

The Influence of Shared Leadership on Reflexivity and Performance: A Mediated Model

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Abstract

This study investigates how shared leadership influences employee performance and whether reflexivity is a mediating mechanism in this relationship. Building on theories of shared leadership, social exchange, and team learning, the study focuses on leader–employee dyads in Dutch organizations, a context characterized by flat hierarchies and participative decision-making. Data were collected from 133 leader–employee pairs using validated questionnaires on shared leadership, reflexivity, and employee performance. Regression and mediation analyses revealed that shared leadership was positively associated with both reflexivity and employee performance. However, reflexivity neither significantly predicted performance nor mediated the relationship between shared leadership and performance. These findings suggest that shared leadership can directly enhance employee performance within dyadic relationships but that reflexivity, although promoted by shared leadership, may not translate into measurable performance gains in this context. The study contributes to leadership research by examining shared leadership outside traditional team settings and by considering cultural factors in leadership effectiveness. Practical implications include encouraging organizations to adopt shared leadership practices to improve employee outcomes, even in flat organizational structures. Limitations and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Shared leadership, reflexivity, employee performance, dyadic relationships

The Influence of Shared Leadership on Reflexivity and Performance: A Mediated Model

In today's fast-paced and complex workplaces, effective leadership is highly important for organizational success. The traditional, common approaches and schools of leadership include mostly hierarchical leadership models, where authority and decision-making power are concentrated in a single leader (Day & Antonakis, 2012). However, as workplaces are becoming more team-oriented and dynamic, scholars and practitioners alike have advocated for more flexible and rather decentralized leadership structures that enhance collaboration between members of the same team and adaptability when it comes to work processes (D'Innocenzo et al., 2016). One such approach is shared leadership which distributes leadership among the members of the team instead of designating the role of the leader to a single person (Carson et al., 2007). Shared leadership was found to enhance team outcomes such as team performance, innovation, satisfaction, functioning, and proactivity (D'Innocenzo et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2014

Despite this evolution of the term leadership and the growing evidence supporting the effectiveness of shared leadership on team performance, the mechanisms explaining this association remain underexplored (D'Innocenzo et al., 2016). While several mediating processes have been proposed, such as psychological safety, trust, or collective efficacy, not as much is known about the role of reflective team processes. Interestingly, Hoch (2013) suggests that shared leadership fosters open information sharing and collaborative decision making, both of which are key components of team reflexivity. Reflexivity in teams is a dynamic process in which team members systematically and collectively reflect on their goals, strategies, and ongoing processes to improve each other's performance (Yang et al., 2020). The process of reflexivity enables teams to adapt better to challenges, pool their resources, and integrate improved communication and decision-making strategies, thereby maximizing their efficiency

(West, 2000). This makes reflexivity a theoretically and practically relevant mechanism through which shared leadership may enhance team outcomes (Schippers et al., 2007).

Previous empirical evidence suggests that reflexivity enhances multiple aspects of team functioning. For example, Schippers et al. (2015) found that teams with higher reflexivity showed greater innovation, since members engage in open discussion and integrate different perspectives. Chen et al. (2018) showed that reflexivity not only enhances performance but also reduces burnout and improves psychological well-being. Reflexivity therefore appears to be a process that bridges leadership and team outcomes, but its role in shared leadership models is still insufficiently researched.

Although some studies have identified mediators such as team learning behavior (Decuyper et al., 2010), psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999), and collective efficacy (Walumbwa et al., 2008) to explain how shared leadership influences outcomes, reflexivity stands out due to its integrative nature—it involves evaluation, adaptation, and strategic alignment, which are particularly critical in dynamic work environments (West, 2000; Schippers et al., 2007). However, studies examining reflexivity as a mediator in the shared leadership–performance link remain scarce.

The cultural and organizational context in which shared leadership unfolds can play an important role in how its effects show up. Hadi and Chaudhary (2021) and Yang and Schloemer (2020) demonstrated that shared leadership improves team performance through reflexivity, but they conducted their studies in markedly different cultural settings, such as telecom teams in Pakistan and hospitality organizations in China.

In contrast, the Dutch work environment presents a distinct leadership culture. According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the Netherlands scores low on power distance (PDI = 38), reflecting relatively flat hierarchies and already participative leadership styles (Hofstede, n.d.).

This result raises the question of whether shared leadership actively enhances reflexivity in the Dutch context or simply aligns with existing cultural norms that already support such processes.

Additionally, Dutch organizations are shaped by consensus-driven decision-making, known as the “Polder Model” (Plochg, 2019), which emphasizes open communication and critical reflection, which are key components of reflexivity.

Thus, it remains unclear whether shared leadership actively enhances reflexivity or whether Dutch teams already exhibit high reflexivity due to cultural norms. To address this, it is essential to study shared leadership in dyads, specifically between formal leaders and their direct followers. This approach allows for a more detailed understanding of how leadership processes unfold at the interpersonal level (Wang et al., 2014). While many studies conceptualize shared leadership as a group-level construct, recent research has emphasized the importance of dyadic dynamics in shared leadership models, arguing that they capture real-time reciprocal influence more accurately than aggregate team measures (Zhu et al., 2018).

