in the work environment and **display** positive and proactive behaviors (Juyumaya and Torres, 2023). Furthermore, employees who manage their energy, positivity and inspiration well and perceive their work as stimulating, tend to be more proactive and committed to accepting responsibility and ensuring the quality of their work (Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023a).

Despite its public and vocational nature, police professionals carry out a high-risk profession (Jackman et al., 2020) greatly affected by political, economic, social, technological, and legal changes (Kohlström, 2021), in which they have to deal with situations that demand discretion, authority and precision, along with speedy decision-making (Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023b).

Emotional exhaustion implies the loss of resources that result from **excessive** interpersonal demands (Maslach and Jackson, 1986). Exposure to high demands and requirements in the work environment can lead employees to distance themselves emotionally and cognitively from their jobs (Han et al., 2023; López-Cabarcos et al., 2021c). Employees who are exposed to excessive job demands on a continuous basis show a rupture **in** their work, with negative and destructive consequences for themselves, the organization and society (Maslach and Leiter, 2017).

#### *The influence of leadership style on employees' emotional exhaustion and work engagement*

The complexity of police work, its importance for society's safety, and the hierarchical and formalized structure of police institutions (Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023a; Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023b) point **to a** need to carefully analyze the role of variables such as leadership **which**, in turn, can have a great impact on how subordinates feel about their work and perceive their own performance (Fors Brandebo et al., 2019). In this regard, JD-R theory provides a comprehensive framework **regarding** the influence of leadership on the physical and

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3 psychological well-being of employees through a positive and motivating, or a negative and  
4 harmful process for health (Pletzer et al., 2024). According to JD-R theory, authentic  
5 leadership, which involves positive and constructive leader behavior, can act as a valuable  
6 job resource by enabling employees to achieve work objectives, reduce the impact of job  
7 requirements, or contribute to personal growth, learning and development. Conversely,  
8 laissez-faire leadership, which involves passive leader behavior, can act as a hindrance job  
9 demand by making it difficult for employees to achieve their goals and depleting their  
10 physical and psychological energy (Bakker et al., 2023; Pletzer et al., 2024). The selection of  
11 leadership style may be particularly relevant in hierarchical work environments such as those  
12 in police organizations, where leaders have high decision-making power, requiring  
13 employees to follow established rules and guidelines (Pletzer et al., 2024). Laissez-faire is the  
14 most common of the destructive leadership styles in public police organizations due to their  
15 highly bureaucratic, formal, and centralized structures and the prevalence of rank, power, and  
16 control (Fors Brandebo et al., 2019; Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023b). In these work  
17 environments, leaders can avoid participating in decision-making processes, ‘delegating’ this  
18 responsibility to subordinates. In short, while authentic leadership is the most desirable form  
19 as it is an important driver of positive work experiences, the most prevalent destructive  
20 leadership style in public police organizations is avoidant leadership. Accordingly, to achieve  
21 effective and healthy work environments, it is necessary to provoke changes not only in  
22 behaviors but in leader mentality. Despite its relevance, studies on the implications of  
23 leadership style on employee health and well-being are scarce, and even so more when the  
24 work context of public police professionals is considered. This study contrasts two leadership  
25 styles, laissez-faire - the most common - and authentic - the most desirable -, to analyze their  
26 influence on employee well-being, specifically work engagement and emotional exhaustion.

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3 Authentic leadership refers to ‘a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes  
4 both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-  
5 awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and  
6 relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-  
7 development’ (Walumbwa et al., 2008; p.94). Authentic leaders encourage the open exchange  
8 of information, explain decisions and actions, promote fluid communication processes, and  
9 consider the employee viewpoint, establishing trusting, symmetrical and close relationships  
10 with them (Hsieh and Wang, 2015). In this sense, authentic leadership strengthens ties  
11 between employees and promotes team cohesion and identification between leaders and  
12 subordinates (Garcia-Guiu Lopez et al., 2015). By being faithful to their values and  
13 displaying the highest level of ethical behaviors (Crawford et al., 2019), authentic leaders can  
14 inspire employees to apply the same values. Such value-based leader behaviors can  
15 encourage employees to discover their own talent, and support them in using this talent to  
16 create a better fit with work goals and provide opportunities for developing rewarding  
17 relationships (Chaudhary and Panda, 2018). Previous research finds that constructive  
18 leadership such as authentic leadership can enhance work meaningfulness (Chaudhary, 2020),  
19 well-being, job performance, organizational commitment and extra-role behaviors (Farr-  
20 Wharton et al., 2021). The mental toughness and strength needed to carry out police work  
21 make authentic leadership an effective tool for helping police professionals respond  
22 adequately to daily tasks and responsibilities, face the challenges and improve their well-  
23 being. Thus, authentic leadership can be effective in public police contexts, since they are  
24 based on ethical and rational operational processes, built on trust and close relationships, and  
25 open to information exchange to facilitate decision-making (Farr-Wharton et al., 2021). In  
26 line with JD-R theory, authentic leadership can spark a motivational process through which  
27 police professionals develop positive work experiences, leading them to be more engaged  
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3 with their work and institution (Hoch et al., 2018; Pastor Alvarez et al., 2019) and less  
4 emotionally exhausted (Fors Brandebo et al., 2016). However, more in-depth research is  
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6 necessary to analyze the mediating role of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between  
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8 authentic leadership and work engagement. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:  
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13 H<sub>1</sub>-Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and work  
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15 engagement.

