Shared Leadership and Performance: Moderating Role of Leader Legitimacy

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PSB3E-BT15: Bachelor Thesis

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June 24, 2023

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Abstract

Effective employee performance is key to successful organizational functioning. An important factor influencing performance is leadership. Indeed, leaders can have a tremendous impact on the performance of their employees. But what type of leadership leads to the most effective performance, and what factors influence this relationship, is still an unanswered question. Shared leadership allows power dynamics to shift and makes team members more open and committed. However, what is the exact relationship between shared leadership and job performance is not yet known. In the present study, we investigate whether high levels of perceived leader legitimacy cause shared leadership to have a positive effect on employee job performance and whether low legitimacy does the opposite. We conducted a study using a questionnaire (N=27), which we distributed to dyads of a leader and an employee from a working team with our participants being Dutch-speaking residents of Groningen ranging 19 to 65 years in age. The results of our study showed no effect of legitimacy on the relationship between shared leadership and performance ($p = 0.29$), providing no support for our hypothesis. The paper ends with a discussion of implications stemming from this study, as well as its limitations and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: shared leadership, legitimacy, employee performance, team dynamics

Shared Leadership and Performance: Moderating Role of Leader Legitimacy

Every organization has the inherent goal of being successful by achieving the best possible performance. And since teams have become central units in most modern organizations (Kilcullen et al., 2023), the topic of job performance especially in teams is quite relevant. However, many studies that are dealing with interpersonal relations in organizations only use the individual approach (e.g., only the leader's or only the employee's perspective), thus limiting themselves to looking at one side of the story (Gooty & Yammarino, 2011). To gain perspective from more relevant parties, one can look at dyadic interpersonal relationships. And since dyads are pervasive in virtually every workplace (Gooty & Yammarino, 2011), the dyadic approach should bring about some interesting insight into the workings of team dynamics. Moreover, it was leader-follower dyads in particular that were found to be salient in teams (Bass, 2008), not to mention that leaders often impact job performance heavily (Bass et al., 2003), and they are responsible for the decisions that a given organization takes in order to succeed (Bass, 1991). For these reasons, we decided to use a dyadic approach with a specific focus on leader-follower dyads, as we see this to be an appropriate level of analysis for the present study.

It is clear that leadership is crucial for team effectiveness and influences job performance, but what is the most successful leadership style for achieving better performance, and under which circumstances is still not certain. While, some sources suggest that stable power hierarchies promote the best performance (Anderson & Brown, 2010), the proponents of shared leadership offer a different perspective (Aime et al., 2014). Shared leadership can be defined "as a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both" (Pearce & Conger, 2003, p. 1). Multiple studies have shown a positive relationship between shared leadership and job performance (Carson et al., 2007;

Ensley et al., 2006). However, other findings suggest no relationship between shared leadership and performance, or even a negative one (Hmieleski et al., 2012; O'Toole et al., 2003).

Thus, it is not yet clear when the association between these two variables is positive, and what variable makes this positive relationship the strongest. Some evidence from the literature suggests, that leader legitimacy could be an important factor. For example, research found that subordinates are more likely to comply with the request (Tyler, 2006), and less likely to experience anger (Nugier et al., 2007) when the leader is seen as legitimate. Both voluntary compliances with leaders' requests and experience of negative emotions are likely to have an influence on employee behavior and possibly their performance, which makes legitimacy a relevant variable to investigate. Legitimacy can be defined as a "characteristic of an authority or an institution which makes people believe it deserves to be obeyed." (Kanat-Maymon et al., 2021, p. 229), and it is beneficial for team functioning (Yoon & Thye, 2011). And while most research on legitimacy deals with other types of leadership, there is some evidence of its influence even in heterarchical structures where power shifts occur, such as shared leadership (Aime et al., 2014).

Even though the research that investigates specifically the connection between shared leadership, employee performance, and leader legitimacy is limited, there is preexisting literature that indicates some level of association between them. Indeed, as mentioned above, perceived leader legitimacy seems to be connected to team functioning, and good team functioning includes good performance. And while the relationship between shared leadership and employee performance is still inconclusive in existing literature, looking at the effect of leader legitimacy on this association could lead to a better understanding of this relationship. Therefore, the present study uses a moderation model to investigate whether legitimacy affects the relationship between shared leadership and performance. By gaining an

understanding of these variables, this paper helps to shed light on important questions regarding optimal performance and leadership. Proper understanding of what leadership style is the most efficient for employee performance and under what conditions, can offer enriching findings about how to make workplaces more effective. Furthermore, due to the dyadic nature of this study, these findings offer a unique perspective on leader-follower dynamics. This is quite relevant since interpersonal relationships are present in every organization. And since there is still a lot we don't know about leader–follower dyads research (Kim et al., 2020), this study provides more understanding of this level of analysis.