This study seeks to address these research gaps by examining the mediating role of team reflexivity in the relationship between shared leadership and employee performance, specifically within the dyadic context of leaders and employees in Dutch workplaces. While previous studies have identified a variety of psychological and team-level mechanisms—such as trust, team learning, and communication quality—as potential mediators in shared leadership models (Carson et al., 2007; Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014), reflexivity remains understudied despite its strong theoretical relevance. Reflexivity represents a dynamic, recurring process where teams evaluate and adapt their strategies, making it particularly suitable to capture the internal processes facilitated by shared leadership (Schippers et al., 2007). Moreover, empirical studies have confirmed the potential mediating role of reflexivity in leadership models. For instance, Hoch (2013) and Hadi and Chaudhary (2021) demonstrated that shared leadership improves reflection

and open communication, which subsequently enhance team performance. By investigating this specific mediator, the current study adds conceptual clarity to how shared leadership affects performance outcomes. It also contributes to cross-cultural leadership research and practical workplace strategies by contextualizing shared leadership models in a low power-distance environment and highlighting reflexivity as a potential explanatory process.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Shared Leadership and Reflexivity

Shared leadership refers to a dynamic, mutual influence process among individuals in teams, where leadership roles and responsibilities are distributed rather than centralized in a single formal leader (Carson et al., 2007). This shared influence structure leads to collaboration, mutual respect, and greater engagement among team members. In a dyadic context—between a formal leader and an employee—shared leadership can manifest when both parties contribute to decision-making, support each other’s input, and influence team direction together.

Literature suggests that shared leadership is positively associated with reflexivity because it fosters mutual influence, collaboration, and open communication among team members (Carson et al., 2007). This reasoning aligns with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which explains how reciprocal relationships built on trust and support encourage proactive behaviors such as reflection and learning. When employees experience mutual trust, recognition, and influence within a shared leadership structure, they are more inclined to reflect openly on work processes and goals (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Shared leadership also nurtures a climate of psychological safety, defined as the belief that one can speak up or make mistakes without fear of retribution, which is crucial for reflexive dialogue (Carson et al., 2007). Empirical evidence supports this connection: for instance, Hoch (2013) found that shared leadership significantly increases collaborative learning and open communication. Similarly, Hadi and Chaudhary (2021)

reported that shared leadership leads to higher reflexivity by promoting team responsibility and joint decision-making. These findings suggest that reflexivity may act as a key mechanism through which shared leadership improves team outcomes, warranting further investigation into its mediating role (Schipper et al., 2007).

Shared leadership is theorized to promote reflexivity because it creates conditions in which team members feel psychologically empowered to engage in collective reflection and decision-making. This idea aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in motivating behavior. When leadership is distributed and team members feel that their input is valued, these psychological needs are more likely to be met, prompting greater engagement in reflective processes (Lorinkova et al., 2013). Similarly, Complexity Leadership Theory conceptualizes leadership as an emergent, adaptive process that supports collective learning and adjustment in dynamic work environments (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007), making reflexivity a natural outcome of shared leadership interactions. Empirical evidence supports these theoretical expectations: Hadi and Chaudhary (2021) found that shared leadership significantly enhanced team reflexivity through mechanisms of mutual cooperation and joint responsibility. Therefore, shared leadership not only fosters favorable psychological conditions but also enables the adaptive team processes necessary for reflexivity to emerge.

H1: *Shared leadership is positively associated with reflexivity.*

Reflexivity and Employee Performance

Team reflexivity refers to the extent to which team members reflect upon and adapt their goals, strategies, and working processes to improve performance (West, 2000). It involves active discussions about past actions, shared learning, and a willingness to question current practices

(Schippers et al., 2007). For employees within teams, reflexivity contributes to greater role clarity, better coordination, and more efficient task execution.

According to Team Learning Theory (Decuyper et al., 2010), reflexivity is a key learning behavior that enables continuous improvement. Reflexive teams identify ineffective practices, adjust strategies, and share feedback openly, leading to better individual and team outcomes. The Input-Process-Outcome (IPO) model (Ilgen et al., 2005) also positions reflexivity as a central team process that converts leadership and team dynamics into effective outputs.

Empirical studies consistently show that reflexivity improves both team and individual performance. Schippers et al. (2015) found that teams practicing reflexivity exhibited greater innovation and decision-making effectiveness. Chen et al. (2018) found that reflexivity not only improved performance but also contributed to employee well-being.

H2: *Reflexivity is positively associated with performance.*

Shared Leaderships Direct Effect on Employee Performance

While shared leadership has been positively associated with team outcomes, findings on its direct impact on employee performance remain mixed. Some studies suggest that the effects are contingent on contextual factors, such as team dynamics or organizational culture.

Nevertheless, there is growing empirical support for a positive link between shared leadership and performance. When leaders and employees share responsibility for decision-making and strategic direction, employees report higher satisfaction, initiative, and motivation (Wang et al., 2014). In dyadic relationships, this mutual influence has been shown to strengthen engagement and ownership over work processes, which in turn may enhance performance.

Social Exchange Theory explains that when leaders demonstrate trust and support, employees reciprocate with increased effort and commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Self-Determination Theory further adds that shared leadership fosters autonomy and competence, leading to intrinsic motivation and stronger performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In addition to influencing reflexivity, shared leadership is also theorized to have a direct impact on employee performance. While some studies emphasize the mediating mechanisms involved, others point to a more immediate effect. Shared leadership creates a sense of empowerment, motivation, and accountability among employees, factors that are consistently associated with enhanced performance outcomes. When leaders and employees jointly participate in decision-making and strategic direction, this collaborative dynamic can boost individual initiative, commitment, and satisfaction (Wang et al., 2014). D’Innocenzo et al. (2016) found that shared leadership significantly improved performance across diverse industries, and Wang et al. (2014) confirmed its effectiveness in both team and individual contexts. These findings support the view that shared leadership may directly enhance employee performance, independent of mediating mechanisms.

