

Research Review and Outlook of Shared Leadership in Virtual Team

Youlian Peng

School of Business, Jiangxi Normal University, Nanchang 330022, China.

Abstract: In the form of the review of the literature, this study elaborated the concept of virtual team shared leadership, reviewed the relevant research results of virtual team shared leadership, analyzed the influencing factors and the action results, and put forward the future outlook, so as to provide reference for the future research of virtual team shared leadership.

Keywords: Virtual Team; Shared Leadership; Research Review

1. Introduction

With the development of Internet applications, the living environment of organizations is becoming more and more complex, the competition among industries is intensifying; also, the traditional division of labor of entity organizations is more fine, and many other disadvantages are becoming increasingly prominent. In order to better adapt to the environment, the virtual teams with information technology as the medium are rising rapidly. The “geographic dispersion” of virtual teams leads to reduce the effectiveness of traditional vertical leaders' influence on employees, which requires leaders to disperse leadership to members. Studies have shown that shared leadership is a leadership model that highly matches the virtual team^[1]. However, the domestic virtual team shared leadership is still in the preliminary stage of theoretical development and model construction, and the systematic review and review are relatively scarce. This paper reviews the relevant research results of the virtual team shared leadership and prospects its future research content and direction.

2. The Conceptual Connotation of Share Leadership in Virtual Team

Virtual team refers to the team whose members are scattered in geographical location and organizational boundaries, and mainly rely on some type of technical intermediary communication, which emphasizing “the characteristics of geographical dispersion” and “technology dependence”^[2]. Later, the definition of the virtual team also revolves around the core elements, such as time, space boundary, team members, and team objectives. Shared leadership refers to the leadership model in which leadership power is shared in the team, and virtual team shared leadership refers to the model in which two or more team members play leadership roles in a virtual team^[3].

3. Influencing Actors of Shared Leadership in Virtual Team

3.1 Individual Factors

Shared leadership is influenced by the individual team members. First, the distribution of team-shared leaders is related to the personality, cognition, ability, and participation of the members. Members with certain characteristics are more prominent in influencing others and will also play an important role in shared leadership. The second is the cognition of team members. Research shows that members' recognition of the team can promote the development of shared leaders in the team. Members can put team goals above their own interests and realize that individual behavior can have an impact on the common value, so they are more willing to share leadership and make their own contributions. Finally, there is the ability of team members. Virtual teams are usually built to solve complex and dynamic tasks, and the realization of virtual team goals largely depends on the professional ability of the members. If the professional ability of the team members is strong, they are more likely to be recognized as leaders by other members, and they are keen to exert some leadership influence, which can actively achieve the team goals.

3.2 Team Factors

Virtual team is a decentralized team across regions and cultures. Therefore, the cultural background and values of team members are different, and the integration of communication modes among members is difficult, which is not conducive to the sharing of leadership in the team. On the other hand, it also brings opportunities for shared leaders. The participation of members who are with different cultural backgrounds and values will broaden the team's information channels and diversify their viewpoints, so as to put forward constructive suggestions. In addition to being influenced by the team's cultural values, shared leadership in virtual team is also influenced by team tasks. Shared leadership is more effective in virtual teams with knowledge-intensive and complex dynamics. In the virtual team, members will take the initiative to provide others to help other members, which can promote shared leadership. In addition, team support, rewards, and information support perceived by virtual team members can also promote shared leadership.

3.3 Other Factors

Virtual teams are “technology-dependent” and rely on electronic communication tools. The biggest difference between electronic communication tools and face-to-face communication lies in the lack of social signals, such as facial expressions, pronunciation and intonation. There are inconsistent views on communication media impact on shared leadership in existing research. The lack of social information in electronic communication in the virtual team hinders members from responding to each other, thus hindering the development of shared leadership.

4. The Results of Shared Leadership in Virtual Teams

4.1 Individual Level

In terms of employees' psychological emotion, in the virtual team, shared leadership will enhance individual psychological authorization and insider identity perception, so as to improve employee self-efficacy, which is beneficial to improve satisfaction and happiness, trust, psychological security and cohesion of members, increase individual initiative behavior to improve the work and organization. In terms of employee attitude, right sharing is a psychological state experienced by individuals, which is conducive to the formation of organizational commitment, and can also stimulate the work motivation and development willingness of members, and has a significant impact on improving the significance of work, reducing resignation intention and job burnout. In terms of employee behavior, in the virtual team, due to the lack of face-to-face work environment and dependence on technology, members have less interaction and interpersonal relationship establishment is difficult. Shared leadership Collaborative decision-making, knowledge sharing, shared responsibility, and mutual leadership of team members can respond to these issues. Therefore, in the virtual background, shared leadership can improve and promote team members, thus affecting individual performance, organizational civic behavior, knowledge sharing, and creativity.

