Leading Together, Performing Better: How Job Satisfaction Can Build a Bridge Between Shared Leadership and Performance

Hannah-Sophie Weeink

S4290445

Department of Psychology, University of Groningen

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Group 01 & 02

Supervisor: Msc. Roxana Bucur

Second evaluator: Dr. Claudia Kitz

In collaboration with: Ismael Berhitu, Jamie Friedrichs, Thomas Geijsen, Joshi Okolišan

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Abstract

In the current organizational context, the traditional vertical leadership style is more and more being replaced by the emerging shared leadership. Shared leadership involves employees in the decision-making process, enabling greater autonomy and empowerment. This study researches the relationship between shared leadership and performance within leader-follower dyads and investigates whether this relationship is mediated by job satisfaction. Based on theories such as the social identity theory, the self-determination theory, and the social exchange theory, we hypothesized that the relationship between shared leadership and performance is mediated by job satisfaction. Data was collected through a convenience sample consisting of 57 dyads in Dutch organizations. Respondents completed an online questionnaire comprising reliable, peer-reviewed scales. A correlational analysis revealed significant positive associations among the three variables. The meditation analysis performed in PROCESS revealed that job satisfaction mediated the relationship between shared leadership and performance. The direct effect of shared leadership on performance became non-significant when job satisfaction was added to the model, indicating full mediation. This study adds a dyadic perspective to existing research on the often-investigated relationship between shared leadership and performance. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of increased employee participation through shared leadership to enhance their satisfaction and thereby increase their performance.

Keywords: *shared leadership, job satisfaction, performance, dyads*

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In today's society, leadership is no longer a solo act. It is a shared responsibility where higher performance can be unlocked through greater job satisfaction. Additionally, it has become increasingly difficult for leaders to acquire and retain all the necessary knowledge, abilities and skills to manage their teams (Pears & Manz, 2005). In an attempt to involve employees in the decision-making process, the concept of shared leadership has gained prominence in the workplace (Wang et al., 2014). In contrast to vertical leadership, the traditional form of leadership where most influence and power is vested in a singular leader (Conger & Pearce, 2003), shared leadership can be described as a process where influence is continuously exchanged between parties (Pearce, 2004). Leadership roles are being distributed rather than centralized, and collaboration, mutual influence, and shared responsibility are emphasized (Pearce & Conger, 2003). Multiple employees become responsible for tasks originally handled by a single leader, combining their knowledge and skills (Carson et al., 2007). Moreover, it contributes to the social integration with team members (Pearce et al., 2004). Wu et al. (2020) suggest that a positive relationship between shared leadership and several distinct types of team outcomes can be established, indicating positive organizational outcomes. The mechanisms of shared leadership are especially useful in the Dutch organizational context, as the Netherlands is known for having low power distance in their culture (Hofstede, 1980) and being consensus-driven, encouraging colleagues to be actively involved in the decision-making process (Selvarajah et al., 2018).

Whilst extensive research has been conducted on the relationship between shared leadership and performance, existing literature has mainly focused on the larger team dynamics, leaving the dyadic dynamics of a single leader and one employee relatively unexplored. Research would benefit from expanded literature on leader-follower dyads, as

proposed by Kim et al. (2020). Similarly, Mathieu et al. (2015) suggested that these relationships with regard to the dynamics of shared leadership should be researched in the future in different types and sizes of work teams. To date, no research has explored the relationship between shared leadership and performance, especially combined with potential explanatory variables, within dyadic settings.

Addressing this gap, this research investigates whether shared leadership enhances job performance through its effect on job satisfaction, the mediating variable that could explain the underlying mechanism of the relationship. Mathieu et al. (2015) described how researchers have often overlooked mediating variables and should, therefore, focus on expanding the scope of contributing variables. Including job satisfaction improves our understanding of how employees respond to the increased say and control in the decision-making process and how this influences their performance. The self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) clarifies how increased autonomy, competence and relatedness are responsible for higher motivation and satisfaction, similar to the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) that ascribes the increased satisfaction mostly to autonomy and task significance.

Through our findings, we can comprehend how the mechanisms of shared leadership work in dyadic contexts, focused specifically on Dutch organizational contexts that are known for their egalitarian and consensus-driven approach. By introducing job satisfaction as our mediating variable, we aim to understand how shared leadership enhances performance by improving employees' attitudes at work and motivating them to perform better. In other words, job satisfaction will be our mediating variable. By examining dyadic contexts, we examine this relationship beyond the traditionally researched team-level dynamic thereby offering new insights.

Shared Leadership and Performance

In an organization with shared leadership, one can speak of a culture where different group members of the organization exert mutual and/or collective influence (Wu et al., 2020). An important characteristic is that these members can participate in the decision-making process, where there would originally be one hierarchical leader who could make important decisions individually (Shane & Fields, 2007). Commonly, research differentiates between two forms of leadership: vertical leadership and shared leadership. In vertical leadership, one leader is assigned to the leadership role, whereas in shared leadership, multiple members are responsible together (Pearce & Sims, 2002). Most studies examined shared leadership on the team level, where dynamics between colleagues in groups and their collective influence were investigated. However, in our study, we focused explicitly on the dynamics between leaders and followers, creating a dyadic viewpoint.

The definition of performance is two-fold: on the one hand, it relates to the effectiveness of a team which can be measured through objective outcomes (Van der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005), whereas on the other hand, it refers to the in-role and out-role performance (i.e., organizational citizenship behavior) expressed by employees (Williams & Anderson, 1991). As this research requires objective measurement of performance, we focus on in-role performance, entailing necessary and expected tasks to be fulfilled within the work hours and on time while complying with the rules and regulations (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

Explaining the link between shared leadership and performance requires a framework that can offer theoretical insights into the dynamic, which captures the psychological processes leading towards increased performance. The social identity theory of leadership (Hogg, 2001) elaborates on this dynamic as it suggests that leadership effectiveness is based on the extent to which the leader is perceived as a prototypical member of the group. If the leader is perceived as 'one of us', the group is more likely to accept and appreciate the leader. Distribution of leadership across multiple team members allows for stronger identification

with leaders as well as the team, strengthening the social identity and team cohesion. Shared identity, coherent with enhanced team cohesion, forms the basis for better coordination due to effective organizational communication and an improved shared understanding (Haslam et al., 2003), resulting in improved performance.