H3: *Shared leadership is positively associated with performance.*

Reflexivity as Mediator

While shared leadership can directly influence performance, it is also theorized to operate through indirect mechanisms, such as team reflexivity. Shared leadership enables a collaborative environment that encourages feedback, information exchange, and continuous reflection (Hoch, 2013). These conditions are essential for reflexivity to emerge (Carson et al., 2007).

According to the Input-Process-Output (IPO model), leadership as an input influences performance through internal processes, reflexivity being one of the most critical. Complexity Leadership Theory also highlights how adaptive processes like reflexivity arise from dynamic, shared leadership interactions (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). As reflexivity develops, teams become

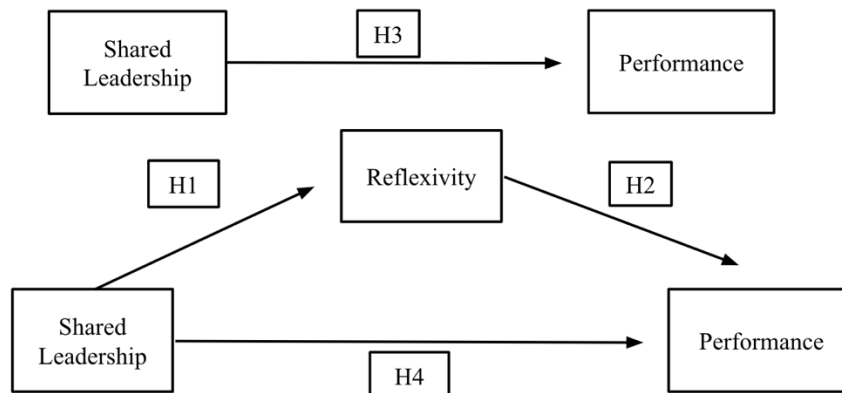
more strategic, adaptable, and aligned with goals—all contributing to improved individual performance.

Hadi and Chaudhary (2021) empirically validated this mechanism, demonstrating that reflexivity significantly mediates the relationship between shared leadership and performance. Similarly, Lorinkova et al. (2013) showed that empowering leadership improves performance largely by enabling learning behaviors such as reflection and adjustment. While these studies underline the importance of reflexivity as a mediator, they focus on broader team settings and different cultural contexts. The present study replicates and extends this line of research by specifically examining the mediating role of reflexivity within leader–employee dyads in the Dutch workplace. By applying this framework in a low power-distance setting, the study offers a culturally specific contribution and tests whether reflexivity similarly functions as a mediating mechanism in this more participative environment.

H4: *Reflexivity mediates the relationship between shared leadership and performance.*

Figure 1.

Research Model: Relationship of Shared Leadership With Team Performance mediated by Reflexivity.



Methods

Participants

The final sample consisted of 133 leader–employee dyads ($N = 266$), recruited through convenience sampling from the personal and professional networks of undergraduate students. Recruitment focused on organizations located in the Groningen region of the Netherlands. Although the broader research project collected data from 135 dyads, two were excluded from the present study due to missing values on one or more of the key variables shared leadership, reflexivity, or performance which resulted in a final analytic sample of 133 matched dyads. Each dyad included one formal leader and one direct-report employee, creating a 1:1 paired data structure.

Leaders ($n = 133$) had a mean age of 43.79 years ($SD = 11.38$) and were 58,6% male and 41,4% female. Employees ($n = 133$) had a mean age of 27.65 years ($SD = 8.25$) and were 57.1% female and 42.9% male. Participants represented diverse organizational sectors, although no specific industries were targeted.

Design and procedure

This study employed a cross-sectional, quantitative design to investigate the relationships between shared leadership, reflexivity, and employee performance. Shared leadership and reflexivity were answered by the employees and employee performance was answered by the leaders. Next to these variables, other variables are included in the questionnaire, that are not considered in the present study. Data were collected by bachelor students from the University of Groningen using convenience sampling. Leaders and employees were recruited from organizations located primarily in the Groningen region of the Netherlands.

Leaders were defined as individuals in formal supervisory roles responsible for decision-making and task coordination. Employees were defined as direct subordinates of these leaders.

The recruitment process began with students contacting leaders in their personal or professional networks and informing them about the study. After obtaining informed consent, each leader was asked to nominate one employee at random who directly reported to them. That employee then received an invitation to complete the employee version of the survey. Both leaders and employees completed separate, online questionnaires. Both surveys took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to survey completion. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the study.

Measures

Shared Leadership

Shared leadership was assessed using the Shared Leadership Questionnaire developed by Hoch (2013), which includes elements of both transformational and empowering leadership. The original 18-item scale was adapted to reflect the dyadic relationship between a leader and a specific employee, rather than a general team-level perspective. Items were rated by employees on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency in this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$). A sample item from the transformational component is: "My supervisor expresses appreciation for my efforts" An example of an empowering leadership item is: "My supervisor encourages me to take responsibility for my work" (See Appendix for the Dutch translation of the scales).

