

# Investigating a Link between Shared Leadership and Organisational Citizenship Behaviours in Self-Managed Teams

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## Introduction

The emergence of self-managed teams in the modern work environment is increasing rapidly; Druskat and Wheeler estimate that 79% of Fortune 1000 companies utilise “empowered,” “self-directed” or “autonomous” teams (Druskat & Wheeler, 2004). With the increasing prevalence of self-directed teams the need to investigate novel leadership methods has come to the fore (Pearce & Conger, 2002). These cross-functional and self-managed teams require a more laissez faire approach to leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2002). In fact vertical leadership has been identified as one of the key reasons why many self-managed teams fail (Sivasubramaniam, Murry, Avolio & Jung, 2002).

Self-managed teams require the constituent individuals to perform additional behaviours that go above and beyond their designated role and would normally be ascribed to the managerial role (Omar, Zainal, Omar & Khairudin, 2009). Promoting organisational citizenship behaviours therefore should be a primary objective for any leadership structure implemented in a self-managed team context. The purpose of this literature review is to investigate a causal relationship between shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours to posit an alternative approach to leading cross-functional, self-managed teams. This will provide the basis to answer my research question: *Does a shared leadership approach promote organisational citizenship behaviour in self-managed, cross disciplinary teams?*

Shared leadership is defined as a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organisational goals or both (Pearce & Conger, 2002). Organisational citizenship behaviours are described as discretionary individual behaviours which promote the functioning of an organisation and are not systematically or formally rewarded (Smith, Organ & Near, 1983). Surprisingly there has been scant research linking these concepts despite the seemingly obvious correlation between their definitions. Instead the majority of the literature in the field of shared leadership is focused on its antecedent elements (Serban & Roberts, 2016).

The specific “off shoots” that I will be operationalising to link these two constructs are: trust, group cohesion, and job satisfaction. These antecedent elements of organisational citizenship behaviours are outcomes of shared leadership. Examining the intersection between both constructs will create validity to a possible causal relationship.

I am approaching this literature review within the positivist paradigm of research, meaning I am reducing complex dynamic human interaction into manageable variables (Schrag, 1992). I will use models from prior research

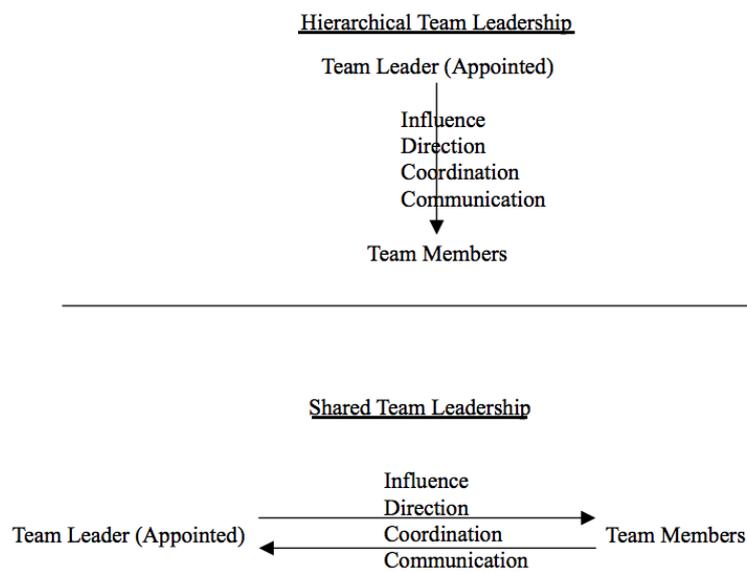
to tentatively establish a causal relationship between shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours. Building upon tested models by adopting a positivist approach will help me verify the validity of my proposed relationship. By linking shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours through tested models I will demonstrate that my findings have real world application making the contribution of my literature review twofold.