Different empirical studies have evaluated the effect of shared leadership on performance, or performance-related concepts, in teams, where a positive relationship was generally found (e.g., Wu et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2014; Klasmeier & Rowold, 2020; Chiu et al., 2016; Hiller et al., 2006), which aligns with the social identity theory. Wu et al. (2020) report that shared leadership is an important contributor to positive team outcomes. Wang et al. (2014) did find a positive association between shared leadership and performance but found stronger associations with other outcomes (e.g., attitudinal outcomes). Klasmeier and Rowold (2020) saw that shared leadership worked as a mediator between different input variables (e.g., trust) and the dependent variable performance. Pearce et al. (2004) found that shared leadership was a stronger predictor for performance than vertical leadership. D'Innocenzo et al. (2016) endorse that a positive relationship between shared leadership - compared to traditional hierarchical leadership - and performance can be reported. However, they state that the strength of this relationship is unclear, and that not all studies have provided consistent results. Some contradictory yet outdated studies rejected the claim of a positive relationship. Berkowitz (1953) found that a singular leader led to increased productive behavior, Bowers and Seashore (1966) found negative results for peer leadership, and Boies et al. (2010) saw negative effects of shared leadership on performance. Altogether, as literature predominantly leans towards this, we hypothesize that shared leadership will have a positive association with performance.

Hypothesis 1: Shared leadership is positively associated with performance.

Shared leadership and job satisfaction

Shared leadership is suggested to be positively associated with job satisfaction. As the influence and authority of employees increases, this could consequently enhance their job satisfaction by creating an enlarged shared purpose (Carson et al., 2007). A theory that aligns with this relationship is the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which proposes that the fulfillment of the basic psychological need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy is necessary for growth, development, and personal well-being. Additionally, the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) states that autonomy is one of the key drivers for job satisfaction, as it helps to satisfy the psychological needs of employees. Shared leadership allows employees to exert influence over decisions, thereby enhancing autonomy and subsequently allowing for greater levels of job satisfaction.

In line with these theoretical frameworks, empirical research provides us with more evidence of a positive association between shared leadership and job satisfaction. For instance, Carson et al. (2007) found that shared purpose is present when colleagues have common goals and objectives towards which they work. It has been shown that this common sense of goals and objectives can, in turn, cause a sense of commitment, empowerment and motivation amongst colleagues in their work (Carson et al., 2007), which aligns closely with the psychological needs described by Ryan and Deci (2000). As a consequence, their willingness to make decisions that are beneficial for colleagues also increases. Through this approach, the decision power of employees does not only help themselves but also like-minded colleagues, achieving a sense of belonging and commitment. It can therefore be supposed that shared leadership has a positive influence on employees' job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Shared leadership is positively associated with job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction and job performance

The association between job satisfaction and performance is one that has been studied for many decades. When employees are more satisfied with their jobs, they will likely be

more motivated to perform well at their jobs (Isen & Baron, 1991). One theoretical explanation is offered by the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which explains how a person's behavior is determined by their behavioral intention, consisting of attitude towards the behavior and subjective norms. If an individual's attitude towards their job is positive, equivalent to experiencing job satisfaction, the intention towards performing well will increase, enhancing job performance. The social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) sheds another light on this principle by explaining how relationships are built on the reciprocal influences of trust; social exchange occurs when there is mutual liking, respect, and trust. When employees are satisfied with their jobs, they experience a fulfillment of the exchange from the organization's side and will be more likely to also fulfill their responsibilities and reciprocate with enhanced performance.

Many different studies endorse this theoretical framework and state that higher job satisfaction is related to higher job performance (e.g., Judge et al., 2001; Drescher et al., 2014), as employees with higher levels of job satisfaction experience positive moods at their work and subsequently perform better at their jobs, for example in terms of motivation and problem-solving (Isen & Baron, 1991). Other studies are more reluctant to make these statements. Bowling (2007) performed a meta-analysis that supported a spurious relationship between job satisfaction and job performance, theorizing that other underlying variables influence this relationship. The meta-analysis performed by Judge et al. (2001) found that there was a moderately strong positive correlation between these variables. This association, however, seemed to be moderated by a different variable: job complexity.

In short, while most researchers support the positive association between job satisfaction and job performance, some view the relationship as minimal (e.g., Brayfield & Crockett, 1955) and others as at least moderate (e.g., Drescher et al., 2014; Judge et al., 2001).

Although most previous research investigated team dynamics, we hypothesize that the same dynamic will still be visible in dyadic contexts, which brings us to our third hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: Job satisfaction is positively associated with job performance.

Job satisfaction as a mediator

Even though shared leadership has repeatedly been positively associated with performance (e.g., Wu et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2014; Klasmeier & Rowold, 2020), various researchers called for the need to explore third variables that could explain the mechanism between the independent variable and dependent variable. For instance, Drescher et al. (2014) suggested that the relationship is not universal and suggested that the relationship is mediated by trusting behavior.

By introducing job satisfaction as our mediating variable, we investigate whether - and how - job satisfaction explains the relationship between shared leadership and performance. Concretely, we investigate whether shared leadership accounts for increases in employees' job satisfaction to understand whether this accounts for increases in performance. Job satisfaction is as a crucial factor in this study. It relates to a positive emotional response resulting from a fulfilling or rewarding appraisal of their job or job experience (Locke, 1976), which can be simplified to how a person feels about their job.

There are both theoretical and empirical foundations for choosing job satisfaction as our mediating variable to build on current literature. Shared leadership is known to enhance team empowerment, which is related to employees' decision power, autonomy and involvement (Carson et al., 2007; Pearce & Sims, 2002; Spreitzer, 1995). The concept of team empowerment can be associated with increased job satisfaction (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999) and job performance (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Wood & Bandura, 1989). The self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) describes how autonomy, relatedness and competence - likely to increase due to a shared leadership style - promote satisfaction and motivation within

employees. Similar mechanisms are reported by the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), which takes autonomy and task significance, which can be achieved through shared leadership, as necessary conditions for improving employee' satisfaction. Langfeld (2004) warns that autonomy can be beneficial only as long as it is balanced properly and that excessive autonomy may be harmful.