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18 Laissez-faire leadership is characterized by leaders avoidance behavior and inaction when  
19 they are required by the organization (Bass and Avolio, 2004). Protocols, and rules are of  
20 particular relevance in public police organizations, so that professionals can prioritize their  
21 compliance, avoiding the responsibility of making decisions that are delegated to other  
22 colleagues (Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023a). Avoidance-based leadership can result in  
23 incompetence, harm to others or a lack of knowledge, and can run contrary to the legitimate  
24 interest of the organization without meeting the expectations of subordinates (Einarsen et al.,  
25 2007).

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37 Passive leadership is not necessarily negative (Fosse et al., 2019; Lundmark et al., 2022;  
38 Yang, 2015), but the complex and demanding nature of the work of public police  
39 professionals requires them to follow clear and timely orders to carry out the tasks correctly  
40 (Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023a). In other words, the fact that these professionals work in  
41 dynamic and unpredictable situations, in which adaptive decision-making is needed, increases  
42 the need for effective leadership (Cohen et al., 2019). Moreover, when leaders avoid  
43 involvement, subordinates may lose trust and may even become unwilling to follow them  
44 (Fors Brandebo et al., 2016; Fosse et al., 2019). Police professionals may be less sensitive to  
45 aggressive, assertive or abusive leader behaviors, because they socialize within a strict  
46 hierarchy, with great discipline and in a regimented environment (Chénard-Poirier et al.,  
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2022; Fosse et al., 2019). Thus, for police professionals, active forms of destructive leadership may be different from those in which leaders simply avoid making decisions, abdicate responsibilities, or misuse authority (Fors Brandebo et al., 2019; Fosse et al., 2019).

Police professionals are trained to develop rational and quick thinking, so as to perform their tasks correctly because they are required to intervene effectively and promptly in demanding, risky, and stressful work environments (Farr-Wharton et al., 2021). In this sense, laissez-faire leaders fail to provide police professionals with effective, agile, and quick orders needed, preventing them from fulfilling their duties and responsibilities optimally (Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023a). Hence, in line with JD-R theory, avoidance-based leadership causes police professionals to be less committed to their organization and profession, and feel that their physical and psychological energy is depleted (Fosse et al., 2019; Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023b). Therefore, in many cases, this type of leadership can be considered as negative, since leaders do not establish open, meaningful and respectful relationship with employees, and avoid making rational and effective decisions, causing harmful consequences for their well-being. Further research is needed to analyze the mediating role of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employee work engagement. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H<sub>2</sub>-Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and work engagement.

#### *The moderating role of resilience and self-efficacy*

The demanding nature of police tasks may force police professionals to resort to other mechanisms, such as personal resources, to adapt to the complexity of their work (Janssens et al., 2021). Positive psychological resources, such as resilience and self-efficacy, can drive growth, well-being, and quality performance by fostering employee strengths, and

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3 counteracting the negative effects of demanding and challenging work environments (Avey et  
4 al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2007). According to JD-R theory, resilience and self-efficacy may  
5 act as buffers in the negative relationship between high job demands or low job resources and  
6 employee well-being, through a motivational process that can help them achieve their goals at  
7 work while they develop their professional careers (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). The  
8 choice of resilience and self-efficacy as moderators is justified by the external and reactive  
9 nature of resilience, and the internal and proactive nature of self-efficacy (Luthans et al.,  
10 2007).

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12 Resilience refers to an individual's capacity to adapt to **adversity**, challenging or threatening  
13 conditions (Luthans et al., 2007). Demanding and complex work environments can lead to  
14 negative experiences at work, leaving the most vulnerable employees feeling unable to  
15 complete their work successfully, **which affects** their well-being (Cohen et al., 2019).  
16 Resilience can allow employees to develop the necessary competences to face adversity and  
17 work challenges, preserving their well-being and resulting in effective and **high-quality** work  
18 (Wong et al., 2021). Value-based leadership styles can encourage employees' positive  
19 psychological capacities and, in turn, their development and growth (Avolio and Gardner,  
20 2005) making it easier for them to cope with complex work environments (du Plessis and  
21 Boshoff, 2018). Thus, authentic leaders are able to build trusting and hopeful work contexts  
22 where employees can cope with and recover from **adversity**, and, in turn, increase their work  
23 engagement and decrease emotional exhaustion (du Plessis and Boshoff, 2018). To achieve  
24 this goal, authentic leaders must be aware of the requirements and complexities of police  
25 work; they must design contingency plans and provide the necessary support to help  
26 employees cope with all kinds of adversities and challenges. Police professionals must focus  
27 on the positive aspects of their responsibilities and duties, seeing problems as solvable and  
28 challenges as **manageable**. In this way, high levels of resilience can help police professionals  
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3 mobilize their competencies to face and recover from the adversities and challenges of work,  
4 improving their engagement and the capacity to avoid emotional exhaustion. **More in-depth**  
5 **research is necessary to analyze the** moderating role of resilience in the relationships between  
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7 authentic leadership, emotional exhaustion and work engagement. Therefore, the following  
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9 hypotheses are proposed:  
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15 H<sub>3</sub>-Resilience moderates the relationship between authentic leadership and emotional  
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17 exhaustion, such **that** the moderation effect weakens the negative relationship between both  
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19 variables.  
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23 H<sub>4</sub>-Resilience moderates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work  
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25 engagement, such **that** the moderation effect weakens the negative relationship between both  
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27 variables.  
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31 Self-efficacy can be defined as an individual's confidence in their capacity to cope with  
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33 stressful or challenging demands (Luthans et al., 2007). Self-efficacious employees have  
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35 confidence in their capacity to mobilize their energy to meet the requirements and demands  
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37 of the work environment (Korman et al., 2022). In this way, self-efficacy may help  
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39 employees **in handling** negative situations, **facing** challenges, **and promoting** commitment to  
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41 activities that improve performance, and avoid emotional exhaustion (Bakker and Demerouti,  
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43 2017). The presence of avoidance-based leadership in demanding and complex work  
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45 environments such as that of police professionals can lead them to accumulate negative  
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47 experiences at work, affecting their engagement and emotional exhaustion (Fosse et al., 2019;  
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49 Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023b). Stronger self-efficacy can help police professionals face  
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51 problems, cope with stressful experiences, and preserve their well-being (Lan et al., 2020). In  
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53 other words, high levels of self-efficacy can trigger the ability of police professionals to  
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55 mobilize their own competencies to protect themselves from leader avoidance in decision-  
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3 making and work duties, reducing insecurity and loss of control and improving work  
4 engagement and the ability to avoid emotional exhaustion (Lopez-Cabarcos et al., 2023b).

