

Investigating Boundary Conditions for Shared Leadership – Team Performance Relationship: A Team Leadership Coordination Perspective

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Shared leadership is believed to be beneficial for team effectiveness. Researchers, however, have not always found positive effects. We suggest that scholarly attention should not merely focus on optimizing team input for shared leadership, but also considers leaders' coordination during shared leadership. The present research identifies expertise recognition accuracy and task-knowledge coordination as important leaders' coordination contingencies that strengthen the effects of shared leadership on team performance. Our study helps resolve theoretical controversies about whether shared leadership influences team performance and provides empirical and practical insights into how leadership coordination can drive higher team performance during shared leadership.

Abstract

Although shared leadership has been posited to be able to enhance team performance by allowing teams to leverage more expertise and resources of team members, empirical evidence for such an effect has been inconsistent. Previous research examining the boundary conditions for this effect has been focused almost exclusively on team composition variables, paying little attention to team leadership coordination processes, and failing to investigate the underlying mechanisms for the moderating effect. Addressing these limitations, the present study proposes that two team leadership coordination process variables of expertise recognition accuracy and task-knowledge coordination should strengthen the relationship between shared leadership and team performance. It is further hypothesized that task-knowledge coordination should mediate the moderating effect of expertise recognition accuracy. We tested our conceptual model in a two-wave, multi-source field study, conducted with 457 professionals working in 83 project teams at two information technology firms located in a Southern city of the People's Republic of China. Results based on mediated moderation analyses provided strong support for our hypotheses. Theoretical and practical implications were discussed.