Employee Performance

Employee performance was assessed through leader ratings using an adapted measure based on the framework by Van der Vegt and Bunderson (2005). While the original scale focused on five global performance dimensions, this study implemented an extended set of 21 items to more comprehensively capture individual work behavior, including task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), and counterproductive work behaviors. This adaptation allowed for a more nuanced evaluation of employee performance relevant to dyadic work dynamics. This scale was also adapted to fit our dyadic approach.

Leaders responded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (helemaal mee oneens / “strongly disagree”) to 7 (helemaal mee eens / “strongly agree”). The scale demonstrated high internal consistency in this study (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .90$). Example items include “My employee fulfills responsibilities described in the job description” (Voldoet aan de verantwoordelijkheden vermeld in de functiebeschrijving), “My employee helps others who have a heavy workload” (Helpt anderen die een zware werklast hebben), and “My employee complains about unimportant things at work” (Klaagt over onbelangrijke dingen op het werk).

Reflexivity

Reflexivity was measured using the validated scale by Schippers et al. (2007), which captures the extent to which team members reflect on their goals, strategies, and work processes, and adapt accordingly. In the present study, the items were linguistically and contextually adapted to the leader–employee dyadic level. Both leaders and employees completed this measure to reflect on their collaborative work processes.

Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (helemaal mee oneens / “strongly disagree”) to 7 (helemaal mee eens / “strongly agree”). The questionnaire was administered in Dutch to match the participants’ native language. Internal consistency in the current sample was excellent (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$).

Example items from the employee version include: “My leader and I discuss different ways to achieve our goals” and “My leader and I evaluate what we can learn from completed actions.” The corresponding items from the leader version were adapted to refer to “my employee.”

Results

3.1 Preliminary Analyses and Assumption Checks

Prior to conducting the main analysis, the data were examined for missing values, outliers, and compliance with the assumptions of regression. Two cases were excluded due to incomplete responses, resulting in a final sample of 133 leader–employee dyads. All relevant variables (shared leadership, reflexivity, and performance) demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .90 to .92.

Assumptions for normality and linearity were assessed using visual inspection of Q–Q plots (Appendix, Figure B1). The plot showed that the standardized residuals were approximately normally distributed, as most data points closely followed the diagonal line, with only minor deviations at the extremes. This indicates that the assumption of normality was adequately met. No severe violations were observed. Homoscedasticity was assessed via the scatterplot of standardized residuals against predicted values, which showed no systematic patterns (see Figure B2). Additionally, multicollinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance statistics (Table B1). A significant relationship was found between all the variables (see Table 1).

Table 1

Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD), and Correlation between the variables

| Variables | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|-----------|----------|-----------|---|---|---|
|-----------|----------|-----------|---|---|---|

| | | | | |
|----------------------|------|------|--------|------|
| 1. Shared leadership | 5.42 | .87 | - | |
| 2. Reflexivity | 5.21 | 1.09 | .73*** | - |
| 3. Performance | 5.92 | .72 | .26** | .20* |

Note. N = 133, The correlation is significant at p values <.01 (2-tailed)

*p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001

To examine the mediation model (Hypothesis 4), Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4) was used with 5,000 bootstrap samples and 95% confidence intervals (Hayes, 2018). 2 Dyads were excluded due to listwise deletion of PROCESS leading to a n=131 for the mediation analysis.

3.2 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 predicted a positive association between shared leadership and reflexivity (path *a*). The results supported this hypothesis. Shared leadership significantly predicted reflexivity, accounting for 52.9% of the variance ($R^2 = .529$). The linear regression was statistically significant, $F(1, 129) = 146.08, p < .001$. The unstandardized regression coefficient indicated that higher levels of shared leadership were associated with higher levels of reflexivity ($B = 0.91, SE = 0.08, p < .001$).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that reflexivity would be positively associated with employee performance (path *b*). This hypothesis was not supported. Reflexivity did not significantly predict employee performance, explaining less than 1% of the variance ($R^2 = .0004$). The regression was non-significant, $F(2, 128) = 5.22, p = .982$, and the coefficient was also not significant ($B = -0.002, SE = 0.08, p = .982$).

Hypothesis 3 posited that shared leadership would be directly associated with employee performance (path *c'*). This hypothesis was supported. Shared leadership significantly predicted

performance, even when controlling for reflexivity. The model explained 27.5% of the variance in performance ($R^2 = .275$), and the relationship was statistically significant, $B = 0.23$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = 2.23$, $p = .027$.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that reflexivity would mediate the relationship between shared leadership and performance (path $a \times b$). This hypothesis was not supported. The indirect effect of shared leadership on performance through reflexivity was not statistically significant ($B = -0.002$, $BootSE = 0.06$), with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval ranging from -0.13 to 0.13 . Because the interval includes zero, the mediation was not significant.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing

| Hypotheses | Relationship | Estimate | t | SE | p | Conclusion |
|------------|--|----------|-------|-----|-------|------------------|
| H1 | SL \rightarrow RFLX | .91 | 12.08 | .08 | <.001 | Supported |
| H2 | RFLX \rightarrow PRF | -.002 | -.02 | .08 | .982 | Not supported |
| H3 | SL \rightarrow PRF (direct effect) | .23 | 2.23 | .10 | .027 | Supported |
| H4 | SL \rightarrow RFLX \rightarrow PRF | -.002 | | | n.s. | Not supported |

Note: $N = 131$. CI = 95%, 5000 bootstrap samples (for H4)

SL = Shared Leadership; RFLXVT = Reflexivity; PRFMN_21 = Performance

The indirect effect (H4) is not statistically significant because the bootstrap 95% CI included zero.

