Literature Review on Shared Leadership in Teams

Jong Gyu Park
Pennsylvania State University

Bora Kwon
Pennsylvania State University

Shared leadership has gained considerable popularity over the past few years, but it remains inconsistently defined and measured. This has been mainly caused by relatively little empirical research. Future research is needed to compare the effects of shared leadership in various types of teams such as knowledge-based work team, self-managed work team, and task force team. It is concluded that organizations can utilize shared leadership to establish strategies to enhance team performance, quality of products, and positive change which will eventually lead to improved organizational performance

INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership is highly correlated with perceptions of organizational effectiveness and has been studied as one of the key variables that relates to overall group or team effectiveness (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Kolb, 1996). Past research for group and team effectiveness has mainly focused on a single formal leader and emphasized that person's individual characteristics and behaviors. Leadership from a single individual has provided important implications for the relationship between leadership and team effectiveness, but this approach is limited in that it only focuses on the relationship between one leader and the followers (Yukl, 2002).

Research is currently under way to overcome this limitation, and research involving team leadership is no exception. Many theories about team leadership were proposed in the past, and the concept of lateral leadership rather than hierarchical leadership within a group began to attract the interest of scholars (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003). Academic research and the practical implications about lateral and collective leadership managed by team members have arisen during the past two decades. "Shared leadership" is a representative subject of this research. Previous studies have generally defined shared leadership as an emerging process of mutual influence, where team members share in the leadership function of a team (Pearce & Sims, 2002). Still, this idea of shared leadership offers considerable room for further study (Pearce, Conger, & Locke, 2007).

A self-managed work team is one of the important aspects of shared leadership. Organizations often have this type of structure because such a team allows them to operate effectively and quickly cope with any rapid changes (Ancona, 1990). Accordingly, interest in leadership within a team environment is increasing, although questions about whether or not traditional leadership models fit this concept of self-managed teams are being raised (Pearce & Sims 2002).

In this context, research about shared leadership has produced mixed results. Research has certainly shown that shared leadership is positively related to team performance (e.g., Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007; Ensley, Hmieleski, & Pearce, 2006; Hoch, Pearce, & Welzel, 2010; Mehra, Smith, Dixon, & Robertson, 2006; Pearce & Sims, 2002; Sivasubramanium, Murry, Avolio, & Jung, 2002). Regrettably, however, empirical research on shared leadership has been lacking so far (Carson et al., 2007). Also, only a few studies have directly focused on the antecedent conditions of shared leadership (Carson et al., 2007), and it seems apparent that researchers have had little interest in the subject.

Research on shared leadership, which is important to explain leadership within a team and for team effectiveness, will be meaningful work to alternate the conventional leadership paradigm in specially set teams. Several paper attempts to discover a new leadership feature that can fit current organizational environments in which team based performance is highly valued. In this context, it will be relevant to review the literature regarding shared leadership (Torraco, 2005). This paper also aims to analyze existing studies about shared leadership within a team, focusing mainly on its definition and measures and then proposing a research agenda that provides new direction for future research.

This paper is divided into three sections: method, findings, and conclusion. The method section describes a framework for the literature review and the method used to select related articles. The findings section presents a critique of existing articles and synthesizes key findings for future research. The paper concludes with a summary of what we know and still need to know about shared leadership in teams and implications for scholars and practitioners.

METHODS

Through the literature review, a number of studies of shared leadership are synthesized and summarized. According to Torraco (2005), integrated literature reviews are appropriate when divergent statements are made on a specific topic or when there are changes in an emerging trend or theoretical direction and how it is reported. A shift has developed in the leadership scholarly community, where some have supported the notion that leadership is actually a process that can be shared, distributed, and collectively enacted (Pearce & Conger, 2003). Some leadership scholars have even proposed that leadership does not have to originate solely from a formal leader but, rather, can derive from any member of a group. Hence, it seems particularly timely to conduct an integrated literature review on shared leadership, keeping the particularities of each study in mind.

The guideline of integrated literature review (Torraco, 2005) provides the framework for the method that follows. Relevant research data for a preliminary conceptualization of shared leadership was carefully selected by reviewing the existing literature on the subject. Furthermore, the collected studies have been synthesized in an effort to suggest a research scheme that would give direction for future shared leadership research.