Building on this reasoning, by encouraging participation and influence, employees experience higher levels of autonomy, empowerment, and influence associated with enhanced levels of job satisfaction (Carson et al., 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). As established previously, job satisfaction can be related to higher levels of performance. Satisfied colleagues are not only more motivated (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), but they also feel a need to reciprocate after experiencing positive attitudes toward their job (Blau, 1964), resulting in increased performance. Altogether, the addition of job satisfaction as a mediator appears to be crucial in bridging the gap between shared leadership and performance. Job satisfaction encapsulates the behavioral and emotional responses coming from shared leadership into the more objectively measurable performance. Hence, job satisfaction helps us explain the relationship between shared leadership and performance, especially in a dyadic setting.

It is important to be aware of the dyadic context where the relationship between leaders and employees is magnified, which differentiates this research from prior research. Muterera et al. (2018) stress that dyadic research on leadership styles should be expanded. Kazemi et al. (2024) highlight the importance of the dyadic nature of the direct relationship between leaders and employees in employee satisfaction, which is underlined by Aggarwal et al. (2020), describing that the exchange is related to enhanced empowerment and engagement.

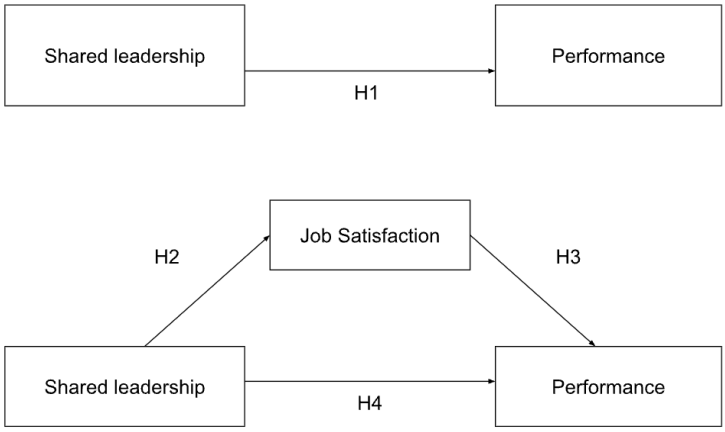
Job satisfaction provides a fitting bridge between shared leadership and performance because it explains how shared leadership benefits the performance of employees and

eventually organizations as a whole through increased well-being and motivation in employees. Choosing job satisfaction as a mediator will therefore help us understand the underlying mechanism of the relationship between shared leadership and performance.

Hypothesis 4: The effect of shared leadership on performance is explained by job satisfaction.

Figure 1.

Research Model: Relationship Between Shared Leadership and Job Performance Mediated by Job Satisfaction.



Methods

Participants

In order to test the hypothesis, we recruited Dutch-speaking participants who were all actively working in a team of an organization in the Netherlands. The initial cleaned data set of all valid results consisted of 135 dyads, but due to an error in the online program where the data for our variable job satisfaction partly went missing, the sample size was reduced. Our final sample consisted of 57 dyads, adding up to 114 participants. The mean age was higher for leaders than for employees. Leaders had a mean age of 42.1 (*SD* = 13.1), whereas the mean age for employees was 33.9 (*SD* = 12.5). Moreover, we found that 42.9% of the participants in the employees' group were male, whereas this was 57.1% of the participants in

the group for leaders. Additionally, the largest part of our sample was employed in a large company, which was defined as a company consisting of more than 250 colleagues.

Design and Procedure

Our study has a quantitative, cross-sectional research design. Data collection started on the 2nd of April 2025 and ended on the 19th of May 2025. Managers and employees were generally approached via a standardized information letter sent via email. The letter contained information regarding the research, including the goal of the research, voluntary participation, and how data will be handled. When participants were approached by the student directly, this information would be transferred in person.

The students could approach both the employee and the leader first; whichever was preferred by the student. If the leader was approached first, the leader was requested to randomly select one of the employees in order to avoid favoritism. The questionnaire, which was translated to Dutch, was indicated to take approximately ten minutes and was conducted in an online setting on the website Qualtrics. Before the questions of the survey appeared, the participant was informed about some ethical considerations. The participant learned about the confidentiality of filling in the questionnaire, which was achieved by creating a code to match the employee and leader, learned about the right to withdraw, and consequently was asked to give informed consent.

There were two separate questionnaires, one for the leader and one for the employee. As participants were recruited through the personal network of the Psychology bachelor students of the University of Groningen, this can be considered a convenience sample. Anyone working less than 17 hours was automatically excluded from the sample, because the questionnaire would end immediately if the participant selected the option that they worked less than 17 hours. This criterion is necessary to differentiate marginal work with a very low amount of hours from part-time work (Messenger & Wallot, 2015). Additionally,

requirements were that participants had to understand Dutch, be employed in an organization in the Netherlands, and be part of a team.

Measures

Shared Leadership (Independent Variable)

Shared leadership was measured in the employee questionnaire by using the Shared Leadership scale by Hoch (2013; see Appendix A), adapted to fit a dyadic approach. The scale contained eighteen items, grouped into three subscales with six, eight, or four items respectively, reflecting the different aspects of shared leadership. The measured subscales are transformational leadership, which consists of items such as ‘‘My colleagues are driven by higher purposes or ideals.”, individual empowering leadership, consisting of items such as ‘‘My colleagues encourage me to learn new things.’’, and participative leadership, consisting of items such as ‘‘My colleagues decide on my performance goals together with me.’’. The items assess the extent to which the employees’ leader inspires them, helps them work towards their goals, allows and helps them to work individually to achieve personal responsibility, and coaches them to develop performance goals. Employees were asked to rate each item on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). A higher score indicates a greater extent of shared leadership in the organization. The total reliability was $\alpha = .90$, which is excellent. Additionally, we assessed the reliability of each subscale. The reliability of the transformational leadership subscale was $\alpha = .80$, the individual empowering leadership subscale had $\alpha = .80$, and the participative leadership subscale had $\alpha = .92$. Thus, the subscales range from good to excellent reliability.