I begin this literature review by looking at the emergence of shared leadership theory; I will then specify which shared leadership approach I will be conceptualising in my research and how it interacts with organisational citizenship behaviours. To establish the relationship between these two constructs I propose three mediators of the relationship: trust, group cohesion, and job satisfaction. To validate the link between my two main constructs I will show how these mediators are consequential of shared leadership and antecedent to organisational citizenship behaviours. I will do this by reviewing prior literature and analysing select models that demonstrate these relationships. Finally I will present a conceptual model that collates the findings of my literature review and highlights the relationship between shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours including references to relevant models that I have identified.

## Shared Leadership

Traditionally leadership theory has been focused on the individual (Bass & Bass, 2009) with significant research being dedicated to the influence of a leader on organisations and what constitutes a leader (Friedrich, Vessey, Schuelke, Ruark & Mumford, 2009). However more recently a holistic perspective of organisational leadership has emerged that posits a combination of formal vertical leadership and informal leadership stemming from the bottom up (Friedrich et al., 2009). A comparison of the two approaches to leadership is made in Figure 1. This view questions the value of the saturated research that surrounds the individual leader and has led to emergent theories like shared leadership increasing in popularity.

The increasing academic attention being paid to shared leadership is reflected in the granulation of the construct. From the overarching umbrella of shared leadership Wang identified three distinct constructs emerging: shared traditional leadership; shared new-genre leadership; and cumulative, overall shared leadership (Wang, Waldman & Zhang, 2014). Shared traditional leadership is characterised by assuming economic compensation for performance and maintaining the structure predominant in traditional leadership. Shared new-genre leadership moves from traditional monetary compensation to a more transformational leadership approach coupled with an orientation of development and change. Finally cumulative, overall shared leadership regards to what extent individuals in teams contribute to the gross organisational leadership (Wang et al., 2014).



**Figure 1: Comparison of Leadership Theories (Shane Wood & Fields, 2007)**

It is important to identify which shared leadership paradigm is best suited to test the causal relationship between shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour. Organisational citizenship behaviours are discretionary and non-reward based in nature (Lazauskaite-Zabielske, Urbanaviciute & Bagdziuniene, 2015). Therefore by definition a traditional leadership approach rewarding pro-social behaviours through economic means does not classify as producing organisational citizenship behaviours. Given their discretionary nature organisational citizenship behaviours do not manifest themselves in all team members resulting in cumulative citizenship behaviours, rather they are exhibited by certain individuals within the team. This makes the cumulative shared leadership paradigm poorly equipped to identify a causal relationship with organisational citizenship behaviours. When analysing literature of the singular leader a transformational leadership approach has been shown to be the most effective in stimulating organisational citizenship behaviours in employees (Omar, Zainal, Omar & Khairudin, 2009). Given this, I pose that a shared new-genre leadership approach will be the most effective in stimulating the antecedent elements to organisational citizenship behaviours and proposing a relationship between the two constructs. There has been little examination between these two constructs in prior research. The only existing work I found linking shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours was a research proposal identifying possible new research directions which stated that the requirements of shared leadership were similar to that of citizenship behaviour (Friedrich et al., 2009). Through demonstrating the causal relationship between shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours I hope to add to the growing literature arguing the value of shared leadership.

## Trust

Trust refers to one's willingness to accept vulnerability to another party in the absence of the ability to control or guarantee the other party's actions (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). In an organisational team context trust is the mechanism through which one member allows another to influence an outcome based on their subjective judgement. Shared leadership in cross-functional teams involves the transferal of leadership when one member's expertise outweighs that of the others, thus creating situations where team members trust in another to positively influence the outcome through leadership. The appointed leader is typically the one whose abilities are tailored to solving the specific issue; this makes them more likely to achieve the desired outcome. When team members delegate leadership and are rewarded with the desired outcome trust relationships form.

Social exchange theory explains the forming of these trust relationships. It posits that individuals enter and remain in exchange relationships so long as the perceived value of the relationship outweighs the cost (Emerson, 1976). During the course of these exchanges one party provides a benefit to another, in this case expertise and leadership, which invokes the implicit obligation to reciprocate these benefits in some form (Emerson, 1976). During these periods of exchange one party becomes dependent on the other to deliver what was expected. The consistency between cognitive expectations and realisation of said expectations will lead to the fostering of trust relationships (McAllister, 1995). With enough rewarding of trust between parties within a shared leadership team the formation of pro-social relationships is inevitable.