Theory and Hypotheses Development

Shared leadership

Shared leadership shifts away from the classic form of leadership where there is a single, appointed leader. Instead, it refers to a leadership system where team members share leadership roles and responsibilities (Acar, 2010). Unlike the more traditional, leader-centric view where only one person is in charge at all times, shared leadership offers a different perspective. It is seen as a dynamic and interactive process that happens on a group level (Pearce, 2004), and where the team members share the leadership responsibilities (Carson et al., 2007). According to Pearce et al. (2010), shared leadership comes about with active, deliberate shifting in leadership roles among the members of the group, in accordance with what skills are needed in a particular situation. Indeed, in such self-managing teams, these shifts appear depending on what the current task demands are, and on who is best equipped to tackle these tasks (Morgeson, 2005). Therefore, the concept of shared leadership offers a different viewpoint from traditional theories. Namely, that the power expressions in a team might not be stable. Instead, they shift according to what a given situation demands (Aime et al., 2014).

Shared Leadership and Performance

Shared leadership offers an interesting point of view, but what are the effects of this leadership style on team outcomes are not yet certain. On one hand, many findings suggest a positive influence. For example, Katz and Kahn (1978) suggest many advantages of shared leadership such as higher commitment and competitive advantage for organizations as a result, openness to reciprocal influence, and sharing of information. Similarly, Hoch (2013) argues that members of teams with shared leadership are more likely to contribute their ideas and share information with other group members. He further suggests that these processes lead to increased creativity and idea generation. Moreover, according to Bergman et al. (2012), shared leadership leads to less conflict and more consensus, higher trust, and improves the overall functioning of the team. Furthermore, multiple studies were able to find a direct link between shared leadership and better performance (Carson et al., 2007; Ensley et al., 2006; Wu & Cormican, 2021).

On the other hand, some findings do not suggest such favorable outcomes, for example, many sources argue that stable leadership structures where power does not shift make for more effective groups because they provide order which in turn improves collective decision-making, motivation, and cooperation (Anderson & Brown, 2010; Halevy et al., 2011; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Indeed, multiple studies were not able to find a relationship between shared leadership and performance or even found a negative one (Hmieleski, et al., 2012; O'Toole, et al., 2003).

So, it can be concluded that the research on shared leadership bears inconsistent results. However, unlike most preexisting research, the present study offers a unique perspective by focusing on leader-follower dyads. This level of analysis could uncover connections between shared leadership and performance that would not be uncovered

otherwise. For example, specifically in dyads, shared leadership might lead to more accountability, potentially causing an increase in motivation as well as commitment of employees, which could lead to better performance. Therefore, considering both literature findings and the dyadic perspective, argued hypothesis is the following:

H1: Shared leadership is positively associated with employee performance.

Legitimacy and performance

The perceived legitimacy of the leader could be a relevant factor for employee performance. Whether a leader is seen as legitimate changes how employees perceive them, and consequently also changes how they respond to their leadership style. This could in turn affect employee performance. Legitimacy can be broadly defined as "the belief that authorities, institutions, and social arrangements are appropriate, proper, and just." (Tyler, 2006, p. 376). A legitimate leader is someone who is perceived to exercise their power rightfully. This perception of legitimacy can come from merit, ability, fairness, or appropriateness (Emerson, 1964). The power expression of a leader is seen as legitimate when this person has the best set of resources for the given situation (Aime et al., 2014).

There seems to be a connection between leader legitimacy and team outcomes. According to Yoon & Thye (2011), perceived legitimacy is of utmost importance for proper organizational functioning. This finding indicates a potential connection between legitimacy and performance since good employee performance is a crucial part of effective organizational functioning. Furthermore, while there are not many studies connecting job performance directly to legitimacy, some sources can connect it with leader illegitimacy instead. This factor can be considered as a low level of legitimacy, making these sources insightful for the present study. More specifically, Ratcliff & Vescio (2018) showed that when leaders retained their power illegitimately, subordinates felt anger, lack of control, and

thought less deeply about cognitive tasks, which indicates a direct connection with performance. In line with existing literature, the second hypothesis is the following:

H2: Legitimacy is positively associated with performance.

Moderating role of Legitimacy

High levels of perceived leader legitimacy could have a positive effect on the relationship between shared leadership and performance. Kanat-Maymon et al. (2021) argue that perceived legitimacy fosters voluntary adherence of employees to the rules of leaders. Indeed, Tyler (2006), found that employees are more likely to comply with a request when the power of the leader is perceived as legitimate. Employees who fulfill requests voluntarily are likely to possess higher motivation and put more effort into their work as a result, leading to better performance. These findings might be especially relevant to shared leadership since voluntary and active participation and undertaking of responsibilities in the form of shifting roles between the leader and the follower is characteristic of this leadership style (Pearce et al., 2010). Thus, by increasing the willingness of employees to work voluntarily, legitimacy might foster motivation of employees to take on leadership roles more effectively, and subsequently increase their performance. Furthermore, followers were less likely to experience anger while under a leader who was perceived as legitimate (Nugier et al., 2007), suggesting implications for the well-being of employees. In the context of shared leadership, employees share leadership roles as well as responsibilities (Acar, 2010). This requires a certain level of reciprocal openness which could be jeopardized by employees experiencing anger toward whoever is currently in charge. Anger could further lead to bad interpersonal relationships, diminishing work ethic, and performance in the process as well.