Performance (Dependent Variable)

The variable performance has been measured solely in the leader questionnaire. Two different scales adapted to fit a dyadic approach were used, the first scale by Van der Vegt and Bunderson (2005) and the second scale by Williams and Anderson (1991), consisting of a

total of 27 items (see Appendix A). For our results, we combined the two scales into an averaged score. In the first six items (Van der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005), the leaders were asked to rate how their employees perform on various aspects of their jobs and contained questions such as “How does your employee score on achieving goals?” . The other 21 items (Williams & Anderson, 1991) assessed job performance both in terms of in-role performance and extra-role performance, including organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and consisted of questions such as “The employee fulfills responsibilities specified in job description”. The scale consists of three subscales, which are Performance of In-Role Behavior (item 1 to 7), Performance of OCB targeted at the individual (item 8 to 14), and Performance of OCB targeted at the benefits of the organization (item 15 to 21). Again, the participants answered the questions of both scales by means of a 7-point Likert scale.

The first scale by Van der Vegt and Bunderson (2005) rated 1 = *very poor performance* and 7 = *very good performance*. The second scale by Williams and Anderson (1991) rated 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*, where 4 was considered *neither agree, nor disagree*. In both scales, higher scores signify better overall job performance, including the required job responsibilities and additional efforts by employees. The scale by Williams and Anderson (1991) uses some reversed items (items 6, 7, 17, 18, 19), for which the scores were reversed first before they could be analyzed. The total reliability of the performance scale was $\alpha = .93$. The reliability of the scale by Van der Vegt and Bunderson (2005) was $\alpha = .93$. For the scale by Williams and Anderson (1991) we found a reliability of $\alpha = .90$. As all of the scales have a Cronbach’s alpha higher than .90, we can conclude that the reliability is very high.

Job Satisfaction (Mediator)

Job satisfaction was measured in the employee questionnaire, using the scale that was adapted to fit a dyadic approach, by Judge et al. (1998), inspired by the questionnaire by

Brayfield and Rothe (1951; see Appendix A). One item was added to our questionnaire: “I like my job better than the average person.”. Another example item is “Most days I am enthusiastic about my job.” The scale consists of four items, in which respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with statements regarding their satisfaction with their current job. Employees could rate the items based on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Higher scores are related to greater job satisfaction. The reliability for this total scale is $\alpha = 0.90$, indicating excellent reliability.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Our final sample size consisted of 57 dyads, having a total of 114 respondents. The descriptives of the variables in our model analysis can be found in Table 1. Employees’ performance was assessed by their leaders, which yielded high scores ($M = 5.90$, $SD = .72$). Contrary to performance, both job satisfaction ($M = 5.84$, $SD = 0.89$) and shared leadership ($M = 5.40$, $SD = .87$) were self-reported by the employees, which resulted in moderately high to high scores.

Pearson's correlations between the independent, dependent and mediating variable were assessed. Each of the correlations was significant at the 0.01 level. All of the three correlations were significant and positive. The strongest correlations were found for the relationship between shared leadership and job satisfaction and the relationship between job satisfaction and performance. The smallest correlation was found for the relationship between shared leadership and performance. Ultimately, our first three hypotheses have been supported by this correlation analysis.

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlations of the Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3

1.Shared Leadership	5.40	.87			
2.Job Satisfaction [a]	5.84	.89	.49		
3.Performance	5.90	.72	.26	.51	

Note. Table reports bivariate correlations. $N = 133$ dyads, if not indicated otherwise. Correlation is significant at the $p < 0{,}01$ (two-tailed).

[a] $N = 57$.

Assumption Testing

Before performing the regression analysis, it was assured that all assumptions had been met. All relevant graphs and figures can be found in Appendix B. We first checked for linearity (Figure 1, 2). Linearity can be assumed if the dots are centered around the trendline. There was a straight-line trend visible in both of the scatterplots, indicating a linear relationship between the variables. The positive trendlines suggest that an increase in the predictor, shared leadership, as well as job satisfaction, is related to an increase in the dependent variable, performance.

The homoscedasticity assumption was met if the dots were randomly distributed in the residual plot. In this graph, we plotted the standardized residuals against the standardized predicted values. As the dots were indeed distributed randomly (Figure 3), the assumption for homoscedasticity has not been violated.

For the normality assumption, we used two different visual inspection methods: a histogram and a Q-Q plot (Figure 4, 5). The histogram was somewhat skewed, but this could be attributed to the small sample size. Moreover, the histogram is roughly bell-shaped and is symmetric around the mean of 0. On the Q-Q plot, all the dots lie close to the diagonal line of the plot, which indicates normality. We can therefore argue that the normality assumption has not been violated.

Multicollinearity was not violated, as the VIF < 5 for both shared leadership and job satisfaction (Table 3). The dataset showed one potential influential outlier, dyad code 222,

which had a Cook's distance of 1.3, which is larger than the cut-off score of Cook's distance > 1. When the analysis was performed again, the removal of the outlier did not have any effect on the analysis results. However, since these results seemed to be invalid, the outlier has been removed from the dataset.

Hypothesis testing

Shared Leadership and Performance

Our first hypothesis examines the relationship between shared leadership and performance. There was a moderately weak relationship between the two variables, with r = .26, p = .002 (see Table 1). This indicates that in a work environment where there are high levels of shared leadership, performance of employees increases to a small degree.

Shared Leadership and Job Satisfaction

The second hypothesis tests whether shared leadership is positively associated with job satisfaction. Here, we found r = .49, p < .001 (see Table 1), which indicates a moderately strong relationship between the two variables. We can argue that higher levels of shared leadership is related to higher levels of job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction and Performance

The third hypothesis supposes that job satisfaction is positively related to performance. The corresponding correlation is r = .51, p < .001 (see Table 1), indicating a moderate positive correlation between the variables. Therefore, employees who report higher levels of job satisfaction are likely to perform better at their job.