Discussion

These studies aimed to investigate whether shared leadership enhances employee performance indirectly through reflexivity, within the context of the Dutch work environment. In summary, the results provide partial support for the hypothesized model. While shared leadership significantly predicted both reflexivity and employee performance, reflexivity did not significantly predict performance and did not mediate the relationship between shared leadership and performance. These findings suggest that although shared leadership may directly enhance performance, the expected mediating mechanism of reflexivity was not statistically supported in

this sample. The implications of these findings, along with potential explanations and limitations, will be explored in the following discussion section.

The finding that shared leadership is positively associated with reflexivity is in line with the theoretical expectations that were outlined in the introduction. As was predicted by Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Copanzano & Mitchell, 2005), mutual influence and trust between leaders and employees create a foundation for joint reflection and open dialogue. In the dyadic setting, when leadership responsibilities are shared with the employees, both parties are more likely to share ideas, voice their concerns, and evaluate strategies that reach shared goals. These are core aspects of reflexivity (Schippers et al., 2007). Furthermore, this result aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which suggests that when individuals experience autonomy and feel as though their input matters, they become more intrinsically motivated to engage in reflective learning behaviors. In shared leadership structures, employees likely feel more competent and connected with their leader on a personal level. This helps create a headspace necessary for reflexivity to occur.

This finding supports previous research showing that shared leadership fosters reflexivity. For example, Hoch (2013) found that shared leadership encourages open communication and learning, while Hadi and Chaudhary (2021) demonstrated that it enhances reflexivity by promoting cooperative responsibility between team members. Our study adds to existing research by looking more closely at what happens between a leader and an employee within a team. While most studies focus on how shared leadership works across the whole team, we looked at the specific relationship between one leader and one employee. These pairs (dyads) are still part of their larger teams, but our focus was on how shared leadership plays out between just two people. We found that even at this smaller scale, shared leadership can lead to joint reflection and

discussion, which shows that reflexivity doesn't only happen in the whole team, but can also grow from strong cooperation between a leader and an employee.

Moreover, this relationship may confirm the cultural context of the study. The Netherlands is known for its low power distance (Hofstede, n.d.), meaning that hierarchical boundaries are less rigid, and participative leadership is common. This cultural context may help explain why we found a strong positive relationship between shared leadership and reflexivity. The Dutch "Polder Model" (Plochg, 2019) emphasizes consensus and joint decision-making which are values that naturally support reflexive practices. As a result, Dutch leaders may be more open to non-hierarchical, collaborative interactions with employees, which could have strengthened the link between shared leadership and reflexivity observed in our study.

In sum, this study provides strong evidence that shared leadership and reflexivity are closely linked, particularly in direct leader–employee relationships. These findings affirm earlier theory while offering novel insight into how this dynamic unfolds within a Dutch, low power-distance work culture.

Although shared leadership did significantly predict reflexivity, reflexivity itself was not significantly related to employee performance and also did not mediate the shared leadership performance link. The finding contrasts with prior research that highlights reflexivity as a key mechanism linking leadership processes to team performance (e.g., Schippers et al., 2007; Hadi & Chaudhary, 2021). A possible explanation has to do with the nature of the leader-employee relationship. Reflexivity is usually conceptualized as a team level construct that benefits from cognitive diversity, open debate, and broad range of perspectives (Schippers et al., 2007; West, 2000). Within dyadic relationships, however, the reflective process may lack the complexity and number of viewpoints that make such a powerful tool for team learning and adjustment.

Another explanation relates again to the cultural context of the present study. Dutch workplaces are characterized by low power distance and a strong orientation to participative decision making and an open communication (Hofstede, n.d.; Plochg, 2019). These cultural norms may hint to a baseline of reflexivity that already formed across leader-employee relationships, thus limiting its explanatory power. In other words, reflexivity may be so embedded in the Dutch workplace culture that it does not predict performance in this sample.

Additionally, reflexivity may have a stronger effect on other outcomes such as innovation, learning, or psychological well-being—constructs that are less directly observable and not captured by the performance scale used in this study (Decuyper et al., 2010; Schippers et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2018). The leader-rated performance items focused primarily on concrete work behaviors, such as task completion and rule adherence. This may not fully reflect the benefits of reflexivity. As noted by the IPO model (Ilgen et al., 2005), not all process gains translate immediately into performance outcomes, especially when they are assessed by an external rater who may not witness the reflective interactions himself.

Turning to the direct effect of shared leadership on performance (H3), the findings showed a significant and positive relationship. This supports previous research findings suggesting that when leaders and employees engage in shared decision making and mutual influence, employee performance tends to improve (Wang et al., 2014; D’Innocenzo et al., 2016). A possible explanation lies in the interpersonal nature of the dyad: when leadership responsibilities are shared, employees may feel more trusted, competent, and motivated to deliver high-quality work. This interpretation aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which highlights how autonomy, competence, and relatedness drive intrinsic motivation. In the present sample, leaders who actively involved employees in goal setting, learning, and problem-solving likely created conditions that directly boosted performance, not necessarily

through indirect mechanisms, but because the relational dynamic itself was empowering. This supports arguments by Lorinkova et al. (2013) and others who have shown that shared leadership can produce immediate gains in engagement and task focus when implemented at the interpersonal level.