Low levels of perceived leader legitimacy seem to have adverse effects on the functioning of the team, and could potentially have a negative effect on the relationship

between shared leadership and performance. If perceiving the leader as legitimate seems to have favorable effects on team functioning, the opposite should then be true when the leader is perceived as illegitimate. Ratcliff & Vescio (2018) indicate that illegitimate wielding of power by leaders made employees feel angrier and less supportive, which could affect the overall goals of the team negatively, including performance. This is especially important in the context of shared leadership which relies on supportive collaboration and sharing of responsibility. Furthermore, Aime et al. (2014) suggest that in environments where power expression shifts occur (such as workplace where shared leadership is implemented), creativity is fostered, but this effect diminishes when the power expression is not perceived as legitimate. Since creativity has been connected directly to performance (Ince et al., 2022), this finding implies that in environments where shared leadership or similar power structures are used, low legitimacy diminishes creativity and potentially job performance as well. Taking these findings into account, the last hypothesis is the following:

H3: Legitimacy moderates the relationship between shared leadership and performance, such that the positive association between shared leadership and performance is stronger when the perceived legitimacy of the leader is high as compared to when it is low.

Method

Participants

The total number of participants who filled out the survey was 166. Due to the dyadic nature of the study, participants were collected as a part of leader-follower pair, half of the participants being leaders, and the other half being followers. Participants that were not part of a dyad were excluded, as well as participants who were less than 18 years old. In the end, we were able to match 27 dyads, giving us a total of 54 participants. Initially, it was also

planned to exclude participants who work less than 17 hours per week, but due to the small sample size, we decided to include these participants after all.

In total, 54 participants completed the survey with age ranging from 19 to 65 ($M =$ 37.78, $SD = 13.16$), 26 identifying as men, and 28 identifying as women. Most participants were from the Netherlands, as speaking the Dutch language was a requirement for the completion of our survey. 46.3% of participants completed a university level of education, and 29.6% completed higher vocational education, with the rest of the sample completing lower educational levels. Our sample was recruited from 14 various industries, with the most common industry being education/university, and food industry, both chosen by equal 14.8% of participants. The size of organizations from which participants were collected differed with 22 participants working in small organizations (less than 50 workers), 17 participants working in large organizations (more than 250 workers), and 15 participants working in middle-sized organizations (between 50 and 250 workers).

Design

This study was a cross-sectional, multi-source, field design. The dependent variable was performance and two independent variables were legitimacy and shared leadership. Two separate questionnaires were used to investigate these variables, one for leaders and the second for followers. Moreover, this study was a bachelor thesis project with 5 more students conducting it. Since every student investigated different variables, the questionnaires didn't include only performance, shared leadership, and legitimacy scales, but multiple other scales measuring different variables, corresponding to what each student investigated.

Procedure

Variables in this study were measured with an online questionnaire conducted via the website Qualtrics. The participants accessed the questionnaire either through a link that was

sent to them online, or provided to them in person. Before completing the survey, participants gave informed consent about participation and usage of their data, and after the survey completion, they were properly debriefed and informed about the purpose of the study.

When selecting participants, the following criteria were taken into consideration. Participants had to consist of leader–employee dyads and they had to be part of a team. Furthermore, they had to be at least 18 years old, and they had to be proficient in Dutch since the questionnaire was administered in this language. Finally, we planned to include only the participants who work at least 17 hours per week. However, our sample size was smaller than expected, so we decided against this criterion.

Participants were recruited by contacting leaders of relevant institutions where teams could be found. These leaders were then asked to fill out the survey and to let their employee complete the survey as well, forming the above-mentioned dyads. If leaders were not available, employees were approached first. Contacting participants took place in person as well as online. Importantly, the present study was approved by the ethics committee, and personal information was confidential. All participants gave informed consent before participating in the study.

Legitimacy

To measure legitimacy, we used a scale of Van der Veg (2018). For our purposes, we used an adapted version suitable for leader–employee dyads, and we used it only in the employee survey. The participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agree with the items on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), to 7 (completely agree). The Cronbach alpha of the adjusted scale was .47, indicating quite low reliability of the scale. The reliability was still very low, even after we deleted items that showed weak correlation with the rest of the items, leaving us no choice but to use the scale. For these reasons, the

interpretation of results gained by using this scale had to be done very carefully. Examples of adapted items are the following: "My manager's level of influence is based on what he/she does or knows.", "My manager's level of influence is based on his/her contribution to success of our collaboration.", or "In our collaboration, my manager has direct influence over decisions."