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7 **Further research is needed to analyze the** moderating role of self-efficacy in the relationships  
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9 between laissez-faire leadership, emotional exhaustion, and employee work engagement.  
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11 Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

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15 H<sub>5</sub>-Self-efficacy moderates the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and emotional  
16 exhaustion, such **that** the moderation effect weakens the positive relationship between both  
17 variables.  
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22 H<sub>6</sub>-Self-efficacy moderates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work  
23 engagement, such **that** the moderation effect weakens the negative relationship between both  
24 variables.  
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## 29 30 **Methodology**

### 31 32 33 *Participants and procedure*

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36 The **population under study** was composed of 1,500 European public police professionals. An  
37 explanatory cover letter and a questionnaire about leadership and employee well-being were  
38 distributed to all of them between Dec 1, 2022, and January 30, 2023. Two hundred  
39 respondents **responded to** the survey (response rate=13.3%), yielding 184 valid  
40 questionnaires. This response rate is **sufficient in the** social sciences (Čater and Čater, 2009),  
41 human resource management (Cox and Goodman, 2005) and, specifically, police professional  
42 (Nix et al., 2019) studies. Men **comprised** 90.2% of the respondents ( $N=166$ , average  
43 age=46.15,  $SD=6.37$ ), women: ( $N=18$ , average age=42.06,  $SD=4.40$ ); years of service were  
44 less than 30 for 78.3% of the respondents, and tenure in the current workplace was less than  
45 20 years for 81% of the respondents. To test the study hypotheses, structural equation  
46 modelling (that allows simultaneously analyzing a set of dependency relationships between  
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3 variables that can behave as dependent or independent in subsequent relationships in the  
4 same analysis) and multigroup analysis (that reveals differences between subsamples within a  
5 total population that are not evident when examined as a whole) with SPSS 27.0 AMOS  
6 package were used.  
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### 11 12 13 *Instruments* 14

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16 To measure emotional exhaustion, the 5-item MBI-GS scale from Maslach and Jackson  
17 (1986) with a 7-point Likert scale (0=*never*; 6=*always*), was used [i.e. “I feel emotionally  
18 drained by my work”].  
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23 To measure work engagement, 5 items related to work dedication of the 9 items in the  
24 UWES–Utrecht scale from Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), with a 7-point Likert scale  
25 (0=*never*; 6=*always*), were used [i.e. “I am enthusiastic about my job”].  
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30 To measure laissez-faire leadership, The 4-item MLQ-5X scale from Bass and Avolio (2004),  
31 with a 5-point Likert scale (1=*never*; 5=*always*), was used [i.e. “Leader avoids making  
32 decisions”].  
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37 To measure authentic leadership, 4 items related to internalized moral perspective of the 16  
38 items on the Walumbwa et al. (2008) scale, with a 5-point Likert scale (0=*never* and  
39 4=*always*), were used [i.e. “My leader demonstrates beliefs that are consistent with actions”].  
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44 To measure resilience, the 3-item scale from Luthans et al. (2007), with a 6-point Likert scale  
45 (1=*strongly disagree*; 6=*strongly agree*), was used [i.e. “I usually take stressful things at  
46 work in stride”].  
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51 To measure self-efficacy, the 3-item scale from Luthans et al. (2015), with a 6-point Likert  
52 scale (1= *strongly disagree*; 6=*strongly agree*), was used [i.e. “I feel confident in representing  
53 my work area in meetings with management”].  
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### *Common method bias*

To ensure there was no common method variance bias, data collection followed the recommendations of Podsakoff et al. (2003). Respondents were requested to provide honest responses, and the anonymity of their answers was ensured. In the survey, the dependent variables were placed after the independent variables, and scales previously used and tested were used. Harman's single factor test (1967) was used to model all the items as indicators of a single factor representing method effects. The results revealed six factors with eigenvalues above 1, which explained 75.59% of the total variance (first factor explaining less than 34%). In addition, all the variables were loaded onto one factor to evaluate the fit of the confirmatory factor analysis model (Korsgaard and Roberson, 1995). The single-factor model did not fit the data well and was significantly worse than the measurement model. All of this confirmed that common method variance bias was not a problem in this study.