Selection of Related Literature

Based on a framework of "fit for the purpose" methodology of literature review, the first step was to select reliable literature. The sources for information were drawn mainly from the fields of organizational behavior (OB), industrial and organizational (I/O) psychology, and human resource management (HRM). To select as many appropriate articles as possible, the following databases were chosen: Business Source Premier on EBSCO Host (http://www.ebscohost.com/academic/business-source-premier), Social Science Field on ProQuest (http://search.proquest.com/socialsciences), and ERIC (http://search.proquest.com/eric).

Establishing Selection Criteria

The main focus of this study is on shared leadership in teams. Shared leadership has been synonymous with such other terms as "distributed leadership," "collaborative leadership," "collective leadership," "co-leadership," and "emergent leadership" (Bolden, 2011). Bolden (2011) found that "shared leadership" and "distributed leadership" are the most widely used terms in discussing this subject.

He used results sorted from the Scopus database (http://www.scopus.com), which is one of the largest abstract and citation databases of research literature and quality web sources, covering nearly 18,000 titles from more than 5,000 publishers between 1980 and 2009. The main keywords used to search reliable research papers were "shared leadership," "distributed leadership," and "teams." In order to verify research papers that dealt with OB, I/O psychology, and HRM search results were limited to those in which the terms "shared leadership" and/or "distributed leadership" and "organization" and/or "work teams" and/or "teams" were present in the title or abstract. In addition, they were fenced in publication by peer-reviewed and English language for the past 10 years. Research was also limited to empirical study papers for investigation of measures, which is one of the critical factors considered in this paper.

Fifty-three articles were initially retrieved: 25 articles in Business Source Premier, 23 in ProQuest, and five in ERIC. Then, a "staged review" was used to analyze reliable articles. Torraco (2005) declared that a staged review is one approach used to analyze the literature, where an initial review of abstracts is made before a thorough review is conducted. Articles that meet the selection criteria and keywords, especially those focused on empirical research, have been chosen for their implications and future work through the staged review. As a result, seven articles were selected.

Data Organization and Analysis

The seven key articles were closely reviewed because they were identified as reliable and relevant studies about the topic. A close analysis has been made utilizing a particular lens defined by future implication regarding shared leadership in teams. Torraco (2005) mentioned that good literature reviews examine the literature with a specific lens defined by the article's objective; therefore, a new conceptual framework for the studies examining shared leadership in teams was used to provide a critique of the articles, and then the studies were synthesized into new approaches following Torraco's guidelines.

FINDINGS

Each article has different definitions and measures. In this section, several typologies of shared leadership have been developed based on each article's key findings, samples, and method. These findings consist of two parts: Summary of analysis of articles and the key issue revealed by the analysis. In particular, the issues focused on the definition and measures of shared leadership. I have discussed new findings and synthesized them into a few implications that offer new perspectives for future research on shared leadership.

Summary of Articles Analysis

Pearce and Sims (2002) carried out a study to examine which of the two types of leadership, vertical or shared, is a better indicator of team effectiveness. They also examined the various strategies and types of leader behavior: aversive, directive, transactional, transformational, and empowering leadership for vertical and shared leadership respectively. In this study, vertical leadership is defined as "the behavior of the appointed team leaders," and shared leadership is defined as "distributed influence from within the team" (Pearce and Sims, 2002, p. 172). Seventy-one separate change management teams participated in this study. Participants were asked to fill out a behavior scale for five styles of leadership. The effectiveness of each team was measured approximately six months later after assessing each leadership behavior. The most important finding of this research was that shared leadership is a more accurate mechanism than vertical leadership as a predictor of team effectiveness. These results show that a conscious strategy of assigning a leadership role to team members is likely to enhance team effectiveness, even though the results may not apply to other types of teams or groups, considering that sample teams were relatively autonomous and experienced on highly complex tasks and were drawn from only one organization.

