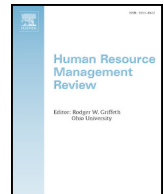




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Team personality composition, emergent leadership and shared leadership in virtual teams: A theoretical framework

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ABSTRACT

Limited theory and research has been devoted to the role of team personality composition, as well as emergent and shared leadership, in virtual teams. In an effort to provide a theoretical basis for the role of team personality composition, as well as emergent and shared leadership, in virtual teams, we propose a virtual team framework that portrays the team personality composition as predictors of emergent and shared leadership. These in turn are expected to impact virtual team performance. We further posit that the relationships between team personality composition and virtual team performance are indirect, through emergent leadership and shared leadership. Finally, we present team virtuality as a moderator between team composition and team processes. Suggestions for future research and implications for the management of virtual teams are presented.

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The use of virtual teams has continued to grow as organizations widely adopt virtual team structures to perform work. Virtual teams work across geographic distance and different time zones to accomplish joint goals; virtual teams are often comprised of members from different cultural and national backgrounds (Cramton & Hinds, 2005; Gibson & Gibbs, 2006; Hinds, Liu, & Lyon, 2011; Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014). A 2012 survey of 379 HR professionals by SHRM found that 46% of the participants reported their organizations use virtual teams (SHRM, 2012). Similarly, a 2014 survey of 3000 managers from more than 100 countries indicated that 40% of their organizations' employees spend at least half their time working on virtual teams and 77% of these teams are multi-cultural (RW³ CultureWizard, 2014). While virtual teams provide a number of advantages to organizations, there are a number of inherent challenges resulting from team virtuality. For example, in the 2014 RW³ survey, the following percentage of respondents indicated that the lack of co-located interaction of virtual teams created significant challenges affecting trust (64% of respondents), decision-making (55%), managing conflict (54%), and expressing opinions (53%).

One important factor to mitigate these challenges and augment team performance is team leadership. While virtual teams typically have a vertical leader, due to geographical dispersion, the emergence of team members as leaders (willing to take on leadership roles) and the sharing of leadership among members have been discussed as augmentations, in light of long with management challenges, in leading virtual teams (Carte, Chidambaram, & Becker, 2006). The emergence of team members as informal leaders inside the team and the facilitation of shared leadership are expected to facilitate team functioning and team effectiveness in virtual teams (Gilson, Maynard, Young, Vartiainen, & Hakonen, 2015; Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014; Liu, Hu, Li, Wang, & Lin, 2014; Martins, Gilson, & Maynard, 2004; Shuffler, Wiese, Salas, & Burke, 2010; Zhou, Vredenburg, & Rogoff, 2015). Primary

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factors we posit to be antecedents to these leadership processes, and virtual team effectiveness, are the team composition in terms of team member personality.

When it comes to team member personality composition, the most prominent personality trait classification is the Big Five typology. The Big Five framework describes the five central personality dimensions of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience and emotional stability. Field research on co-located teams, has demonstrated the positive impact personality facets can have on team functioning and performance (Bell, 2007; Mount & Barrick, 1995; Mount, Barrick, & Stewart, 1998). With regard to the development of team processes, studies on co-located teams have documented that team member agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability, represent predominant and consistent predictors of team processes and team effectiveness (Barrick, Stewart, Neubert, & Mount, 1998; Bell, 2007; Mount & Barrick, 1995; Peeters, Van Tuijl, Ruttes, & Reymen, 2006). In addition, the personality variable extraversion has been associated with leadership, leader emergence and shared or collective team leadership (e.g., Barry & Stewart, 1997; Hoch, 2013; Ilies, Germardt, & Le, 2004; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002).

While research on team composition has highlighted the role of team personality composition as an antecedent of effective team processes in co-located teams, emergent leadership research has highlighted the central role of individual team members' personality as an antecedent of the emergence of (sole) individuals as team leaders, in these settings (e.g., Balthazard, Waldman, & Warren, 2009; Barry & Stewart, 1997; Kickul & Neuman, 2000; Taggar, Hackett, & Saha, 2006). Surprisingly, the role of personality as a team composition variable, has received limited attention in research on virtual teams. In light of research findings on the importance of personality composition in co-located teams, we expect that both individual team member personality as well as team personality composition, representing the aggregation of team members' personality, will be similarly important as predictors of leadership in virtual teams.

To conceptualize the association of team member personality and team personality composition in virtual teams, we present a virtual team model based on the input-process-output (IPO, e.g., McGrath, 1991; Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson, & Jundt, 2005), or input-mediator-output (–input) IMO(1) (Marks, Mathieu, & Zaccaro, 2001)¹ approach of team performance, adopted from Hoch and Dulebohn's (2013) framework. Fig. 1 presents the paper's input-process-output model. The model depicts the team personality composition in terms of the Big Five as input factors that, as antecedents, facilitate the development of emergent leadership and shared leadership, which in turn mediate the team personality composition and virtual team performance relationships. Virtuality moderates the pathway between input variables and emergent states and processes.

The organization of the paper is as follows. First, we describe emergent leadership and shared leadership, which represent the focal mediators in our IPO model, and the association between these virtual team leadership behaviors and virtual team performance. Second, we summarize the literature on the role of both individual team member personality as well as team personality composition, in terms of the Big Five dimensions, as antecedents of emergent and shared leadership, as well as team performance. Following, we outline the role of emergent and shared leadership as mediators between team personality composition and virtual team performance. Finally, we highlight the role of team virtuality as a moderating variable, influencing the input and process pathways.

1. Theoretical background

1.1. Emergent Leadership

Emergent leaders are individuals who exert significant influence over other members of the group, even though they may not be vested with formal authority (Schneider & Goktepe, 1983). Different from shared leadership, defined at the team level and as a group construct, emergent leadership is defined on the individual level. Emergent leadership describes an individual leadership phenomenon whereby an individual arises as team leader informally, without being assigned formal leadership responsibility. Emergent leadership is further described: "as both an individual's completion of leader-like work duties and occupying positions of leadership or authority either within or outside of the work domain" (Cogliser, Garnder, Gavin, & Broberg, 2012, p. 753).

Emergent leadership has been examined in various different contexts, including traditional organization settings (e.g., Judge & Piccolo, 2004), self-managing teams (e.g., Manz & Sims, 1987; Walton, 1977), and small group settings (e.g., Kickul & Neuman, 2000; Neubert & Taggar, 2004; Neubert, 1999). Due to the complexity of their team tasks, virtual teams are often self-managing teams. Self-managing work teams are defined as teams that monitor and manage their own performance, make decisions related to their work, and take collective responsibility for meeting their own goals (Hollander & Offermann, 1990; Kozlowski, Gully, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1996). While implementing self-managing teams is often productive for organizations (for example, to lower costs or improved decision-making quality, Lawler, 1998; Morgeson, DeRue, & Karam, 2010), the most common reason for their failure is due to the failure of leadership (Beyerlein, Johnson, & Beyerlein, 1996; Cohen, Chang, & Ledford, 1997). Related, researchers have consistently found that effective leadership is pivotal to teams' success (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Wageman, 2001).

¹ Marks et al. (2001) have distinguished behavioral processes and those process-oriented states that emerge over time and are accessed via team member perceptions. For purposes of this paper we focus on "emergent states" but refer to them as team processes consistent with the extant literature.

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