In their meta-analysis Drescher and colleagues found that trust was a direct result of shared leadership and fully mediated the relationship between shared leadership and improved team performance (Drescher, Korsgaard, Welp, Picot & Wigand, 2014). I pose that one of the vehicles through which trust improves team performance is organisational citizenship behaviour. There are two views regarding how trust stimulates organisational citizenship behaviours in subordinates. The character perspective assumes that over the course of the trust relationship the trustor will develop conclusions on the characteristics of the trustee (integrity, morality etc.). Trustors that perceive their trustee as being of high character will be more likely to over exert themselves in the form of organisational citizenship behaviours out of loyalty to the trustee (Kacmar, Bachrach, Harris & Noble, 2012). The alternative, a relation based perspective, ties closely to social exchange theory by focusing on the trust dyad. This perspective argues that when employees experience positive social exchanges they are likely to compensate with their most accessible medium of compensation available: organisational citizenship behaviours (Organ, 1988). Positive social exchanges create a feeling of indebtedness in subordinates making them more likely to perform behaviours that go beyond their traditional requirements.

## Group Cohesion

Cohesion is a difficult construct to use as an antecedent due to its reliance on the perceptions of multiple actors within a group. To identify perceived cohesion as a link between shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours it is important to accurately conceptualise it. There are

two approaches to the conceptualisation of perceived group cohesion. The first proposes a positivist approach to the construct by creating an 'index of morale cohesiveness' calculated by dividing the number of mutual friendships within a group by the total number of mutual friendships possible within that group (Dimock, 1987). The second takes a more interpretivist approach by asking individuals why the group is important to them, allowing common factors to be identified (Gross & Martin, 1952). Considering these two paradigmatic perspectives a holistic definition can be formed: perceived group cohesion is an individual's sense of belonging to a particular group and his or her feelings of morale when associated with membership of that group (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990).

Leadership styles employed within teams have a large influence on the attitudes, behaviours and beliefs within a team (Bass & Bass, 2009). A vertical leadership approach concentrates the power within a team into one central role, which can consequently create negative politics (Bass & Bass, 2009). Research has shown that highly cohesive teams are more likely to contain individuals with implicit unique information (Leana, 1985). A shared leadership approach distributes power among individuals with a team based upon their implicit expert power; by doing so it reduces the potential for negative politics and increases cohesion creating behaviours. Under shared leadership groups enjoy increased amounts of collaboration, coordination, and cooperation (Ensley, Pearson & Pearce, 2003); these behaviours are positive social exchanges that create greater feelings of trust and therefore group cohesion among team members.

Group cohesion not only affects the cognitive perceptions of individuals but also their affective states. Cohesion effects moral, motivation, and willingness to engage in social and task related activities (Ensley et al., 2003). The willingness to preserve the positive group dynamic is what motivates cohesive groups to promote pro-social behaviours. Pro-social behaviours help group members maintain their relationships within the group and often manifest themselves in the form of organisational citizenship behaviours (Kidwell, Mossholder & Bennett, 1997). Social psychology research has shown that groups with positive mood states will stimulate individuals within to exhibit altruism (a form of organisational citizenship behaviour) towards each other (Isen & Baron, 1991). Shared leadership creates positive mood states through increased pro-social behaviours between team members and increased reliance on other members in the team. These pro-social behaviours stimulate the formation of trust relationships and increase job satisfaction among employees. Furthermore a positive mood state within groups creates cohesion which will manifest itself in the form of organisational citizenship behaviours.