Shared leadership

As a measurement of shared leadership, we used an adapted version of the scale of Hoch (2013), appropriate for leader–employee dyads. The scale was only used in the employee survey, and it consists of two dimensions. Namely, transformational, and empowering leadership. Shared leadership is calculated based on these two dimensions. The participants are asked to what extent they agree with each item, and give an answer on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), to 7 (completely agree). Cronbach alpha for the original version of this scale was .91(Hoch, 2013). The Cronbach alpha for the adapted scale used in this study was .80, indicating relatively high reliability of the measure. Some example items from the adapted scale include: "My manager gives a clear picture of what our team stands for.", "My supervisor is driven by higher goals or ideals.", or "My supervisor encourages me to collaborate with other team members.)"

Performance

As a performance measure, we used two scales, both of them adapted for use with leader–employee dyads, and both of them were used only for the leader questionnaire. The first scale is from the work of Van Der Vegt & Bunderson (2005). It uses leaders' rating of the team's performance based on several criteria, including, efficiency, quality, overall achievements, productivity, and mission fulfillment. Additionally, supervisors were asked to compare their team performance with similar teams. Participants answered the items on a 7-

point Likert scale with items ranging from 1 (far below average) to 7 (far above average). The Cronbach alpha for the original scale was .87 (Van Der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005). The adapted version of the scale showed Cronbach's alpha of .94, which suggests very high reliability of the measure. The scale included items like: "How does your employee score on achieving goals?", "How does your employee score on meeting deadlines?", or "How does your employee score on working speed?"

The second scale used was the one by Williams & Anderson (1991). It measures three types of employee behavior. Namely, performance of In-Role Behavior (IRB), performance of organizational citizenship behaviors that have a specific individual as a target (OCBI), and performance of organizational citizenship behaviors that focus on primarily benefiting the organization (OCBO). The range of answers was again on a 7-point Likert scale, identical to the one used in the previous performance measure (Williams & Anderson, 1991). The Cronbach alpha for the adapted scale was .90, again indicating the high reliability of this measure. Items from the scale include: "My employee performs assigned tasks properly.", "My employee fulfills the responsibilities stated in the job description.", or "My employee performs the tasks that are expected of him/her."

Even though the scale by Van Der Vegt & Bunderson (2005) has higher Cronbach alpha, suggesting higher reliability, it was not used for data analysis, as it caused problems with normality and linearity assumptions. Since the scale by Williams & Anderson (1991) has quite high Cronbach alpha as well and caused no problems with assumptions, we decided to use this scale instead.

Results

Descriptive statistics

A total of 27 dyads were used for the data analysis, with participants answering scales ranging from 1 to 7. Descriptive statistics and correlations for core study variables can be found in Table 1. Shared leadership had a mean of 5.39 and a standard deviation of .58, suggesting that there was a relatively high level of shared leadership in our sample. Leader legitimacy revealed a mean of 5.49, and a standard deviation of .8, implying a high level of perceived legitimacy, which means that participants generally saw their leader as legitimate. Employee performance reached a mean of 6.09, and a standard deviation of .65. This indicates that on average, leaders rated their employee's performance quite high.

Next, correlations between core variables were investigated. Shared leadership and leader legitimacy showed a significant correlation ($r=.55$, $p< .01$), which indicates that as shared leadership increases, so does the perceived legitimacy of the leader. This correlation implies that looking at the mediating relationship between variables of this study might be worth a try. Shared leadership and employee performance showed a positive, but non-significant correlation ($r=.26$, $p>.01$). The correlation between legitimacy and performance was negative, but insignificant ($r=-.07$, $p>.01$).

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Core Study Variables

Variable	Mean	*SD*	1.	2.
1. Shared leadership	5.386	.578	–	
2. Leader legitimacy	5.49	.801	.554**	–
3. Employee performance	6.095	.652	.261	- .067

*Note. N Dyads = 27. **p < .01.*

Assumptions check

For the data analysis in the present study, SPSS software was used. Before the main analysis was conducted, we first checked the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. For assumptions of normality and linearity, the Q-Q plot which can be seen in figure 1, was generated. No dramatic deviations appear in the plot, with all data points being relatively close to the line, implying that these assumptions were met. For the homoscedasticity assumption, a scatterplot was generated, as can be seen in figure 2. There is no discernable pattern in the plot, which suggests no violation of this assumption. Therefore, all assumptions were met.

Hypotheses testing

The main purpose of this paper was to find out whether perceived leader legitimacy has a moderating effect on the relationship between shared leadership and job performance. To test these effects, we conducted linear regression analysis via process macro by Andrew F. Hayes, an extension for SPSS software suitable for analyzing moderation and mediation models. The results of the analysis can be seen in table 2. The complete model including the predictors and interaction was not significant and explained 17.45% of the variance in performance scores ($R^2 = 0.1745$, $F(3,23) = 1.62$, $p = 0.21$).