Mediation Analysis

For the fourth hypothesis, a mediation analysis had to be performed, assessing whether job satisfaction (M) mediates the relationship between shared leadership (independent variable,

X) and performance (dependent variable, Y). With the use of PROCESS macro (Model 4; Hayes, 2022), the mediation analysis could be performed. The results of the mediation analysis can be found in Table 2. The model was significant with $p = .006$ and $F(1, 55) = 8.11$. The predictor explained 12.9% of the variance of the outcome variable performance. The total effect of shared leadership on performance was significant, $b = .32$, $SE = .11$, $t = 2.85$, $p = .006$. Thus, shared leadership is a fitting predictor for performance. Without the mediator job satisfaction, there would not be a significant relationship between shared leadership and performance, $b = .13$, $SE = .12$, $t = 1.10$, $p = .278$, 95% CI [.10; .55]. When the mediator was added, the indirect effect became significant, $b = .19$, $SE = .08$, 95% CI = [.05; .37]. As the confidence interval did not include zero, there is support for a significant mediation effect. Concluding, our results imply that job satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between shared leadership and performance.

Table 2

Results of the Regression Analysis Predicting Performance

Relationship	***B***	***SE***	***β***	***t***	***p***	**95% *CI* (LL, UL)**
Constant	3.12	.65		4.83	.000	[1.83; 4.42]
SL → JS	.55	.13	.49	4.12	<.001	[.28; .82]
JS → PF	.35	.11	.44	3.32	.002	[.14; .56]
SL → PF (direct)	.13	.12	.15	1.10	.278	[-.11; .37]
SL → PF (total)	.32	.11	.36	2.85	.006	[.10; .55]
SL → JS → PF (indirect)	.19	.08	.21			[.05; .37]

Note. $N = 57$. Bootstrap results based on 5,000 samples. *CI* = confidence interval. The indirect effect is based on the multiplication of a × b.

Discussion

With this study, we aimed to investigate whether job satisfaction mediated the relationship between shared leadership and performance. We hypothesized that shared leadership would be positively associated with job satisfaction, that job satisfaction would be positively associated with performance, and that the variable job satisfaction works as a mediator between shared leadership and performance. Our results support all three hypotheses and we found full mediation in the relationship between shared leadership and performance. The direct effect between shared leadership and performance was non-significant, but when the mediator job satisfaction was added to the model, the indirect effect was significant, which indicates full mediation. These findings are largely in line with previous research.

Although the bivariate effect between shared leadership and performance was significant, in the mediation analysis the relationship became insignificant when job satisfaction was added to the model. This suggests that the relationship between the variables may operate primarily through its effect on job satisfaction rather than directly. This aligns with the social identity theory of leadership (Hogg, 2001), which states that shared leadership would increase social identity as well as team cohesion, resulting in better coordination and communication and ultimately, performance (Haslam et al., 2003). Even though prior research was not performed in dyadic settings, nevertheless, it corresponds with most research found on this dynamic, which also stresses the importance of other variables to explain performance outcomes. For instance, D'Innocenzo et al. (2016) and Wu et al. (2020) reported positive effects between shared leadership and performance. Wu et al. (2020) attribute these effects to increased information sharing, responsibility for the decision-making process and commitment. D'Innocenzo et al. (2016) explained that the better the concept of shared leadership was captured, the stronger the link between shared leadership and performance became. Our findings expand this research by showing that these findings are not limited to larger teams but also apply to one-on-one leader-employee relationships. On the other hand,

Wang et al. (2014) suggested that team performance was not as much explained by shared leadership as were positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. This further supports the implication that other factors, such as job satisfaction, drive the effect between shared leadership and performance. Building on this reasoning, other variables that potentially influence this relationship are team complexity (Wang et al., 2014), intragroup trust (Drescher et al., 2014), team diversity (Hoch, 2014), and information sharing (Hoch, 2014).

The effects of shared leadership could be less visible in a dyadic setting due to the different scope of the leadership role, which could be less pronounced in dyads than in teams. Therefore, when only two individuals are assessed, the positive influence of shared leadership on performance could be less visible.

In our analysis, we found a moderately strong, significant association between shared leadership and job satisfaction. The results of our study confirm the previous findings with regard to this relationship. Two proposed theories relating to this dynamic were the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and the job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). The first theory explains that motivation and well-being will increase when autonomy, competence and relatedness, are satisfied. Higher levels of motivation are thought to be related to higher levels of job satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Shared leadership supports these needs by including employees in the decision-making process and thereby empowering them. Likewise, the latter theory explains how autonomy is the main psychological driver of employees' well-being through increasing control over one’s work. Our findings are consistent with these theories, as shared leadership is thought to increase empowerment and autonomy in employees, factors that are closely linked to job satisfaction. These effects on job satisfaction may be more pronounced in dyadic settings than in team settings, as the quality of the relationship between leader and employee has a large influence on the work experience of an employee. This corresponds with the view by Wang et al.

(2005) that the stronger dyadic bonds impact the outcomes. Additionally, Carson et al. (2007) describe the role of shared leadership on creating shared purpose, that is seen as a key contributor to job satisfaction. Thus, our findings are in line with prior research.

Thirdly, our findings support the relationship between job satisfaction and performance with significant association. The findings can be explained with the help of two theories. The theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) supposes that employees with a positive attitude towards work tend to exhibit increased attitudes towards performing well on the job. The social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) explains that employees will reciprocate positive treatment after feeling satisfied with their job by performing better at their jobs. Empirical studies support this view. The meta-analysis by Judge et al. (2001) revealed that good moods might be responsible for better performance at work, whereas Drescher et al. (2014) state that positive attitudes can enhance motivational processes and consequently improve performance, which particularly aligns with the theory of reasoned action. Our findings on the relationship between job satisfaction and performance extend the findings by Judge et al. (2001) and Drescher et al. (2014) by narrowing down to the dyadic setting. The link between job satisfaction and performance appears to be quite robust in varying settings.