## **Job Satisfaction**

The relationship between shared leadership and task satisfaction has yet to be sufficiently explored (Serban & Roberts, 2016). Job satisfaction refers to the response to actual job outcomes when they match desired outcomes (Wood & Fields, 2007). Shared leadership grants teams the autonomy to elect their own leader to achieve objectives. Studies have shown that employees prefer autonomy when determining roles and tasks within the team environment (Spector, 2003). Shared leadership therefore increases job

satisfaction twofold. It allows employees the autonomy to determine their own roles within the team environment and by having leadership of the team constantly distributed team members with the optimal skillset the desired objectives are more likely to be met. One of the few studies linking shared leadership and job satisfaction has shown that teams who share leadership showed lower levels of stress and higher levels of job satisfaction (Serban & Roberts, 2016).

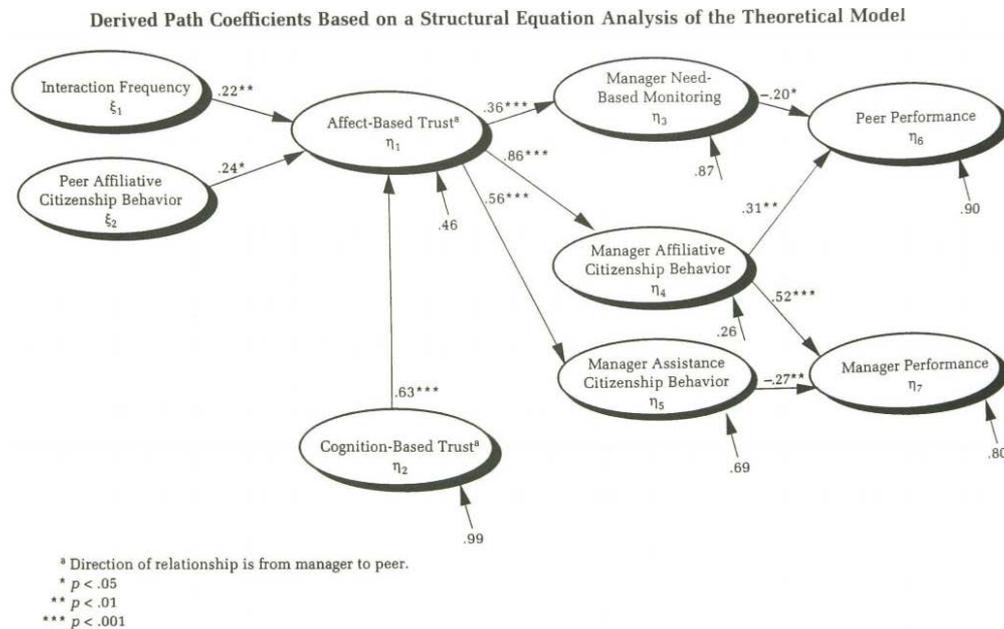
The link between job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviours is intuitive. Extensive research has identified the causal relationship between job satisfaction and various aspects of organisational citizenship behaviours such as altruism (Smith et al., 1983). When employees have a positive job attitude they are more predisposed to exhibit extra role behaviours (Kidwell et al., 1997). The majority of this research however was conducted before the new millennium and there is remarkably little research that has been conducted on job satisfaction within self-managed teams (Foote & Tang, 2008).

In their study of the relationship between organisational citizenship behaviours and job satisfaction in the context of self-managing teams Foote and Tang (2008) found that the presence of a causal relationship still held. They further found that team commitment had a moderating effect on the relationship. Their conceptualisation of team commitment was synonymous with group cohesion showing the inter-relation between the mediating variables of shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours. Foote and Tang found that in teams with high levels of commitment the effect of job satisfaction on organisational citizenship behaviours was significant, likewise in teams with low commitment the relationship the effect failed to reach significance (Figure 5.). Data used in Figure 5 was sampled using a previously developed Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979) and were tested for psychometric properties to ensure validity. Samples taken for this study were from self-directed teams within three geographically separate manufacturing facilities, one of which had implemented self-managed teams for several years and the others more recently. The importance of this sampling scope is that the findings of the research hold over different organisational cultures and stages of implementation of self-managed teams. Foote and Tang's findings not only confirmed the causal relationship between job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviours but further proposed team commitment (cohesion) as a moderator. This allows the integration of these constructs when forming a conceptual framework for the relationship between shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours.