We hypothesized that shared leadership and leader legitimacy would be positively associated with performance (hypotheses 1 and 2). We further stated a hypothesis that high perceived leader legitimacy would lead to a stronger association between shared leadership and performance (hypothesis 3). The analysis showed no main effects. Both shared leadership ($F(3,23) = 1.62$, $b = 0.37$, $t = 1.33$ $p = 0.2$) and legitimacy ($F(3,23) = 1.62$, $b = -0.24$, $t = -1.29$, $p = 0.21$) were not significant predictors of employee performance, therefore hypotheses 1 and 2 were not supported. Furthermore, there was an insignificant interaction between shared leadership and leader legitimacy ($F(3,23) = 1.62$, $b = 0.33$, $t = 1.08$, $p = 0.29$), implying no moderation effect of legitimacy, and no support for hypothesis 3. This

relationship can be seen in figure 3. A noteworthy finding is that for high perceived leader legitimacy (1SD above the mean), the moderation effect was significant ($b = 0.63$, $t = 2.17$, $p = 0.04$). This implies that at high level of legitimacy, shared leadership predicts employee performance.

Table 2

Results of the Regression Analysis on Employee Performance

Predictor	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Constant	6.014	0.142	42.319	<.001
Shared Leadership	0.37	0.277	1.334	.195
Leader Legitimacy	-0.239	0.186	-1.287	.211
Interaction	0.325	0.29	1.084	.29

Additional analysis

Since the main analysis showed insignificant results, we assumed it could be insightful to conduct additional analysis with the education of the leader as a covariate. Results from this analysis can be seen in table 3. This additional analysis model including the predictors, a covariate, and the interaction explained 18.17 % variance in performance scores, and it was not significant ($R^2 = 0.1817$, $F (4,22) = 1.22$, $p = 0.33$).

We theorized that education could affect how the leader is perceived by the employees. Achieving a certain level of education should provide the leader with the knowledge and skill necessary to perform well in their position, and this in turn should make them appear more legitimate. However, even after controlling for the education of the leader, we have not found significant results. Main effect of both shared leadership ($F (4,22) = 1.22$, $b = 0.37$, $t = 1.3$, $p = 0.21$) and legitimacy ($F (4,22) = 1.22$, $b = -0.24$, $t = -1.29$, $p = 0.21$)

yielded insignificant values, as did the main effect of leader education (F (4,22) = 1.22, b = 0.04, t = 0.44, p = 0.66). Moreover, no significant interaction effect was found between shared leadership and legitimacy (F (4,22) = 1.22, b = 0.39, t = 1.15, p = 0.26). These results suggest that even when controlling for the possible effect of leader education, no significant results in favor of our hypotheses were found.

Table 3

Results of the Regression Analysis on Employee Performance with Leader Education as a Covariate

Predictor	B	SE	t	p
Constant	5.767	0.58	9.939	<.001
Shared Leadership	0.365	0.283	1.292	.21
Leader Legitimacy	-0.243	0.189	-1.285	.212
Interaction	0.386	0.335	1.152	.262
Leader Education	0.039	O.09	0.44	.664

Discussion

In this study, we investigated the effect of perceived leader legitimacy on the relationship between shared leadership and employee performance. We hypothesized that shared leadership would be positively associated with employee performance. Even though the literature on this topic is divided, many sources found a positive link between these two variables (Carson et al., 2007; Ensley et al., 2006; Wu & Cormican, 2021), and we theorized that such an association would be more likely to occur in a dyadic model, as we investigated dynamics in a team where interpersonal relationships are pervasive. We also stated a hypothesis that a positive association would be found between perceived leader legitimacy and performance, as this is in line with research by Ratcliff & Vescio (2018), which suggests

that when leaders are not seen as legitimate, employees feel anger, lack of control and, think less deeply about cognitive tasks, which can have a negative influence on their performance. Finally, we hypothesized that when perceived legitimacy is high, the positive effect of shared leadership on employee performance will be stronger. This is consistent with the findings of Aime et al. (2014), which state that environments with occurring power shifts (such as a workplace with shared leadership) foster creativity, but this effect is weaker when power expression is not perceived as legitimate. Since creativity is related to performance (Ince et al., 2022), we expected the same effect in our study.

The results obtained in this study did not support our hypotheses. The analysis showed no significant main effect of shared leadership on employee performance, as well as no significant main effect of perceived leader legitimacy on employee performance, thus yielding no support for both hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2. Furthermore, there was no interaction effect found between shared leadership and legitimacy, suggesting that legitimacy does not moderate the relationship between shared leadership and employee performance. Thus, the findings of this study were unexpected and in conflict with preexisting research.

Theoretical Implications

The present research has a number of theoretical implications. It addresses the inconclusive research findings about the effect of shared leadership on performance and underlines that identifying the variables that lead to better performance might be quite complex. Indeed, while multiple studies found a positive relationship between these variables, other sources found negative or no association (Drescher et al., 2014). Our analysis revealed no significant relationship between shared leadership and job performance, supporting the view that there is no relationship between the two. Moreover, we found no relationship between legitimacy and performance. Considering that Ratcliff & Vescio (2018) found an

association between perceived illegitimacy and lowered thinking about cognitive ability, which in turn is likely to have an adverse effect on performance, this was an unexpected finding, adding to the complexity of the topic. A finding of note is that there was a significant correlation found between shared leadership and legitimacy. This should urge researchers to investigate the perceived leader legitimacy as a mediator rather than a moderator in future studies.