However, against our expectations, reflexivity did not mediate the relationship between shared leadership and performance (H4).

This finding is surprising given the strong association between shared leadership and reflexivity and the theoretical arguments that position reflexivity as a key process in adaptive team functioning (Schippers et al., 2007; West, 2000). One possible reason why reflexivity was not able to translate into higher performance could be the nature of the construct of reflexivity itself. Reflexivity is generally understood as a reflective, learning-oriented process, something that unfolds over time and through repeated cycles of evaluation and adaptation. Since this study relied on cross-sectional data, it may have missed the more long-term effects of reflexivity on performance (Ilgen et al., 2005). Another explanation is that while reflexivity may be activated in leader-employee dyadic interactions, its impact on performance may remain limited if it is not embedded in the broader team context. Reflexivity often requires input from multiple sources in order to generate the learning and adaptation that have a meaningful effect on the outcomes. Since the dyads in our study are part of larger teams, it is possible that individual-level reflexivity was not sufficient to drive the measurable performance outcomes. This highlights that team-level processes may still be necessary to fully use the benefits of reflexivity.

It's also worth considering whether other mediators fit better in this specific cultural and organizational context. Dutch workplaces are known for their flat hierarchies, open dialogue, and emphasis on consensus, all characteristics that naturally lead to reflexive communication (Hofstede, n.d.; Plochg, 2019). As such, reflexivity may already be an existing behavior in many

teams which in turn reduces the variance needed for it to explain further differences in performance. Finally, while the adapted reflexivity scale showed high internal reliability, it was originally developed for teams rather than dyads. Despite careful adaptation, it is possible that the items did not fully capture the type of micro-level reflection that might influence individual work output in close leader–employee relationships.

Strengths and Limitation

This study has several strengths that increase the value and reliability of its findings. First, the data was collected from a relatively large and diverse group of leader-employee pairs. The participants came from various organizations and workplaces in the Groningen region, which covered a number of different roles, ages and work settings. This diversity increases the generalizability of our results. Second, the dyadic approach allowed us to cover both the perspective of leaders and employees, which gives a more complete view of how shared leadership works in practice. It also helped reduce the risk of common method bias, since performance was rated by the leaders and not employees which makes social desirability answers less likely.

Another strength is that well established scales were used in the questionnaires, all of which showed excellent internal consistency in our sample. The items were adapted carefully to match the dyadic nature of this study, and this made the measures more relevant to our research question. Using multiple-item scales for each construct also helped to ensure the reliability and depth of the findings.

However, this study is not without limitations. Because the data were collected at one point in time, we can not make strong claims about cause and effect. Future research should use longitudinal or experimental designs to better understand how these relationships develop over time.

Furthermore, although all core measures shared leadership, reflexivity, and performance were linguistically and contextually adapted for use in leader–employee dyads, they were originally developed for team-level assessment. While the phrasing was adjusted to be more suitable for dyadic language, the underlying constructs may not translate perfectly from team dynamics to one-on-one interactions. This is particularly relevant for reflexivity, which typically unfolds in collective discussions rather than isolated pairs. As a result, our findings on the non-significant mediating role of reflexivity should be interpreted with caution, since the measure may not have fully captured reflective behavior in dyads. This could have led to an underestimation of its potential impact.

Future directions

While this study provides important insights into the role of shared leadership in shaping reflexivity and performance, several questions remain open for future research. First, although reflexivity did not come out as a significant mediator in this study, it may still play a role in other contexts. Future studies could explore whether reflexivity has a stronger mediating effect in larger teams, or settings with higher task complexity, where team reflection is more critical for success (West, 2000; Hadi & Chaudhary, 2021).

Second, the present study focused on formal leader-employee dyads in a Dutch cultural context. It would be valuable to see whether similar patterns emerge in different cultural settings, where a higher power distance or rather hierarchical norms may shape shared leadership and reflexivity differently (Hofstede, 2011). Comparative or cross-cultural studies could help determine whether the dynamics observed in this study are universal or culturally specific.

Third, future research could build on the dyadic design and incorporate longitudinal data. This would allow researchers to explore not just whether shared leadership predicts reflexivity

and performance, but also how these processes unfold over time. A longitudinal or experimental design could give insights into the causal direction of these variables (Ilgen et al., 2005).

Lastly, while this study minimized common method bias by collecting data from both leaders and employees, future research could go further by including for example peer ratings or more objective performance indicators. This could deepen the understanding of how shared leadership influences behavior and outcomes.

Practical Implications

This study gives some useful ideas for improving leadership and teamwork in organizations. First, we found that shared leadership between leaders and employees can directly boost employee performance. When leaders involve their employees in decisions, goal setting, and solving problems, employees feel more included and motivated. Companies can support this by training leaders to work more closely with their teams, rather than leading from the top down.

Second, our results show that trust and autonomy at work matter. Shared leadership gives employees a sense of control and makes them feel capable, which helps them stay motivated. Leaders should focus on building open relationships, listening to employee input, and encouraging initiative. These actions can help employees feel more committed to their work and perform better.