### *Model analysis*

Table 1 shows the standard deviations, simple correlations, means, and estimated reliabilities of the variables studied. Goodness-of-fit of the measurement model yielded good values:  $\chi^2(df)=286.08(173)$ ,  $p<.001$ , GFI=.874, RMSEA=.060, AGFI=.831, NFI=.901, TLI=.949, CFI=.958, CMIN=1.654.

(Table 1 here)

Goodness-of-fit of the structural model also yielded good values:  $\chi^2(df)=162.12(110)$ ,  $p<.001$ , GFI=.903, RMSEA=.051, AGFI=.865, NFI=.928, TLI=.969, CFI=.975, CMIN =1.474. Control variables, gender and age, were not related to exogenous variables, meaning that none of them exert an influence on public police professionals' emotional exhaustion or work engagement. The results indicate that authentic and laissez-faire leadership account for 18.8%

of employees' emotional exhaustion, and both types of leadership, together with emotional exhaustion, account for 43.8% of employees' work engagement.

## Results

### *Mediation relationships*

Table 2 shows the mediation effect of emotional exhaustion in the relationships between authentic and laissez-faire leadership, and police professionals' work engagement. The results indicated that emotional exhaustion partially mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement. Two additional models were tested to fully confirm this result (Baron and Kenny, 1986). The model-fit statistics and the path coefficients for the three models (partial mediation, full mediation and direct effects) are shown in Table 2a. The chi-square of Model 1 (partial mediation) was lower than those of Model 2 (direct effects) and Model 3 (full mediation) and significantly different ( $\Delta\chi^2=65.74$ ,  $\Delta df=2$ ;  $\Delta\chi^2=11.26$ ,  $\Delta df=1$ , respectively). The same result was obtained through Sobel (1982) and Goodman (1960) tests, which also confirmed mediation by emotional exhaustion ( $Z=4.49$ ,  $p<.00000707$ ;  $Z=4.51$ ,  $p<.00000652$ , respectively). In addition, in this case, variance accounted-for value fell between .20 and .80 (Hair et al., 2014), supporting the partial mediation effect of emotional exhaustion. All previous results pointed to partial mediation of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement, supporting H<sub>1</sub>.

The results have also revealed that emotional exhaustion fully mediates the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and work engagement. The model-fit statistics and the path coefficients of the three models are shown in Table 2b. The chi-square of Model 3 (full mediation) was lower than that of Model 2 (direct effects) and significantly different ( $\Delta\chi^2=67.55$ ,  $\Delta df =1$ ), and higher than that of Model 1 (partial mediation), but not significantly different ( $\Delta\chi^2=2.52$ ,  $\Delta gl=1$ , *n.s.*). The Sobel ( $Z=-4.32$ ,  $p<.0000157$ ) and

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3 Goodman ( $Z=-4.34$ ,  $p<.00001453$ ) tests, as well as case variance accounted-for value also  
4 confirmed full mediation of emotional exhaustion. All the above results pointed to full  
5 mediation between laissez-faire leadership and work engagement, supporting H<sub>2</sub>. Table 3  
6 shows the results of the BCbootstrap method for direct and indirect effects of both mediation  
7 relationships.  
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15 (Table 2 here)

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18 (Table 3 here)

