

Examining the Influence of Shared and Servant Leadership on Organizational Performance in Sport for Development and Peace

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Aim

Scholars have called for increased consideration of alternative leadership theories in sport, including collective or shared leadership (Jones, Wegner, Bunds, Edwards, & Bocarro, 2018). For instance, Welty Peachey and Burton (2017) conceptualized that the humanitarian and social-focused nature of organizations involved in Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) may require different leadership approaches compared to other types of sport organizations. To date, however, no studies have empirically examined the relationship between different leadership styles and organizational performance in SDP to help identify suitable leadership approach(es) that allow practitioners to better manage their programs for sustainable program outcomes. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the influence of shared and servant leadership on organizational performance in SDP. The following hypotheses were tested:

H1a: Shared leadership will be positively associated with organizational performance.

H1b: Shared leadership will be a stronger predictor of organizational performance than servant leadership.

H2a: Servant leadership will be positively related to shared leadership.

H2b: Servant leadership will be positively associated with organizational performance.

H3a: Human resources capacity will be positively related to shared leadership.

H3b: Shared leadership will be a stronger predictor of organizational performance than human resources capacity.

Theoretical Background

For the purpose of this study, shared leadership was 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 organizational goals” (Pearce & Conger, 2003, p.1). Prior literature in other disciplines have identified a range of different antecedents and outcomes associated with shared leadership (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007). However, empirical research examining the relationship between servant leadership and shared leadership as well as their relative contribution to organizational performance remains scarce in sport management. Servant leadership refers to an altruistic-based leadership philosophy centered around caring, developing, and empowering others, which may be particularly valuable in SDP organizations (Welty Peachey & Burton, 2017). There is also a consensus among scholars that organizational capacity challenges prevent SDP entities from achieving intended outcomes (Svensson, Andersson, & Faulk, 2018). Therefore, it was hypothesized that human resources capacity would be significantly associated with both shared leadership and organizational performance.

Methodology

An electronic study invitation was delivered to 1,120 staff members based on a review of the websites of all (known) SDP organizations in the United States via their organizational staff listing pages. A total of 215 respondents (19.2%) including 115 executive directors and 100 followers involved in SDP organizations in the United States completed the survey. The sample represented the diverse organizational and program foci of the population. The 20-

item Shared Professional Leadership Inventory for Teams (SPLIT) instrument was used to assess shared leadership. Servant leadership was measured using the SL-7 scale. Perceived organizational performance was measured using Delaney and Huselid's (1996) seven-item performance scale. In addition, human resources capacity was measured using a 14-item subscale based on prior literature investigating capacity levels of SDP organizations (Svensson et al., 2018). The reliability coefficients exceeded recommended acceptable levels. Data were analyzed with through a series of regression analyses.

Results and Discussion

The result of the multiple regression analysis showed that the three variables explained a significant amount of variance in perceived organizational performance ($R^2 = .53$). Shared leadership was the most contributing factor ($\beta = .523$), but human resources capacity ($\beta = .251$) was also a significant predictor of perceived organizational performance. However, the multiple regression analysis also revealed a non-significant relationship between servant leadership and organizational performance when controlling for shared leadership and human resources capacity ($\beta = .083$). Nevertheless, servant leadership was a significant predictor of shared leadership ($R^2 = .47$). The results of this study indicate the importance of shared leadership in SDP and that simply having human resources capacity is not sufficient, rather how SDP human resources function within SDP organizations is critical in terms of how successful an organization will be in terms of performance. Nevertheless, our findings also suggest that servant leadership and human resources capacity are critical antecedents for shared leadership in SDP. The findings of this study advance our understanding of leadership in SDP (Jones et al., 2018; Welty Peachey & Burton, 2016) by identifying the influence of shared and servant leadership on perceived organizational performance. Furthermore, this study also extends the broader sport management literature by providing the first quantitative assessment of antecedents and outcomes of shared leadership in nonprofit sport organizations. Implications of these findings include the need for leaders to enact servant leadership behavior as well as to actively seek opportunities to participate in targeted capacity-building programs in order for more shared leadership to be developed, which in turn can result in increased organizational performance. Future studies are needed to examine the potential influence of other capacities and leadership styles on shared leadership as well as organizational performance.

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