As for the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between shared leadership and performance, our results support our hypothesis. The direct effect disappeared when job satisfaction was added to the analysis as a mediator, making the direct effect insignificant. In other words, the presence of shared leadership by itself does not enhance performance. Rather, shared leadership helps employees to feel more content with their jobs, which motivates and empowers them to perform better at their jobs. Prior research (e.g., Drescher et al., 2014; Mathieu et al., 2015) has repeatedly suggested that the relationship between shared leadership and performance should not be researched separately but should take into account different variables that could work as a third variable.

Our study extends the current literature by offering a new dimension to team dynamics through the dyadic context, where the effects of shared leadership might be less pronounced than in larger team dynamics. Our findings suggest that even in these smaller team dynamics, the same results have been found, which indicates that the mechanisms of shared leadership on performance, influenced by third variables, are more generalizable to different contexts than previously assumed.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

One very important strength of the current study is that it is a multi-source dyadic design, meaning that the measures were assessed by both leader and employee. Existing research has primarily focused on dynamics in the broader context of teams. In contrast, our research narrowed the team-level dynamics to the relatively underrepresented team dynamic of leader-follower dyads. This narrowed perspective allowed us to get a better understanding of the mechanisms underlying shared leadership and enabled us to extend measurement approaches and team-based conclusions. As suggested by Mathieu et al. (2015), the generalizability of prior research is limited, but our study contributes to the external validity of the research on the dynamics between leaders and employees. Complementing this, the Netherlands is known to have relatively small power distances (Hofstede, 1980) and are known to be very consensus-driven in the decision-making process (Selvarajah et al., 2018), making this country an appropriate context to incorporate shared leadership practices and to enhance the generalizability of our findings within the progressive and egalitarian Dutch organizational context. Another strength is the use of valid and peer-reviewed, reliable scales.

Just like every other academic paper, our study contains certain limitations that affect the credibility of our results. Most of the limitations are related to the data collection, where various problems were encountered. The data was collected by means of a convenience

sample after students recruited participants from their personal network and actively approached participants in different city centers. The data is therefore not representative of the population and could present a selection bias, as certain population groups could be overrepresented in the sample. Adding on to the representativeness of the sample, our sample size was strikingly small, having only 57 dyads. This limits the possibility to generalize results and also affects the statistical power of the tests. Small variances in the data might be magnified. It would be necessary to replicate the study in a larger sample to verify if the same results are found. Moreover, the study has a cross-sectional design, which entails that the respondents were only assessed at a one-time point. This research design prevents researchers from making causal inferences. While the results are in line with the hypothesized mediation model, we cannot define the directionality of the relationship; we can only state that the variables are related. This limits our explanatory power, as the direction of the relationship between shared leadership and performance mediated by job satisfaction is not conclusive but could possibly be opposite to what we expected. Then, the high-performing employees would be more satisfied with their jobs and consequently exhibit higher shared leadership behavior.

As for the future directions, the knowledge on the leader-employee dynamics could be expanded in several ways. Firstly, the results of this study should be replicated in a larger and more diverse sample, where participants are not selected on availability or accessibility. This will enhance the representativeness and generalizability of the study results, as well as the statistical power of the tests. Secondly, future researchers should consider different third variables to study in a dyadic setting to understand whether other variables moderate or mediate the relationship between shared leadership and performance in dyadic contexts as well. For example, future research could include intragroup trust (Drescher et al., 2014), task complexity (Wang et al., 2014) and team diversity (Hoch, 2014). Drescher et al. (2014) previously established that trust fully mediated between shared leadership and performance,

Wang et al. (2014) found task complexity to function as a moderating variable, and Hoch (2014) found support for a moderating effect of team diversity, where higher levels of team diversity were related to increased performance. These studies indicate that the relationship between shared leadership and performance is better understood if we study additional influencing variables. Then we can investigate whether these effects are still visible in dyadic contexts. Thirdly, researchers should consider performing a longitudinal research design by assessing participants for a longer period. This allows us to effectively state whether there is a causal relationship between our variables. We challenge future researchers to delve further into the dynamics between leaders and employees while expanding the representativeness, including different possible moderating and mediating variables, and applying different research designs to further understand how these relationships operate.

Practical implications

There are several practical implications based on the outcomes of this study, which could be incorporated in organizations and companies, especially in settings where the dynamics between leaders and employees are particularly emphasized. Having found full mediation in our model, managers, supervisors, and policymakers should understand that the positive effects on employees' job satisfaction directly affect the employees' performance. Organizations can effectively include employees in the decision-making process to enhance both attitudinal and organizational outcomes. Additionally, an increased focus on the improvement of leadership styles, such as empowering or transformational leadership, will have positive effects on employees' satisfaction. Thanks to our specific focus in this study on dyadic settings, the quality of the leader-employee relationship is found to be critical in the mechanism of the dynamics between shared leadership and performance. Leaders need to be aware of the relevance of this relationship and pursue leadership approaches that foster mutual respect, trust, and reciprocity. Altogether, our study shows the relevance of incorporating a

shared leadership approach as a means to increase job satisfaction and drive performance in dyadic contexts. Not only will this lead to positive organizational outcomes, but it will also enhance individual satisfaction and commitment.

Conclusion

In summary, this study examined whether shared leadership is positively associated with performance and whether the relationship is mediated by job satisfaction, in a dyadic context. Data from our Dutch organizational context supports this model hypothesis, which aligns with literature on previous studies and earlier-mentioned theories, such as the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Having a specific focus on the insufficiently explored leader-employee dynamic, the existing literature is expanded by contributing to the team dynamics literature and specifically focusing on leader-employee dynamics. Our findings suggest that organizations should implement shared leadership to enhance participation and empowerment, allowing for more job satisfaction and ultimately, better performance. Despite research limitations, such as small sample size and the cross-sectional design, limiting both generalizability and establishment of causality, we can argue that shared leadership appears valuable for both attitudinal and performance outcomes. We encourage future researchers to investigate these dynamics with more representative samples and to explore different moderating and mediating variables.

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Appendix A

Translated Questionnaires

Translated Questionnaire: Scale Shared Leadership (Hoch, 2013)

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.

Translated Questionnaire: Scale Performance (Van der Vegt and Bunderson, 2005)

De volgende vragen gaan over uw medewerker.