Sivasubramanium et al. (2002) studied how team leadership predicts levels of group potency and group performance over time. They defined team leadership in terms of "how group members evaluate the influence of the group as opposed to one individual within or external to the group"

(Sivasubramanium et al., 2002, p. 68). Data was collected from 42 groups composed of 182 undergraduate students in a university located in the United States. The participants completed a Team Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (TMLQ), which was developed by Bass and Avolio (1994). The results demonstrated that groups rating themselves high on transformational team leadership behaviors soon after the groups were formed saw themselves as being more potent over time and also achieving a higher level of group performance, even though team leadership was characterized only by the participants' self-assessment. In addition, the collection of potency and team leadership were measured within a relatively short period of time.

On the other hand, other studies reported a comparative analysis of the relative influence of vertical and shared leadership within top management teams (TMTs). Ensley et al. (2006) conducted an empirical study on this topic in the new venture context. They defined shared leadership as "a team process where leadership is carried out by the team as a whole, rather than solely by a single designated individual" (Ensley et al., 2006, p. 220). The participants, including 66 TMTs drawn from Inc. magazine's annual list of America's 500 fastest growing startups and 154 TMTs of startups, were asked to complete a leadership behavior survey designed by Cox (1994). Survey items were slightly modified, however, to reflect the unique aspect of the research. The study's results showed that shared leadership accounts for a variance in performances of new startups better than vertical leadership, but this study was limited by a relatively low response rate (17.6% for study 1 and 33.5% for study 2).

The other study was carried out by Mehra et al. (2006), with 28 sales teams investigating how the network structure of shared leadership perceptions was related to team performance. They defined shared leadership as "a shared, distributed phenomenon in which there can be several (formally appointed and/or emergent) leaders" (Mehra et al., 2006, p. 233). This study used a leadership network diagram and analyzed their social network to examine the level of distributed leadership in sales teams. This research failed to find support for the hypothesis that the more decentralized leadership is across team members, the better the team's performance becomes. However, they suggest that distributed leadership structures can differ with regard to important structural characteristics, and these differences can have important implications for team performance.

Carson, Tesluk, and Marrone (2007) conducted a study to show the different impact of internal and external factors on shared leadership in teams. Internal factors of team environment have three dimensions: shared purpose, social support, and voice, and the external factor as an antecedent condition of shared leadership refers to the level of supportive coaching provided by an external leader. They defined shared leadership as "an emergent team property that results from the distribution of leadership influence across multiple team members" (Carson et al., 2007, p. 1218). The study's participants were recruited from 59 consulting teams in MBA. Each team had a faculty advisor, who was an external coach rather than an internal official leader. To measure team performance, the results of team project were asked to the client. The level of shared leadership was measured with a social network approach by calculating density, which is defined by the total number of relationships shared by team members. The researchers found that internal team environment, external coaching, and supporting behavior had a direct relationship with shared leadership. As a result, shared leadership is a strong positive predictor of a team's performance. However, this study focused only on the antecedent conditions of shared leadership. They suggested that future research should focus on a more detailed understanding of the nature of shared leadership, its development, and boundary conditions on its effectiveness.

In addition, Hoch et al. (2006) reported a study to test whether age diversity and team coordination moderated the relationship between shared leadership and team performances with 96 Dutch individuals in 26 teams in a German consulting firm. The researchers defined shared leadership as "a collective social influence process shared by team members and aimed toward the achievement of one or more common goals" (Hoch et al., 2010). A questionnaire that measured both shared leadership and vertical leadership in teams was administered to gather data. The questionnaire developed by the researchers targeted transformational, transactional, directive, empowering, and aversive leadership behavior. The study revealed that shared leadership predicted team performance, and that both age diversity and coordination in teams moderated the impact of shared leadership on the consulting teams' performance. In particular,

shared leadership was positively related to team performance when age diversity and the level of coordination were low. However, the study involved consulting project teams with a limited range of age, even though age diversity was one of the key variables. Also, a relatively small sample size of 26 teams limited generalization of any group level findings.

More recently, Small et al. (2010) tried to align the conceptual definition of shared leadership with an operational definition. The study also tested the relationship between shared leadership and team performance as an outcome and the relationship between collectivism and trusts as antecedents and shared leadership using this operationalization and a longitudinal design. The definition of shared leadership by this study was "an emergent team process defined by the distribution of leadership functions among multiple team members". (Small et al. 2010, p.203) Business majored 280 students in a public university in the United States participated in the experiment and total 60 teams were comprised and each team had four or five members. Teams were asked to complete eight quarters long business simulation. Network centralization using social network analysis (SNA) was utilized as a measure of shared leadership. Likert scaled questionnaire and coach's assessment were used to measure other variables. The study showed that the shared leadership is positively related to a team performance, and the shared leadership is more likely to be higher when team was fully developed. However, the study left a room for further study of antecedents of shared leadership.