## Conceptual Framework

To construct a conceptual framework for the relationship between shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours I rely on models used in other positivist studies surrounding my two major constructs. Specifically I will use McAllister's model examining the antecedents of both cognitive and affective trust and their influence on organisational citizenship behaviours (Figure 2); Ensley et al.'s model showing the causal effect of shared leadership and group cohesion (Figure 3); and Foote and Tang's model showing the causal relationship between job satisfaction and organisational

citizenship behaviours (Figure 4), with the moderating effect of team commitment (Figure 5).



**Figure 2: Cognitive and Affective Trust and Their Influence on Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (McAllister, 1995)**

Shared leadership is a dynamic process whereby leadership is distributed within the team based upon who is the most capable in solving the organisational issue. By electing a leader team members are allowing one individual to have more influence over the final outcome. In doing so shared leadership facilitates positive social exchange between team members as cognitive expectations are more likely to be realised under a leader with specific knowledge in the required field. Consistency between expectations and outcomes leads to the development of trust relationships and positive social attitudes within the team (Figure 2). Shared leadership facilitates the continual creation of positive social exchanges between team members which coupled with an overall positive attitude stimulates group cohesion (Figure 3). This group cohesion creates a positive attitude in the team and pro-social behaviours facilitating the creation of further affective trust relationships (Figure 2). Finally the autonomy granted to teams under shared leadership allows them to designate roles as they see fit, this is not only organisationally efficient but also creates job satisfaction among team members. Furthermore by having leadership determined by which team member has the highest level of relevant capability the likelihood of meeting desired outcomes increases, which in turn, increases job satisfaction. Groups with high levels of job satisfaction are more likely to exhibit organisational citizenship behaviours (Figure 5). Group cohesion proves to be an important antecedent in the formation of trust relationships and the moderation between satisfaction and citizenship behaviours. I propose a conceptual model reflecting these relationships and also the overarching relationship between shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours.

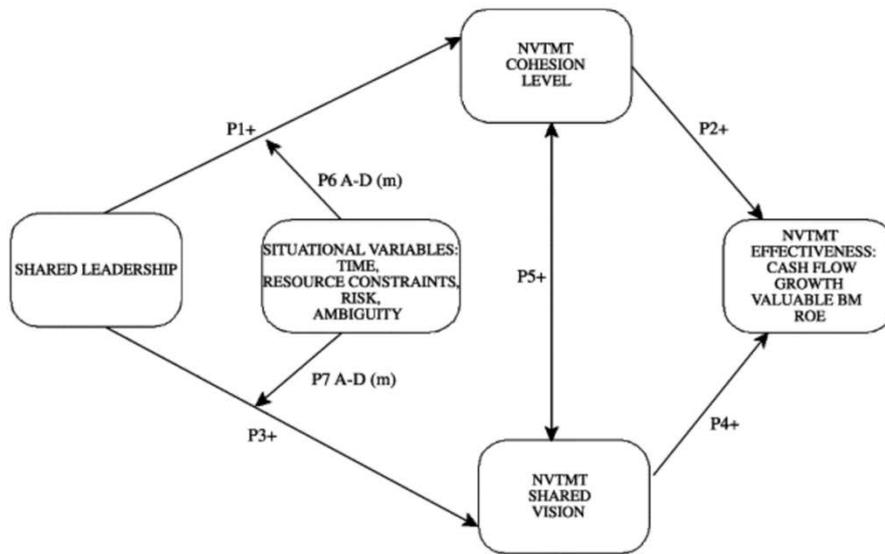


Figure 3 (Ensley et al., 2003)