(1=zeer slechte prestatie, 7=zeer goede prestatie)

Hoe scoort *uw medewerker* op…:

… het bereiken van doelen?

… het behalen van deadlines?

… werksnelheid?

… de kwaliteit van het werk?

… productiviteit?

… effectiviteit?

Translated Questionnaire: Scale Performance (Williams & Anderson, 1991)

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 werkpauzes
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

Translated Questionnaire: Scale Job Satisfaction (Judge et al., 1998; Brayfield & Rothe, 1951)

De volgende vragen gaan over uw werk.

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]

Als u specifiek aan uw huidige baan denkt, in welke mate bent u het eens met de onderstaande stellingen?

1. Ik heb echt plezier in mijn werk.
2. Ik vind mijn baan leuker dan de gemiddelde persoon zijn/haar baan vindt.
3. De meeste dagen ben ik enthousiast over mijn baan.
4. Ik voel me best wel tevreden met mijn baan.

Appendix B

Regression Assumptions

Figure 1. Scatter Plot Assessing Linearity between Shared Leadership and Performance

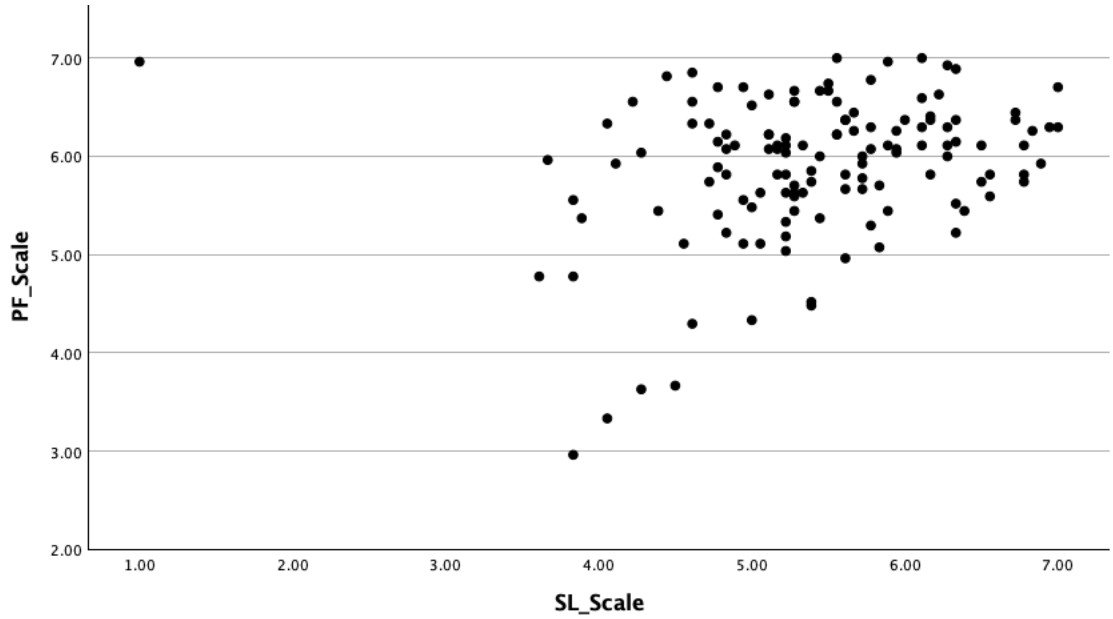

Figure 2. Scatter Plot Assessing Linearity between Job Satisfaction and Performance