Third, even though reflexivity did not turn out to be a strong link between leadership and performance in this study, it still plays a role, especially in full teams. It could be that reflection between just a leader and one employee is not enough to make a considerable difference. Therefore, it may be a good idea for organizations to support team-wide reflection, like holding regular check-ins or feedback sessions. These moments can help teams improve how they work together and learn from experience.

Conclusion

_____ This study explored whether reflexivity mediates the relationship between shared leadership and employee performance in Dutch leader-employee dyads. Based on existing leadership and team learning theories, the goal was to better understand how shared leadership works at the individual relationship level in a culture that already values equality and open communication. The results partly supported the expectations. Shared leadership was clearly linked to both higher reflexivity and better employee performance. However, reflexivity did not significantly predict performance or explain the link between shared leadership and performance. This suggests that while reflexivity may support collaboration, its impact on individual performance is less clear or may depend on other factors. From a theoretical perspective, the study shows that shared leadership can be effective in teams and one-on-one leader-employee relationships. It also adds to the understanding of how leadership works in Dutch organizations, where participation and equality are already strong. Practically, the results highlight that shared leadership can be a useful way to improve employee outcomes, even without complex team dynamics. As workplaces become more flexible and collaborative, knowing how leadership works in close relationships becomes more important. This study shows the value of shared leadership and points to the need for deeper research on how and when reflexivity matters most.

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Appendix A

Items about Shared Leadership from the Employee questionnaire

De volgende vragen gaan over uw leidinggevende.

Geef alstublieft aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de stellingen.

[1 Helemaal mee oneens; 7 Helemaal mee eens; 4 niet mee eens, niet mee oneens]

1. Mijn leidinggevende geeft een duidelijk beeld van waar ons team voor staat.
2. Mijn leidinggevende is gedreven door hogere doelen of idealen.
3. Mijn leidinggevende laat waardering zien voor mijn inspanningen.
4. Mijn leidinggevende moedigt mij aan om ideeën te heroverwegen die nooit eerder in twijfel getrokken zijn.
5. Mijn leidinggevende maakt gebruik van veel verschillende perspectieven om problemen op te lossen .
6. Mijn leidinggevende moedigt mij aan om meer te doen dan alleen dat wat van mij verwacht wordt (bijv. extra inspanning).
7. Mijn leidinggevende moedigt mij aan om zelf oplossingen te zoeken voor mijn problemen in het werk.
8. Mijn leidinggevende dringt aan om zelf verantwoordelijkheid voor het werk te nemen.
9. Mijn leidinggevende moedigt mij aan om nieuwe dingen te leren.

10. Mijn leidinggevende moedigt mij aan om mezelf een schouderklopje te geven wanneer ik een nieuwe uitdaging heb behaald.
11. Mijn leidinggevende moedigt mij aan om samen te werken met andere teamleden.
12. Mijn leidinggevende adviseert mij om mijn werk af te stemmen met anderen, die onderdeel uitmaken van het team.
13. Mijn leidinggevende dringt erop aan om als een team samen te werken met anderen, die deel uitmaken van het team.
14. Mijn leidinggevende verwacht dat de samenwerking met de andere teamleden goed verloopt.
15. Mijn leidinggevende besluit samen met mij wat mijn prestatiedoelen zijn.
16. Mijn leidinggevende en ik werken samen om te kiezen wat mijn prestatiedoelen moeten zijn.
17. Mijn leidinggevende en ik gaan samen om de tafel om overeenstemming te krijgen over mijn prestatiedoelen.
18. Mijn leidinggevende werkt met mij samen om mijn prestatiedoelen te ontwikkelen.

Items about Performance from the Leader Questionnaire

De volgende vragen gaan over uw medewerker.

Geef alstublieft aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de stellingen.

[1 Helemaal mee oneens; 7 Helemaal mee eens; 4 niet mee eens, niet mee oneens]

Mijn medewerker:.....

1. Voert de opgedragen taken naar behoren uit
2. Voldoet aan de verantwoordelijkheden vermeld in de functiebeschrijving

3. Voert de taken uit die van hem/haar verwacht worden
4. Voldoet aan de formele prestatie-eisen van de functie
5. Houdt zich/haar bezig met activiteiten die rechtstreeks van invloed zijn op zijn/haar prestatiebeoordeling
6. Verwaarloost aspecten van het werk dat hij/zij verplicht is uit te voeren
7. Faalt in het uitvoeren van essentiële taken
8. Helpt anderen die afwezig zijn geweest
9. Helpt anderen die een zware werklast hebben
10. Assisteert mij bij mijn werkzaamheden (wanneer niet gevraagd)
11. Neemt de tijd om te luisteren naar problemen en zorgen van collega's
12. Doet zijn/haar uiterste best om nieuwe medewerkers te helpen
13. Heeft persoonlijke belangstelling voor andere werknemers
14. Geeft informatie door aan collega's
15. Aanwezigheid op werk is boven de norm
16. Geeft van te voren aan wanneer hij/zij niet kan komen werken
17. Neemt te veel werkpauses
18. Besteed veel tijd aan persoonlijke telefoongesprekken
19. Klaagt over onbelangrijke dingen op het werk
20. Bewaart en beschermt eigendommen van de organisatie
21. Houdt zich aan informele regels die zijn opgesteld om de orde te handhaven

Items on Reflexivity from the employee questionnaire

De volgende vragen gaan over uw leidinggevende.