Further, literature investigating specifically shared leadership, legitimacy, and job performance is scarce, therefore, we are contributing with a rare combination of variables, providing new insights about team dynamics. Indeed, we were unable to find sources that would test the moderation effect of legitimacy on the relationship between shared leadership and employee performance. Our analysis revealed no moderation effect for legitimacy, and even though there are no studies to directly compare these results with, this outcome was quite surprising, as it was conflicting with the study by Aime et al. (2014), that suggest moderation effect of legitimacy on the relationship between environments with occurring power shifts and team creativity. While these variables are different from our model, the connection between them and our variables can be found, as creativity can be associated with performance (Ince et al., 2022), and shared leadership is a type of dynamic where power shifts occur by definition. For these reasons, our negative findings were surprising to say the least.

Finally, we used a dyadic approach in this study, collecting data from leader-follower pairs. Since dyadic research is still quite rare and unexplored (Gooty & Yammarino, 2011), we believe that the present study provides more understanding of this type of analysis.

Strengths & Limitations

An important strength of the present study is the above-mentioned dyadic approach. This level of analysis offers a unique point of view, considering that there is a small number

of existing research using this approach, especially with the topic of team dynamics. While other types of analyses such as looking at entire teams, or only at individuals are useful, investigating pairs could uncover information that would not be found with other approaches. Moreover, our focus on the leader-follower dyad is relevant for investigating workplaces as this type of dyad was found to be particularly salient in teams (Bass, 2008), and teams are an imperative part of most organizations (Gooty & Yammarino, 2011). Thus, dyadic research is highly relevant to the context of the present study, and it has the potential to uncover new insights.

Another strength is the diversity of our sample in terms of industries. Participants were recruited from various organizations of different sizes. This is highly beneficial for the present research, as it allows us to generalize our analysis to different organizational contexts. Moreover, the industrial diversity prevents our analysis from effects of biases pertinent to specific industries, or organizational sizes. Ultimately, a diverse sample allows for easier and broader application of the results, and exploration of shared leadership, legitimacy, and performance in various contexts.

One of the limitations of this study was the small and culturally homogenous sample, which could have a potential effect on our results and their generalizability. More specifically, we only collected 27 leader-follower dyads. We had to exclude a lot of participants, since in a lot of cases only one member of the dyad completed our questionnaire. This might mean that people were simply not interested in the study, or that participants were unable to reach the other member of the dyad. However, it is worth considering that the instructions for forming a code for each dyad were not clear. Indeed, we found codes that were almost identical, suggesting that this might be the case. Furthermore, while our sample was quite diverse in terms of industries, the opposite can be said about the diversity of cultural backgrounds of participants, all of whom were Dutch speakers, and most of them were Dutch. This lack of

diversity makes our findings relevant only to the Dutch population and together with small sample size limits their generalizability.

Another limitation was the inclusion of participants who work less than 17 hours per week. Initially, it was our goal to disregard such participants, but due to a lack of participants, we decided to keep them in the data set. This could be a potential problem as participants working a few hours might not have the same insight into the team dynamics compared to participants who spend a lot more time with their coworkers. Moreover, the fact that multiple such participants filled out the survey despite being instructed otherwise means there might have been unclear instructions about conditions under which participants are suitable candidates for the study. Furthermore, this limitation is connected to our previous concern about sample size, as a bigger sample would allow us to disregard these participants.

Finally, a clear limitation of this study was the unreliable legitimacy scale. We were not able to improve the reliability of this scale, even after deleting items that showed a small correlation with the rest of the items. This was surprising since we worked with scales that were already established. However, we did adapt them to be suitable for dyads, which might have contributed to such low reliability. A scale with low reliability could potentially not measure the concept it was developed to measure, which is why this limitation could have an effect on our results, and should be addressed by researchers in the future.

Future directions

Taken together, future research should continue to investigate the complex relationship between shared leadership, legitimacy, and job performance, especially since existing research investigating the relationship between these specific variables is scarce. Even though our study had no significant results, subsequent studies might come to different conclusions, especially if the above-mentioned limitation will be addressed. More

specifically, researchers should use a bigger and more culturally diverse sample, and make sure to provide participants with clear instructions. Furthermore, the low reliability of the legitimacy scale should be addressed. Future studies should use a different scale with higher reliability, or potentially develop a new scale for this concept.

Additionally, the relationship between shared leadership and performance is still ambiguous. Future research could benefit from investigating shared leadership with moderators such as team function, team conflict, or team life-cycle, to shed some light on this complex relationship and what causes such inconclusive results in the existing literature (Wu et al., 2020). Further, our study was cross-sectional in nature, recording the data at one point in time only. Subsequent studies could use longitudinal design, which would allow researchers to observe how shared leadership develops over time. This approach would be particularly interesting considering that shared leadership is still an emergent phenomenon, and observing how it develops over time, especially over stages of team development, could uncover new insights (Carson et al., 2007).