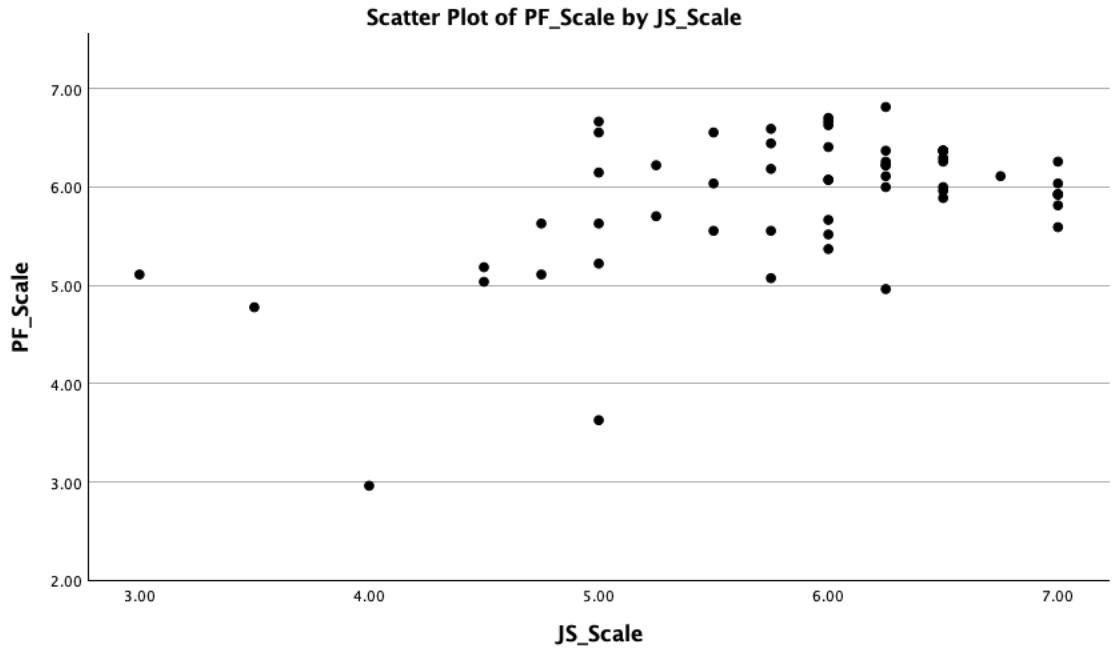

Figure 3. Scatterplot for Homoscedasticity of Residuals

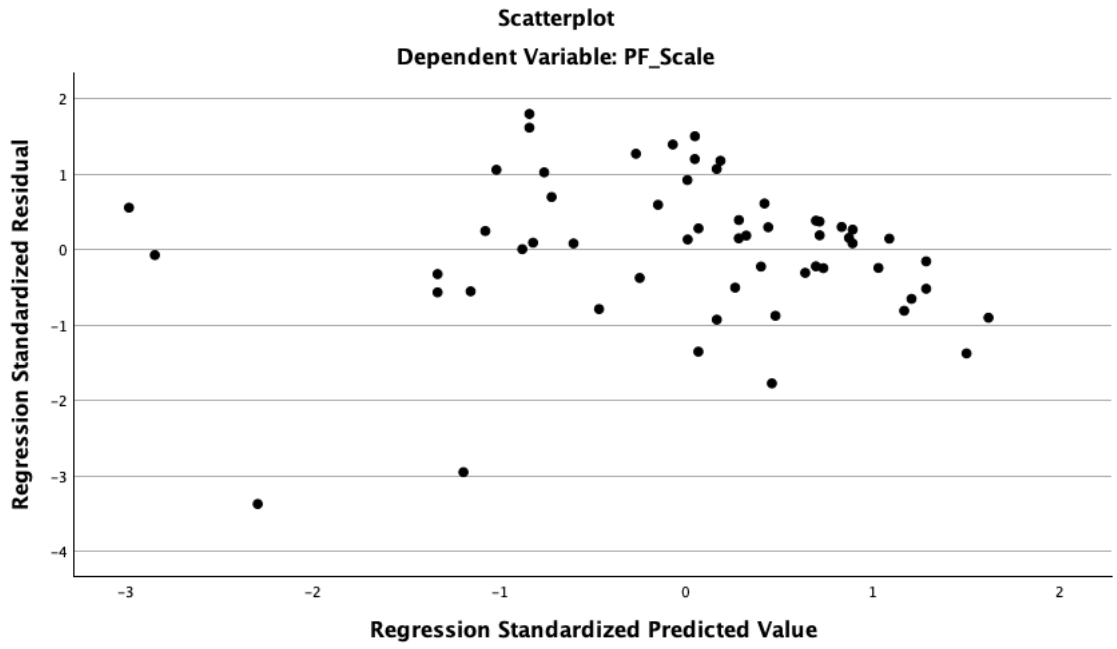

Figure 4. Normality of Residuals in Histogram of the Standardized Residuals

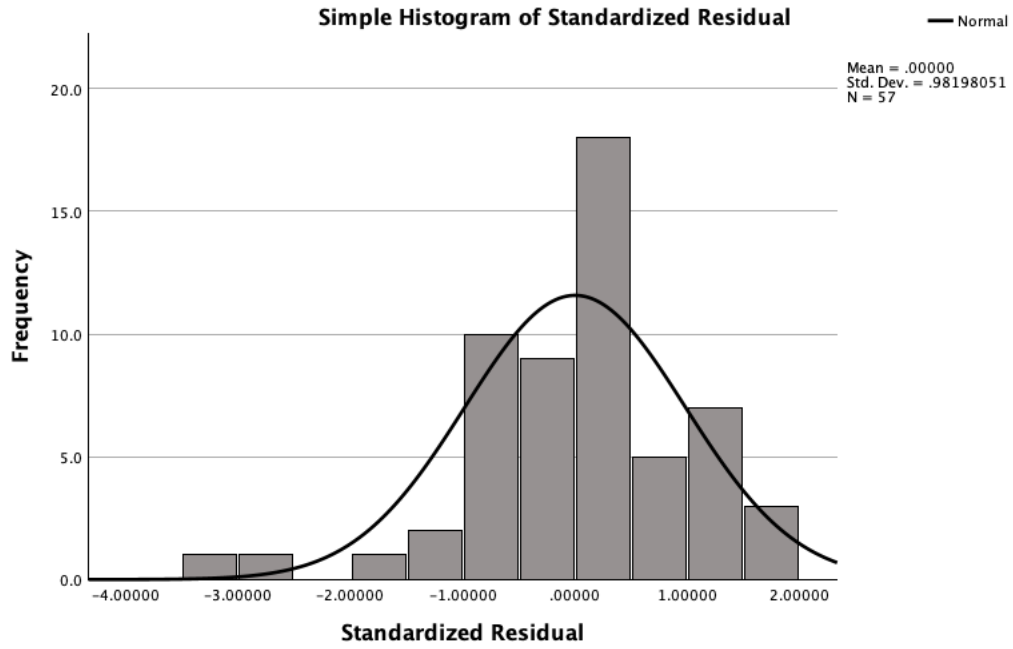

Figure 5. Normality of Standardized Residuals in Q-Q Plot

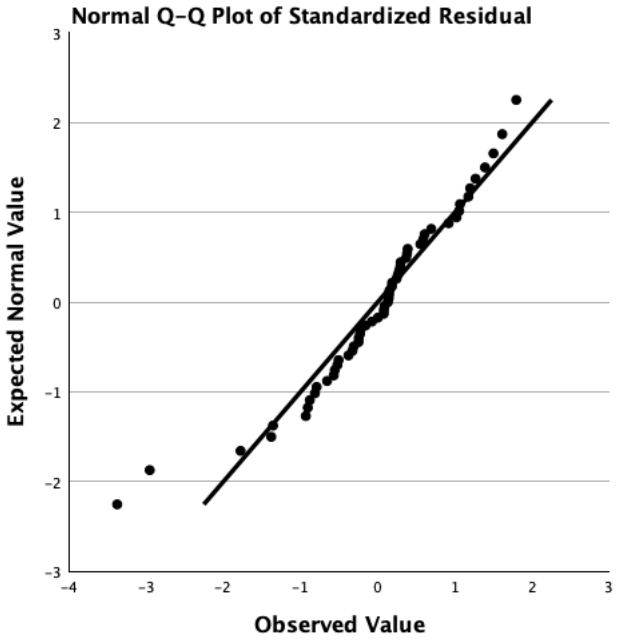

Table 3. Multicollinearity

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
1.Shared Leadership	0.764	1.308
2.Job Satisfaction [a]	0.764	1.308