Issues Identified from the Reviews

Through the literature analysis above, five significant issues have been identified: (a) Subtle differences regarding the definition and perspective of shared leadership. Some studies used own their own definition (e.g., Carson et al., 2007), and other studies utilized a broader concept, such as team leadership (e.g., Sivasubramanium et al., 2002). Moreover, most studies characterized shared leadership as a collective influence, which is a contrasting concept to vertical leadership. For this reason, some research included a description of similar concepts, such as team autonomy, self-management, team empowerment, cooperation, and team cognition, which can be confused with shared leadership (e.g., Carson et al., 2007). (b) All empirical studies in this review employed a quantitative research approach, using questionnaires for measuring shared leadership. Basic approaches of measurement vary greatly, however, in composition from one study to another. There were two main approaches for measurement: one utilized a modified version of existing questionnaires, which had been developed for other leadership behaviors, such as directive, transactional, transformational, and empowering (e.g., Pearce & Sims, 2002; Ensley et al., 2006; Hoch et al., 2010). Another approach involved a social network measurement that assessed the pattern of connections, which represents information exchange, power, and effect among team members by social network diagrams (e.g., Mehra et al., 2006; Carson et al., 2007). Differences of definition and measurement of shared leadership found in previous work are described in Table 1. (c) Research analyzed in this literature review relied on internal team members' and/or other stakeholders' judgments of performance. Thus, it is necessary to consider both a common method variance and the ability to obtain an independent evaluation of a team's performance. (d) Most studies were conducted in North America. One took place in Germany. (e) Three studies directly explored the antecedent conditions for improving shared leadership in teams (e.g., Carson et al., 2007; Hoch et al., 2010; Small et al., 2010).

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TABLE 1

DEFINITIONS AND MEASURES FROM PREVIOUS STUDIES OF SHARED LEADERSHIP

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Authors	Definition	Measure
Pearce & Sims (2002)	Distributed influence from within the team (p. 172). Lateral influence among peers (p. 176).	Ratings (aggregated to team level) on behavioral scales for five leadership strategies: aversive, directive, transactional, transformational, and empowering.
Sivasubramanium, Murry, Avolio, & Jung (2002)	Collective influence of members in a team on each other (p. 68). How members of a group evaluate the influence of the group as opposed to one individual within or external to the group (p. 68).	Team Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (TMLQ) aggregated to the team level.
Ensley, Hmieleski, & Pearce (2006)	Team process where leadership is carried out by the team as a whole, rather than solely by a single designated individual (p. 220).	Ratings (aggregated to team level) on behavioral scales for four leadership strategies: directive, transactional, transformational, and empowering.
Mehra, Smith, Dixon, & Robertson (2006)	Shared, distributed phenomenon In which there can be several (formally appointed and/or emergent) leaders (p. 233).	Qualitative coding based on visual analysis of leadership network diagrams.
Carson, Telsuk, & Marrone (2007)	An emergent team property that results from the distribution of leadership influence across multiple team member (p. 1218).	Density analysis based on leadership sociograms of social network theory.
Hoch, Pearce, & Welzel (2010)	A collective social influence Process shared by team members and aimed toward the achievement of one or more common goals (p.105).	Ratings (aggregated to team level) on behavioral scales for five leadership strategies: aversive, directive, transactional, transformational, and empowering.
Small, & Rentsch (2010)	An emergent team process defined by the distribution of leadership functions among multiple team members (p.203).	Social Network Analysis (SNA), Team Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (TMLQ), and Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ)

Implications: Future Discussion Agenda on Shared Leadership

On the basis of five issues identified from the literature, a future agenda for discussing shared leadership can be proposed.