4.2 Team Level

4.2.1 Team Effectiveness

In terms of team effectiveness, research shows that shared leadership is conducive to improving knowledge sharing and integration, creative advocacy, team innovation, team learning, teamwork, voice behavior, team citizenship behavior, and team effectiveness in virtual team.

4.2.2 Team Performance

In terms of team performance, the relevant research presents three different insights: The first understanding is that shared leadership can promote the performance of virtual teams, or improve the creativity of the team^[4]. In a study of 101 virtual teams, Hoch and Kozlowski specifically compared the effects of shared and vertical leadership and found that shared leadership played a stronger role in promoting team performance^[5].

The second view is that the direct effect of shared leadership on virtual team performance is not significant. Balthazard assumed that sharing transformational leadership was conducive to improving virtual task performance, but the experimental results did not support this hypothesis^[6].

The third view is that shared leadership has a negative impact on virtual team performance. Robert found that shared leadership

had a positive and negative impact on team performance at both the individual level and the team level in a research of 22 virtual teams . At the individual level, shared leadership reduces the team identity of non-white women and reduces team performance^[7].

5. Research Prospect

Although the research on the shared leadership of the virtual teams and its relationship with related variables had achieved preliminary results, its theory, influencing factors and influence effects need to be further studied and discussed.

Currently, shared leadership research is focused on the team level. However, cross-level research is relatively lacking. Therefore, cross-level research on the antecedents and outcomes of shared leadership in virtual teams should be strengthened. Future research should further explore the influencing factors of individuals, teams and external teams in the virtual team, and also pay attention to the cross-layer influence and mechanism of shared leadership on the virtual team and individuals.

The effect of sharing leadership in virtual team needs to be further explored. Previous studies have focused on traditional vertical leadership in virtual teams, as well as communication, trust, knowledge sharing and cooperation. But rarely discussed the effectiveness of virtual teams from the perspective of shared leadership. In the future, the mechanism of leadership can be shared in a virtual context.

Most studies have confirmed the positive effect of shared leadership, but others have shown that it also has a “dark side”, and the exploration of such negative mechanisms and boundary conditions is still lacking. Therefore, it is necessary to expand the research of intermediary mechanism and boundary conditions of shared leadership in virtual team, introduce more mediation and regulatory variables, and further open the black box of virtual team sharing mechanism of leading role.

Focus on cross-cultural comparisons of the relationships between virtual team shared leadership and other related variables. At present, most of the research on virtual team sharing leadership is carried out in the background of western culture. However, What is the difference of the effect of virtual team sharing leadership between the context of high collectivism in Chinese culture that emphasizes “relationship” and the Western "individualism" cultural background? How does the cultural difference affect the virtual team shared leadership and its path mechanism? Exploring these problems is also one of the important directions for future research.

References

- [1] Liu SB, Cheng JK, Wang X. Research on the double-edged sword effect of virtual team shared leadership: the perspective of adjustment structure theory [J]. *Advances in psychological science*, 2022, 30(08): 1770-1784.
- [2] Lionel PR. A multi-level analysis of the impact of shared leadership in diverse virtual teams [P]. *Computer supported cooperative work*, 2013.
- [3] Bligh MC., Pearce CL., & Kohles JC. (2006). The importance of self-and shared leadership in team based knowledge work: A meso-level model of leadership dynamics. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 21(4), 296–318.
- [4] Gu QX, Zhang BQ. The influence mechanism of virtual team transformational and transactional leadership on team creativity: Shared leadership perspective [J]. *China human Resources development*, 2017(11): 6-16+107.
- [5] Hoch JE., & Kozlowski SWJ. (2014). Leading virtual teams: Hierarchical leadership, structural supports, and shared team leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 99(3), 390–403.
- [6] Balthazard P, Waldman D, Howell J, et al. Shared Leadership And Group Interaction Styles in Problem-Solving Virtual Teams [J]. 2014 47th Hawaii International Conference On System Sciences Ieee Computer Society, 2004: 10043b.
- [7] Robert LP. A Multi-Level Analysis of the Impact of Shared leadership in Diverse Virtual Teams [C]. *Proceedings of the 2013 conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work* Acm, 2013: 363-374.