### 21 Moderation effects

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23 This paper also analyzed the moderating effects of resilience and self-efficacy in the  
24 relationships between authentic leadership, laissez-faire leadership, emotional exhaustion and  
25 work engagement. Multigroup analyses were used to test all the moderation effects. Factor  
26 loading invariance among the groups was measured by testing the significance of the chi-  
27 square differences between two confirmatory factor analysis models; one with constrained  
28 factor loadings and the other with unconstrained factor loadings. Regarding the moderating  
29 role of resilience, Table 4a shows that the chi-square difference was significant ( $\Delta\chi^2=77.46$ ,  
30  $\Delta df=9$ ,  $p<.001$ ), suggesting there was no factor loading invariance. A series of multiple group  
31 analyses were performed to analyze path differences. The results suggested that resilience  
32 shows factor loading variance in the relationships between authentic leadership and  
33 emotional exhaustion, and between emotional exhaustion and work engagement. Therefore,  
34 H<sub>3</sub> and H<sub>4</sub> were supported (Table 5a).  
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51 The moderating role of self-efficacy was also analyzed. Table 4b shows a significant  
52 difference in the chi-square ( $\Delta\chi^2=84.36$ ,  $\Delta df=9$ ,  $p<.001$ ), suggesting that there was no factor  
53 loading invariance. Thus, the results showed that self-efficacy moderates the relationships  
54 between laissez-faire leadership and emotional exhaustion, supporting H<sub>5</sub> (Table 5b).  
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3 However, moderation by self-efficacy between emotional exhaustion and work engagement  
4 was not confirmed, so that H<sub>6</sub> was rejected (Figure 1).  
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8 (Tables 4a, 4b here)  
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11 (Tables 5a, 5b here)  
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14 (Figure 1 here)  
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16 The relationships between authentic leadership and emotional exhaustion, and between  
17 emotional exhaustion and work engagement, differed according to the level of resilience, but  
18 how they differed was not exactly clear. The interaction coefficients were negative, so  
19 resilience weakened these relationships, but identification of the precise nature and size of  
20 these effects could not be done merely by examining the coefficients. The effects were  
21 plotted to allow for visual interpretation (Dawson, 2014). Resilience was categorized in three  
22 levels (low-moderate-high) to predict the three relationships at each level. Three regression  
23 groups were identified for each relationship. Figure 2a shows that a moderated level of  
24 resilience has a strong regression effect between authentic leadership and emotional  
25 exhaustion [ $R^2$  LinearRESlow=.146 (correlation value=.382);  $R^2$  LinearRESmoderate=.152  
26 (correlation value=.389);  $R^2$  LinearREShigh=.00002644 (correlation value=.005)]. Figure 2b  
27 shows that a moderated level of resilience has a strong regression effect between emotional  
28 exhaustion and work engagement [ $R^2$  LinearRESlow=.205 (correlation value=.452);  $R^2$   
29 LinearRESmoderate=.361 (correlation value=.601);  $R^2$  LinearREShigh=.278 (correlation  
30 value=.527)].  
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51 The moderating role of self-efficacy was also analyzed. Figure 2c shows that a moderated  
52 level of self-efficacy had a strong regression effect between laissez-faire leadership and  
53 emotional exhaustion [ $R^2$  LinearSElow=.041 (correlation value=.203);  $R^2$   
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3 LinearSEmoderate=.271 (correlation value=.521);  $R^2$  LinearSEhigh=.021 (correlation  
4 value=.145)].  
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8 (Figure 2 here)  
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## 10 Discussion

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14 This research analyzes the influence of emotional exhaustion in public police organizations,  
15 and how positive psychological resources can moderate it. The results indicate that authentic  
16 leadership can reduce emotional exhaustion in public police professionals, making them more  
17 engaged with their work and institution. The results are consistent with previous research  
18 showing that authentic leadership is positively related to work engagement (Pastor-Alvarez et  
19 al., 2019), and negatively related to emotional exhaustion (Fors Brandebo et al., 2016) in  
20 police work context. Thus, authentic leadership can provide a favorable work environment  
21 that enables employees to cope with negative experiences at work, thus enhancing positive  
22 experiences. The results also show that emotional exhaustion partially mediates the  
23 relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement. Thus, value-based leader  
24 behaviors can lead police professionals to avoid emotional exhaustion, which in turn can  
25 encourage them to engage with their work. The direct relationship between authentic  
26 leadership and work engagement is stronger than the indirect effect through emotional  
27 exhaustion. Accordingly, the mediating role of emotional exhaustion clearly weakens the  
28 positive relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement. These findings, in  
29 line with JD-R theory, confirm that authentic leadership can act as a valuable resource,  
30 capable of creating a resourceful work environment that improves employee engagement,  
31 while reducing their emotional exhaustion. Thus, authentic leadership can promote work  
32 engagement due to its motivational potential and its ability to prevent the deterioration of  
33 employee well-being.  
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3 The findings also show that emotional exhaustion fully mediates the relationship between  
4 laissez-faire leadership and employee work engagement. In demanding work environments,  
5 laissez-faire leadership can promote negative and stressful work environments that lead to  
6 higher levels of emotional exhaustion, and consequently, lower levels of work engagement.  
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8 **Thus**, avoidant leaders **can be** detrimental to employee engagement through emotional  
9 exhaustion. In addition, the findings **show** that authentic leadership helps, to a greater extent  
10 than laissez-faire leadership, **to** promote work engagement and reduce emotional exhaustion.  
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12 Therefore, in line with JD-R theory, laissez-faire leadership can act as a hindrance job  
13 demand capable of creating stressful work environments that trigger unhealthy processes  
14 (through emotional exhaustion) **which** damage employee work engagement.

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Positive psychological resources can help police professionals adapt to highly demanding and complex work. According to JD-R theory, the results show that resilience moderates the relationships between authentic leadership, emotional exhaustion and employee work engagement. This can be explained by the external and reactive nature of resilience. Thus, leadership that emphasize values, ethical behaviors, and transparent communication **can** help strengthen the personal capacity of employees to adapt to the job, even if it is **highly** demanding and complex. **Thus, employees will be willing to resort** to personal resources such as resilience to face negative, difficult and stressful situations. **In this manner**, resilience **can** act as a protective factor for employees, allowing them to reduce the consequences of a harmful work environment, more specifically, by reducing the negative consequences of **emotional exhaustion**. Following JD-R theory, the results also show that self-efficacy moderates the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and emotional exhaustion. This result can be explained by the internal and proactive nature of self-efficacy. In fact, laissez-faire leadership can damage employees' confidence in their leader, and consequently, their willingness to follow. Non-intervention by the leader in decision-making processes or in