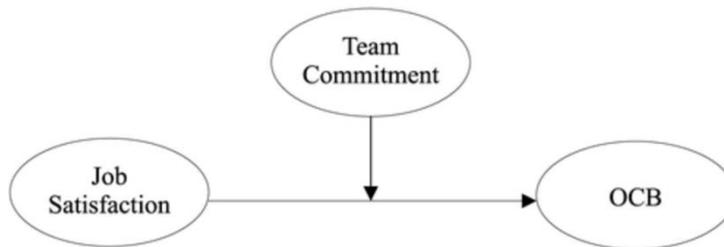


Figure 4 (Foote & Tang, 2008)

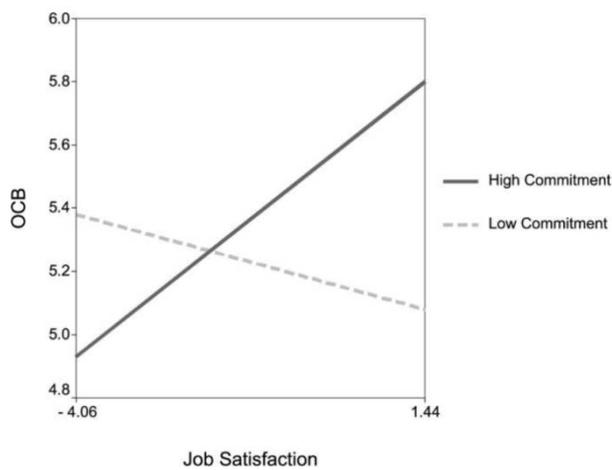
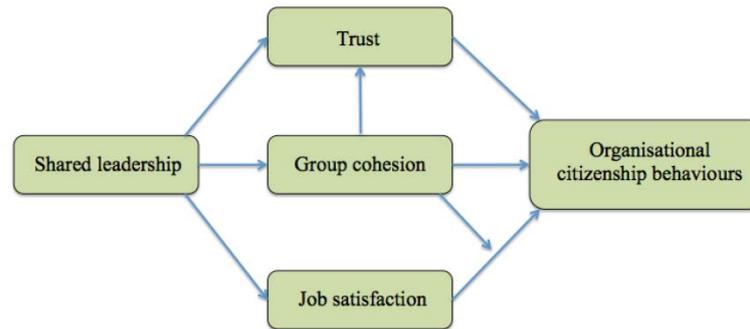


Figure 5 (Foote & Tang, 2008)



**Figure 6: Conceptual Model of Relationship between Shared Leadership and Organisational Citizenship Behaviours**

This model shows that trust, group cohesion, and job satisfaction are all mediating variables between shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours. It further shows the moderating effect cohesion (commitment) has on the causal relationship between job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviours (Foote & Tang, 2008). Finally it also shows the antecedent nature of group cohesion on the formation of affective trust relationships represented in McAllister's original model as Peer Affiliative Citizenship Behaviour (McAllister, 1995).

## Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review was to justify further research into the relationship between shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours in self-managed teams. Self-managed teams require members to take on responsibilities that go well beyond normally expected job roles including such complex activities as development of a vision for the end result of a group's efforts, planning coordinated work tasks, and estimating resources needed in multiple task areas (Seers, Keller, & Wikerson, 2003). The behaviours described are exemplary of organisational citizenship; it is therefore imperative to identify ways to stimulate these behaviours in the organisational team context.

Research into the link between shared leadership and organisational citizenship behaviours is lacking despite the increasing use of self-managed teams in the organisational context and the recognition that a vertical leadership structure is not always the most effective method. I propose that shared leadership is a method that warrants further investigation as it manifests the antecedent conditions for the stimulation of organisational citizenship behaviours. While the link between shared leadership and improved performance has been made (Serban & Roberts, 2016) along with the acknowledgement that improved performance is largely due to an improvement in employee attitude (Serban & Roberts, 2016) the medium that links the two is lacking. I propose that organisational citizenship behaviours contribute significantly to the improvement in performance that shared leadership causes. This makes the contribution of my literature review twofold. I offer reason for organisations to grant their self-managed teams shared leadership along with identifiable outcomes of shared leadership that can be used to predict improved performance. I also offer an explanation as

to why shared leadership improves overall performance of teams contributing to the emergent literature regarding the value of a shared approach to leadership.

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