Geef alstublieft aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de stellingen.

[1 Helemaal mee oneens; 7 Helemaal mee eens; 4 niet mee eens, niet mee oneens]

1. Mijn leidinggevende en ik bespreken de verschillende wijzen waarop we ons doel kunnen bereiken.
2. Mijn leidinggevende en ik gaan na wat we kunnen leren van reeds voltooide acties.
3. Tijdens het uitvoeren van de taak staan mijn leidinggevende en ik stil bij de vraag of we op de goede weg zijn.
4. Mijn leidinggevende en ik gaan na of onze acties datgene hebben opgeleverd wat we er op voorhand van verwachtten.
5. In de samenwerking met mijn leidinggevende wordt het resultaat van acties geëvalueerd.
6. Als dingen niet lopen zoals gepland, gaan mijn leidinggevende en ik na wat we hieraan kunnen doen.
7. Na het afronden van werkzaamheden evalueren mijn leidinggevende en ik wat er is gebeurd.

Appendix B

Figure B1: Q-Q Plot

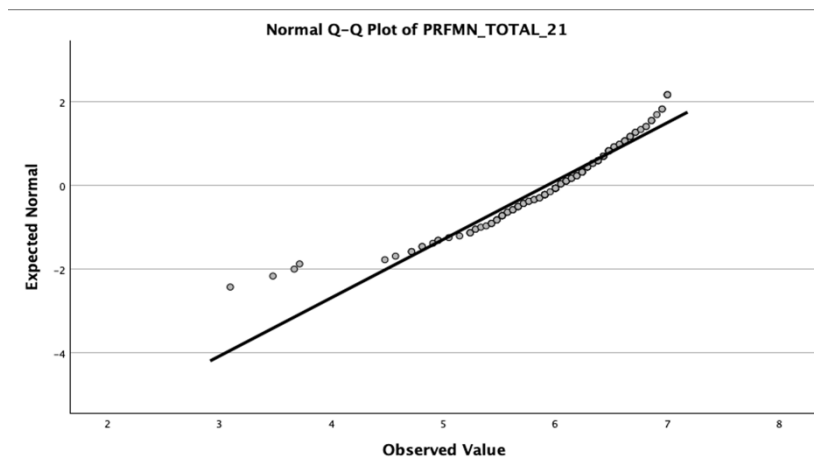


Figure B2: Scatter plot

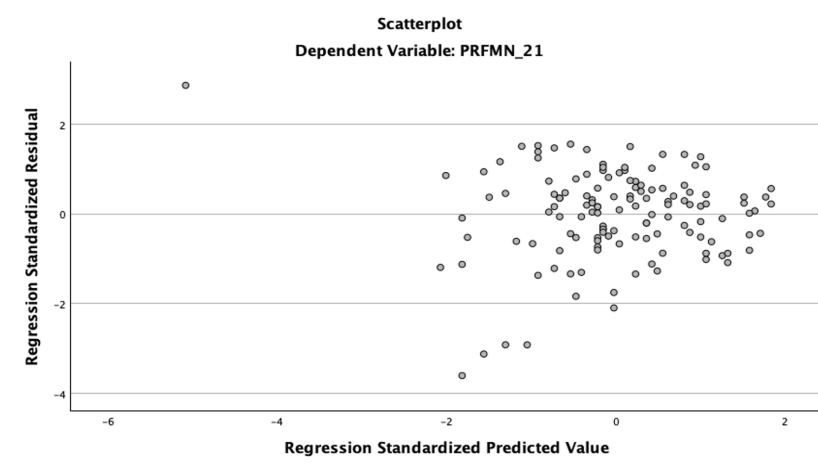


Figure B3: Normality of the data

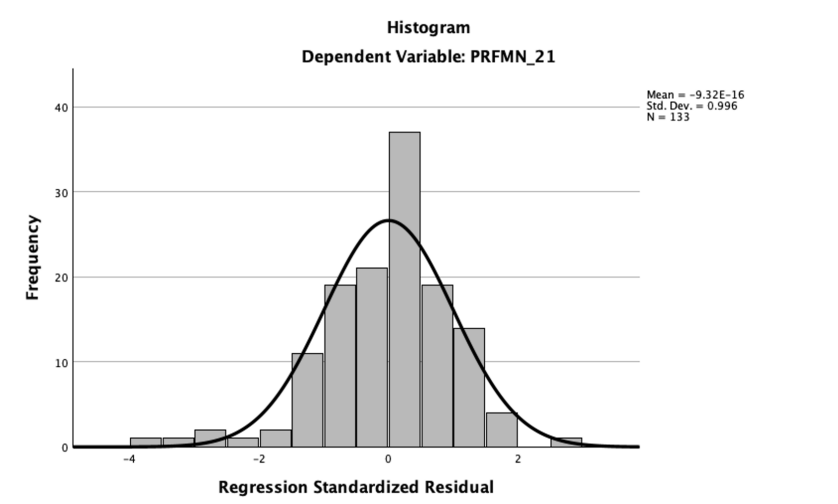


Table B1

Collinearity diagnostics

| Tolerance | VIF |
|-----------|-----|
|-----------|-----|

| | | |
|-------------------|------|-------|
| (constant | | |
| Shared leadership | .469 | 2.132 |
| Self-efficacy | .469 | 2.132 |
