The Effects of Shared Leadership on Team Dynamics in Six Sigma Teams

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationships and impacts that shared leadership development has on two team dynamic conditions during a Six Sigma project, including internal team environment (cohesion) and external coaching style. The study seeks to understand mitigating factors that affect the relationships and presence of variables. It concludes that shared leadership has unique relationships with the two-team dynamic variables. Shared leadership also has a statistically significant relationship with the internal team environment at all phases of DMAIC, but only in the measure, analyze, and improve phases when examined with external coaching. Several mitigating factors impact these relationships and variables’ presence, including: task complexities and deliverables, decision-making, a coach’s traits, presence of the three team cohesion dimensions, etc. A direct relationship exists between shared leadership and decision-making. This relationship impacts all the other relationships. Finally, the degree and style of external coaching has a critical role in relationship development.

KEYWORDS

Continuous Improvement, Shared Leadership, Six Sigma, Team Dynamics, Team Performance

INTRODUCTION

Review of research performed by Carson, Marrone and Tesluk, (2007) indicates that little research addresses the shift to internally distributed forms of shared leadership. Some research, however, does encourage shared leadership amongst team members. Gibb’s (1954) argument that a group should contain leadership qualities was the first of its kind and was known as “distributed leadership” (Carson et al., 2007, p. 1217). Furthermore, research shows that businesses can gain a competitive edge, as it increases commitment for personal and organizational resources that take on complex tasks by sharing information and being open to mutual influences (Carson et al., 2007, p. 1218).

Koschzecz’s (2009) research finds that organizations with shared leadership perform better than those relying on single individuals for leadership. One concludes that organizations perform more efficiently when implementing shared leadership. These opinions challenge conventional thoughts about leadership, however, review of existing research demonstrates a gap in empirical work on shared leadership.

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Problem Background

Investigative research hasn’t been conducted on the relationship between shared leadership and internal, and external team environmental conditions and shared leadership. The relationship between internal and external environmental conditions on shared leadership dynamic in real-world Six Sigma teams as they relate to team dynamics also isn’t researched.

Thus, this research studies the relationships between input environmental conditions and shared leadership in real-life Healthcare industry Six Sigma teams. The problem statement incorporates the need for a longitudinal study by stating, in the context of Healthcare Six Sigma teams, there exists a relationship between shared leadership and each phase of the DMAIC structure. In addition, input environmental conditions of “internal team environment” and “external coaching” have relationships with the degree of shared leadership present. The key metrics to measure the outcome of this research include: the centralization level of interactions between team members and the perceived influence that members have on each other, satisfaction levels with the internal team environmental conditions, and the level of internal member satisfaction with the external environmental conditions.

Research Purpose and Contribution

The research builds knowledge in understanding relationships that shared leadership has with internal and external environmental variables in Six Sigma teams. By identifying the influences and relationships that both internal and external environments have on shared leadership development, Healthcare is better equipped to evaluate a team’s degree of shared leadership at any point in a project. If the team’s degree of shared leadership was not at the proper level, this study helps identify methods that Healthcare can utilize to alleviate the situation. Thus, management can more effectively guide a team, thereby ensuring optimal shared leadership that drives both efficacy and efficiency.

In order for shared leadership to emerge in real-life organizations and industries, two activities are required. Primarily, team members should not only aim to motivate, support, and direct, but should also exhibit leadership qualities. The second activity that is required would be that leadership must gain complete compliance from several team members. Team members should recognize that it is constructive to both influence each other and to accept this influence for both activities to successfully take place (Carson et al., 2007, p. 1232). Based on these activities, Carson et al.’s (2007) research found two critical variables that impact shared leadership development. The first is “internal team environment,” which accounts for support to develop shared leadership over time. The second variable is “external coaching,” which involves supportive coaching provided by an external leader (Carson et al., 2007, p. 1232; Daim, 2012). Despite this research, these variables haven’t been extensively studied nor linked to the development and evolution of shared leadership throughout project execution. Therefore, this research identifies the relationship(s) that internal team environment and external coaching have on the degree of shared leadership in Healthcare Six Sigma teams.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 performs a review of existing, relevant research. Section 3 outlines the methodology developed to execute the study while Section 4 details the findings as they relate to the methodology. Section 5 discusses the results in depth in relation to the main hypotheses and objectives. Section 6 presents a summary of the study as well as contributions to existing research, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Shared Leadership Basics

Barnes et al. (2013) demonstrate the difficulties in bringing about shared leadership in an hierarchical organization. The research is conducted based on Jerry Garcia from the Grateful Dead’s influence on business management and leadership. He proves how shared leadership has potential in traditional organizational settings, and that transformational, servant, and authentic leadership create support for
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