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3 tasks and duties **can** lead employees to resort to their own self-efficacy to face stressful or  
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5 challenging work demands and thus to correctly assume their obligations and responsibilities.  
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7 **Thus**, self-efficacy **can** also act as a protective personal resource focused on compensating for  
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9 the negative implications of laissez-faire leadership; that is, ‘if you do not help me, I have to  
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11 do more and better **myself**’. The results also **show** that self-efficacy does not moderate the  
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13 relationship between emotional exhaustion and work engagement. It seems logical that  
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15 emotionally exhausted police professionals **would** not have enough energy, or professional or  
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17 psychological resources to **perform** their tasks **effectively**, so they **would be** not capable of  
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19 mobilizing their self-efficacy to meet the high requirements of their job.  
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### 23 24 **Theoretical and practical implications**

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27 This research advancements of the knowledge of leadership and employee well-being in three  
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29 ways: (i) value-based leadership **emerges** as a crucial factor to ensure employee well-being,  
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31 especially in the context of complex and vocational professions such as that of public police  
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33 professionals, while laissez-faire leadership can lead employees to live negative experiences  
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35 at work; (ii) psychological resources such as resilience add extra motivational potential in  
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37 resourceful work environments when authentic leadership is present. **However**, in avoidance-  
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39 based work environments, self-efficacy is a very effective moderator; (iii) the usefulness of  
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41 JD-R theory in police professionals’ work context.  
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46 The **major** changes affecting society and their implications for public police professionals’  
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48 work justify the **need** to find effective formulas aimed at both **increasing** their well-being and  
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50 the quality of the service provided to society. Such hectic **and fundamental** social changes  
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52 must be understood as **an** opportunity to provoke the necessary changes within public police  
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54 institutions, focused on avoiding negative experiences at work while promoting positive ones.  
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56 Particularly relevant for the management of human resources is the leadership style, **which is**  
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3 essential for understanding how variables such as emotional exhaustion and work  
4 engagement can affect police professionals' work. Specifically, value-based leadership styles  
5 may enhance employee well-being, while also enhancing the quality of the service provided.  
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7 Workspaces based on encouraging social support, transparent and fluent communication, and  
8 participation in decision-making, help improve employee work engagement, while avoiding  
9 the possibility of suffering emotional exhaustion. In this sense, leaders are especially  
10 responsible for building healthy and wellness work environments. To this end, it is essential  
11 to design human development training programs in which leaders can acquire new abilities  
12 and competencies focused on setting up trusting and close relationships with their teams,  
13 promoting open information-exchange strategies, building fluid communication processes,  
14 and assuming greater responsibility in decision-making. In turn, these training programs can  
15 help both leaders and employees to understand the importance of establishing ethical values  
16 and adhering to public service principles as a way to create positive work environments.  
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20 Authentic leaders, as inspiring agents of change, must design and implement highly flexible  
21 policies and strategies to adapt the work of police professionals to social and technological  
22 changes. In this sense, leaders must be the first to detect employees' training needs, with the  
23 aim of improving their skills and competences as a way to promote engagement with their  
24 work. New communication practices and information flow systems can improve decision-  
25 making processes, while promoting police professionals' participation and intervention in  
26 more effective performance models. Thus, positive and constructive leadership, together with  
27 well-planned social and technological changes, can encourage the necessary change from  
28 rigid and hierarchical structures to more flexible ones. Authentic leadership should be  
29 encouraged through leadership development programs and training sessions. Furthermore,  
30 employees' psychological resources can be crucial to improve their well-being. Thus, self-  
31 efficacy may allow police professionals to adapt to complex work environments in which  
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3 passive leadership **is** present, and resilience can be a complementary resource for facing  
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5 demanding and dangerous work situations, even if authentic leadership **is** present. Public  
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7 administrations and HR professionals **should be** obliged to draw up strategies to stimulate  
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9 positive experiences, giving priority to HR, public service quality, and employee well-being.  
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### 12 **Conclusions and future lines of research**

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16 Value-based leadership emerges **as** decisive to **guaranteeing** the wellness of employees,  
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18 especially in vocational and **highly** demanding professions. This research provides valuable  
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20 guidelines for human resource managers and policy makers to design strategies capable of  
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22 engaging and involving employees, **especially** in public work contexts. Given the importance  
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24 and implications of public police professionals' well-being on the quality of the service  
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26 offered, positive-constructive leadership **is** essential **for building** healthy and effective  
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28 workplaces. In addition, psychological personal resources are effective tools to mitigate the  
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30 negative effects of passive leadership on employees' health and organizational results.  
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35 As **with** any empirical study, this one has several limitations. The main limitation is that all  
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37 the data **are** from a single source using a self-reporting measure. Several procedures were  
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39 undertaken to ensure there was no common method variance bias. The response rate,  
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41 sufficient for social sciences studies, it is not very high, due to the lack of interest of police  
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43 professionals in sharing information about what happens within **their** organizations, and their  
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45 lack of time to participate in **such** studies considering the demanding nature of their  
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47 profession. While the variables considered in this study are particularly important, future  
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49 research could consider other leadership styles (e.g. active-destructive leadership), other job  
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51 resources (e.g. public service motivation), or other organizational variables (e.g. extra-role  
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53 behaviors) to clarify their influence on other outcomes (e.g. job performance). Future studies  
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55 could also use a longitudinal design to draw causal inferences regarding the study variables,  
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3 as well as other geographical areas or activity sectors, so as to compare and confirm the  
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5 results obtained in this research.  
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**Table 1. Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, correlations, AVE and composite reliabilities**