Conclusion

Every organization wants to be successful, which makes the topic of good job performance and what factors lead to it very relevant. The focus of this research was on job performance as well as legitimacy and shared leadership. More specifically, this paper aimed to test whether high levels of perceived leader legitimacy cause shared leadership to have a positive effect on employee job performance, and vice versa. Even though there is not a lot of literature addressing our exact research question, we expected to find supporting evidence due to existing research on related constructs. Yet, we found no support for our hypothesis. However, if the limitations of this study are addressed, future research could lead to different outcomes.

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Appendix A

Figure 1

The Q-Q Plot for Normality and Linearity Assumptions Check.
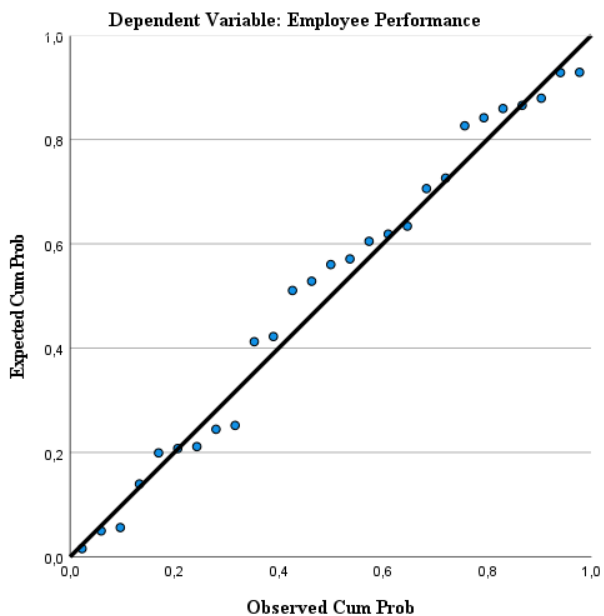

Figure 2

The Scatterplot for Homoscedasticity Assumption Check
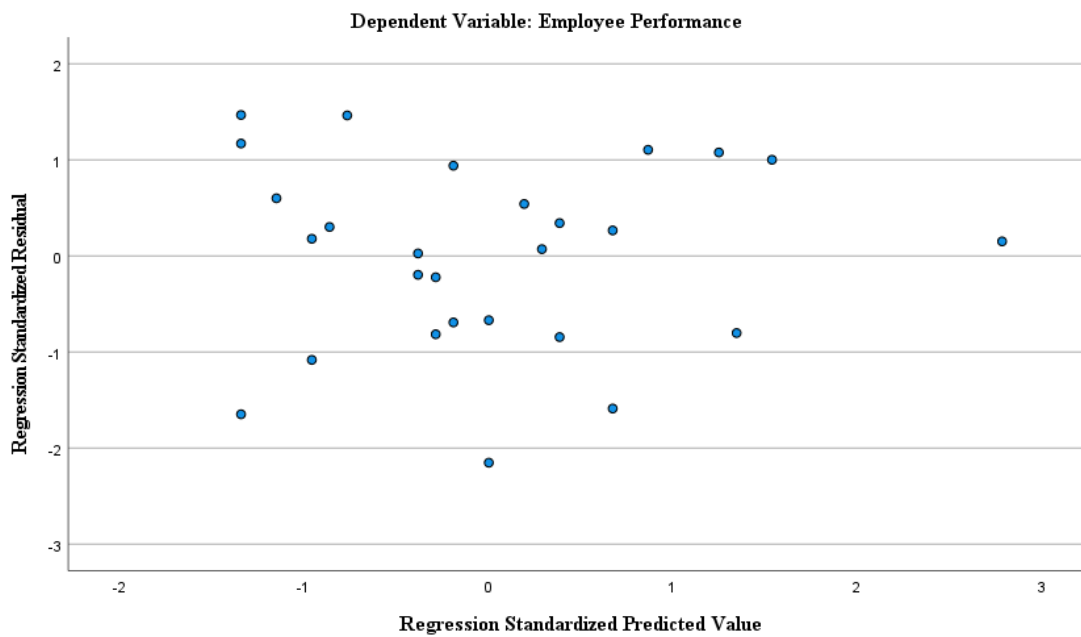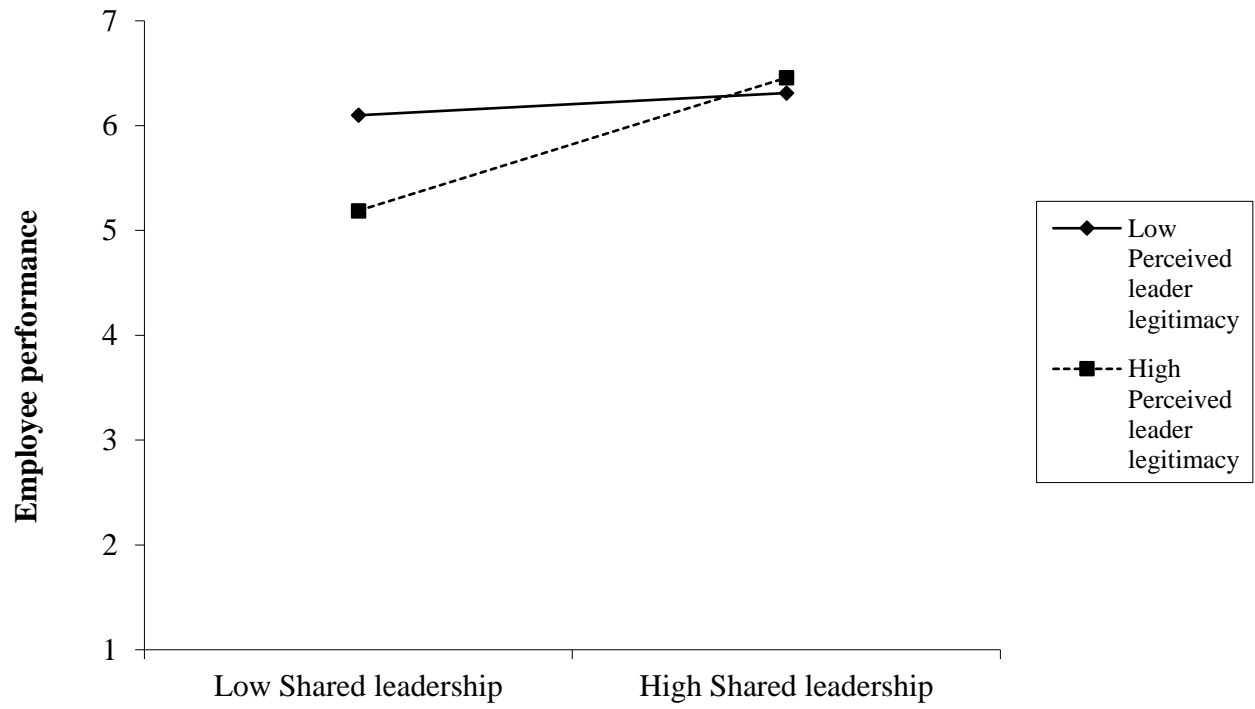
Figure 3