First, the definition of shared leadership should be defined more clearly. Leadership theory must rely on precise definitions of phenomena, but shared leadership is still a relatively primitive term (Pearce et al., 2008). Several articles and practitioner papers use such terms as "distributed leadership," "collective leadership," "team leadership," and "co-leadership" when these actually refer to shared leadership. Some leadership scholars have argued that the major issue regarding the definition of leadership is whether or not it should be viewed as a specialized role or a shared influence process (Yukl, 2002). According to Pearce et al., (2008), however, shared leadership is an explicit attempt to integrate perspectives as a role performed by an individual with the view of leadership as a social process. Additional empirical and theoretical works are certainly needed to introduce shared leadership theory development to meet those demands and to establish a firm definition of shared leadership.

Second, more scientific and reasonable measurement tools are required to measure shared leadership. Previous studies show that three different options are available to measure shared leadership: questionnaires, social network indices, and actor-partner interdependence models (Gockel & Werth, 2010). The problem is that any empirical research using these measures did not assess leadership distribution directly. As an alternative, they assessed whether or not shared leadership exists in a group without considering how well this leadership functioned (Small & Rentsch, 2010). In the research of Carson et al. (2007) and Small et al. (2010), network density was utilized to assess the shared leadership level, but network density reflects the overall quantity of leadership in the team as a proxy value of shared leadership but not its level of distribution. Its value is also limited because quantity of shared leadership cannot explain attribution of shared leadership. Future research should assess how leadership functions are distributed among team members. The research should also capture the quality and nature of leadership offered by each team member (Carson et al., 2007).

Finally, in order to formulate a solid definition and appropriate area of shared leadership, future research is needed to compare the effects of shared leadership in various types of teams, such as knowledge-based work team and task force team, etc. The level of acceptance toward shared leadership can be influenced by characteristics of teams when implementing the concept of shared leadership. According to Pearce et al. (2005), shared leadership is likely to be emerged where "team members are peers of equal status working on a complex task that requires a high level of interdependence and creativity". It can be inferred that team members who work at a hierarchical cultured team are less likely to accept the view of shared leadership, but no one is sure whether or not it is a highly supportive hypothesis until further empirical research investigates under diverse team settings. For instance, the same applies to consulting project team in the management consulting firm or law firm. Every consultants or attorneys have to work within project team as a specialist of each subject which each team-member charged on. In this case, sometimes lateral and collective leadership managed by each team members is more powerful to achieve performance. This is because team-based knowledge worker such as consultant and attorney is to engage in knowledge sharing activities (Reinhardt et al., 2011). Also, providing autonomy to team-based knowledge worker is an effective way to instill job motivation. (Janz et al., 1997)

CONCLUSION

In this study, the holistic perspective of studies regarding shared leadership in teams was used to analyze previous research, point out critical issues, and then synthesize them into a new concept to propose a discussion agenda for future research. Throughout the process, this literature review has identified what we know and what we still need to know about shared leadership.

While we now know more about the complexity and responsibility of workers' tasks, new leadership models are required to embrace the paradigmatic shift from leadership as a hierarchical and formal role by a single leader to leadership as a lateral social process, such as shared leadership (Wassenaar et al., 2010). Is shared leadership then an appropriate solution to enhance team performance in this knowledge-based era? A hint of a possible answer is shown by a comment of Pearce and Barkus (2004):

> The issue is not vertical leadership or shared leadership. Rather, the issues are: (1) When is leadership most appropriately shared? (2) How does one develop shared leadership? and (3) How does one utilize both vertical and shared leadership to leverage the capabilities of knowledge workers? (p.55)

As indicated by several studies in this paper (e.g., Ensley et al., 2006; Pearce & Sims, 2002; Sivasubramanium et al., 2002), adopting both shared and hierarchical leadership work synergistically to strengthen team effectiveness.

The key contribution of shared leadership, therefore, is not in offering a replacement for other traditional leadership concepts or theories but in enabling the recognition of a variety source of leadership in a more integrated approach. Moreover, this contribution can be more closely completed by a robust

definition of shared leadership, reliable measurement tools to measure attribution and phenomenon by shared leadership within a group, and more empirical studies under various contexts.

Today's organizations increasingly rely on teams to achieve certain level of performance, quality, and adaptive change. Also, in this context, effective leadership in teams is a critical trigger to make performance. Therefore, if the concept of shared leadership will be adapted to practical field after due consideration in the academic field, it can be another key trigger to make high level of performance, quality, and positive change in the team level.

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