	M	SD	SE	RS	AL	LF	EE	WE	AVE	CR
SE	3.9	1.2	.866						.708	.877
RS	4.5	.978	.428**	.724					.050	.736
AL	1.7	.803	.244**	.170*	.657				.503	.749
LF	2.8	1.1	-.180**	-.213**	-.529**	.935			.782	.935
EE	1.8	1.1	.386**	-.409**	-.269**	.293**	.914		.667	.909
WE	3.2	1.5	.325**	.309**	.377**	-.274**	-.537**	-.917	.803	.924

Note:  $N=184$ ; Cronbach's  $\alpha$  on the diagonal

\* $p<.05$ , \*\* $p<.01$

**Table 2. Fit results and path coefficients for structural equation models**

Table 2a. Mediating role of Emotional exhaustion between Authentic leadership and Work engagement								
	$\chi^2(df)$	GFI	RMSEA	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	$\chi^2/df$
Model 1	90.26(59)	.927	.054	.887	.938	.970	.977	1.53
Model 2	101.52(60)	.915	.061	.872	.930	.961	.970	1.67
Model 3	156.01(61)	.986	.092	.845	.892	.911	.931	2.55
Standardized coefficients and ( <i>t</i> -values)								
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3			
AL→WE	.255(3.00)**		.430(5.12)**					
AL→EE	-.359(-4.85)***				-.379(-4.99)**			
EE→WE	-.504(7.10)***				-.610(-10.34)**			
Table 2b. Mediating role of Emotional exhaustion between Laissez-faire leadership and Work engagement								
	$\chi^2(df)$	GFI	RMSEA	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	$\chi^2/df$
Model 1	128.69(71)	.904	.067	.958	.935	.961	.969	1.81
Model 2	131.22(72)	.899	.067	.853	.934	.960	.969	1.82
Model 3	198.77(73)	.880	.097	.828	.900	.917	.933	2.72
Standardized coefficients and ( <i>t</i> -values)								
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3			
LF→WE	-.111(1.87)		-.308(4.16)***					
LF→EE	.352(4.63)**				.362(4.76)**			
EE→WE	-.558(-8.21)**				-.604(-10.24)**			

Note: Model 1: Partial mediation; Model 2: Direct effect; Model 3: Full mediation

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 3. BC percentile method–Direct/Indirect effects

Direct effects	Effect	BootSE	<i>p</i>	BootLLCI	BootULCI
AL→EE	-.376	.076	.002	-.510	-.215
EE→WE	-.609	.059	.002	-.707	-.472
LF→EE	.364	.076	.001	.199	.505
EE→WE	-.603	.059	.002	-.705	-.469
Indirect effects	Effect	BootSE	<i>p</i>	BootLLCI	BootULCI
AL→EE→WE	.229	.056	.001	.119	.340
LF→EE→WE	-.220	.054	.001	-.325	-.116

**Table 4a. Moderation effects of Resilience**

<b>Multigroup CFA</b>							
	$\chi^2(df)$	$\chi^2/df$	$\Delta\chi^2(\Delta df)$	RMSEA	CFI	<i>p</i> -value	Invariant
Baseline (no constraints)	243.57(166)	1.46		.051	.963		
Factor loading invariance	321.02(176)	1.83	77.45(9)	.068	.930	.000	No
<b>Multigroup SEM Models</b>						<b>Moderation</b>	
	$\chi^2(df)$	<i>Path invariance</i>		<i>p</i> -value	Invariant		
Const AL→EE	249.70(171)	247.38		<.05	No	Yes	
Const EE→WE	247.36(171)	246.28		<.1	No	Yes	

**Table 4b. Moderation effects Self-efficacy**

<b>Multigroup CFA</b>							
	$\chi^2(df)$	$\chi^2/df$	$\Delta\chi^2(\Delta df)$	RMSEA	CFI	<i>p</i> -value	Invariant
Baseline (no constraints)	244.03(166)	1.47		.051	.961		
Factor loading invariance	328.39(175)	1.87	84.35(9)	.069	.924	.000	No
<b>Multigroup SEM Models</b>						<b>Moderation</b>	
	$\chi^2(df)$	<i>Path invariance</i>		<i>p</i> -value	Invariant		
Const LF→EE	247.70(169)	246.74		<.1	No	Yes	
Const EE→WE	246.06(169)			<i>n.s.</i>	Yes	No	

$p < .1$ \*(.90 confidence),  $p < .05$ \*\*(.95 confidence),  $p < .01$ \*\*\*(.99 confidence)