The Interaction Effect on Employee Performance.

Appendix B

Revised questionnaires (English translation)

Shared leadership scale

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements.

[1 Strongly disagree; 7 Completely agree; 4 neither agree nor disagree]

1. My manager gives a clear picture of what our team stands for.

2. My supervisor is driven by higher goals or ideals.

3. My supervisor shows appreciation for my efforts.

4. My supervisor encourages me to reconsider ideas that have never been questioned before.

5. My supervisor uses many different perspectives to solve problems.

6. My supervisor encourages me to do more than just what is expected of me

(e.g. extra effort).

7. My manager encourages me to look for solutions to my problems in the workplace.

8. My supervisor insists on taking responsibility for the work.

9. My manager encourages me to learn new things.

10. My supervisor encourages me to pat myself on the back when I have achieved a new

challenge.

11. My supervisor encourages me to collaborate with other team members.

12. My supervisor advises me to coordinate my work with others that are part of the team.

13. My supervisor insists on working as a team with others who are part of the team.

14. My manager expects the cooperation with the other team members to go well.

15. My supervisor decides with me what my performance goals are.

16. My supervisor and I work together to choose what my performance goals should be.

17. My manager and I sit down together to agree on my performance goals.

18. My supervisor works with me to develop my performance goals.

Legitimacy scale

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements.

[1 Strongly disagree; 7 Completely agree; 4 neither agree nor disagree]

1. My manager's level of influence is based on what he/she does or knows.

2. My manager's level of influence is based on his/her contribution to the success of our collaboration.

3. In our collaboration, my manager has direct influence over decisions.

4. I generally find the power structure in cooperation with my supervisor honest.

Performance scale

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements.

[1 Strongly disagree; 7 Completely agree; 4 neither agree nor disagree]

My employee:

1. Performs assigned tasks properly

2. Fulfills the responsibilities stated in the job description

3. Performs the tasks that are expected of him/her

4. Meets formal job performance requirements

5. Engages in activities that directly affect him/her Performance Review

6. Neglects aspects of the job he/she is required to perform

7. Fails to perform essential tasks

8. Helps others who have been absent

9. Helps others who have a heavy workload

10. Assists me in my work (when not requested)

11. Takes time to listen to co-workers' problems and concerns

12. Does his/her best to help new employees

13. Takes a personal interest in other employees

14. Passes information on to colleagues

15. Attendance at work is above the norm

16. Indicates in advance when he/she cannot come to work

17. Takes too many work breaks

18. Spend a lot of time on personal phone calls

19. Complains about unimportant things at work

20. Safeguards and protects Company property

21. Adheres to informal rules established to maintain order