LEADING FROM AFAR: CONTEXTUAL CONTINGENCIES OF SHARED LEADERSHIP IN TEAMS

ABSTRACT

We offer and test a theoretical model of team leadership as a contextualized, social system and seek to understand how shared leadership develops in different virtual team conditions. We contribute to team leadership literatures by integrating and extending insights on formal, top-down and shared, bottom-up leadership as well as the virtual teams literature by examining how different virtual team conditions interact with alternative leadership styles. We assessed our model via a controlled experiment conducted with 375 early-career managers within 75 teams in a dynamic leadership simulation. Results indicated formal leadership type (directive v. empowering) and team context (virtual v. partially collocated) interact to shape team attitudes and shared leadership behaviors, which affected teams’ adaptive performance and task proficiency. Findings underscore the importance of dual, simultaneous consideration of formal and informal sources of team leadership under different virtual team conditions.

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