**Table 5a. Paths, R<sup>2</sup> coefficients – RES moderator**

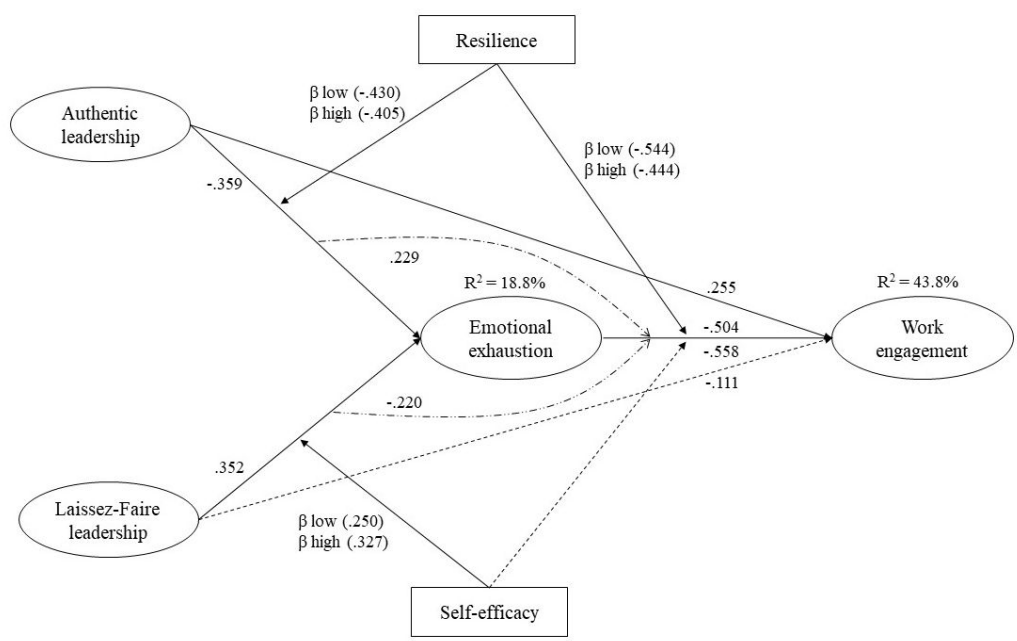
	Low	High	Low	High	
<i>Relationships</i>	$\beta$		$R^2$		<i>Mod. Confidence(%)</i>
AL→EE	-.430	-.405	.197	.170	95
EE→WE	-.544	-.444	.396	.373	90

**Table 5b. Paths, R<sup>2</sup> coefficients – SE moderator**

	Low	High	Low	High	
<i>Relationships</i>	$\beta$		$R^2$		<i>Mod. Confidence(%)</i>
LF→EE	.250	.327	.068	.116	90

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Figure 1. Structural model



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Figure 2. Regression effects on different levels of RES and SE

Figure 2a. AL vs EE – RES moderator

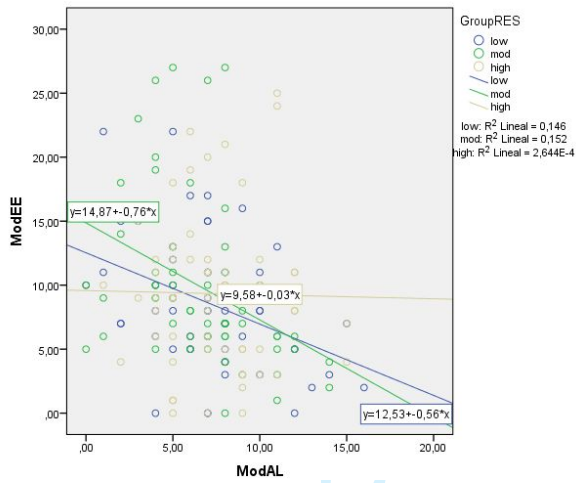


Figure 2b. EE vs WE – RES moderator

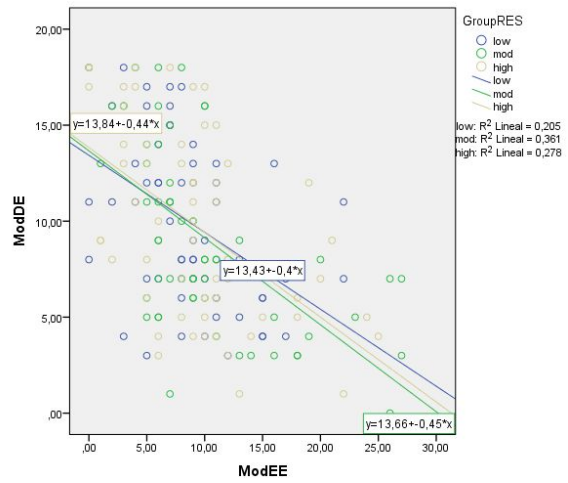
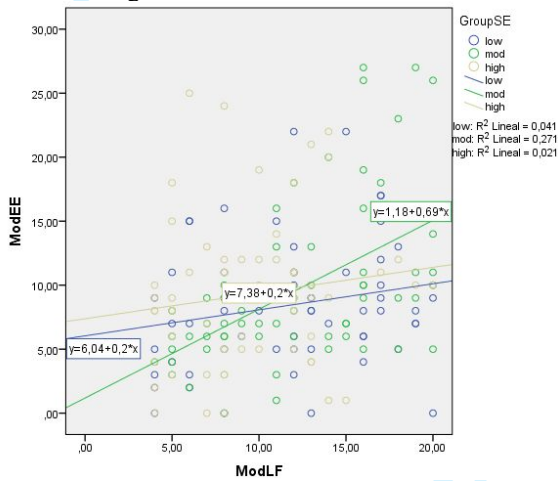


Figure 2c. LF vs EE – SE moderator



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