



## Shared leadership and team performance: testing the mediating roles of knowledge sharing, cognitive and affective trust in team

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**Abstract.** *Purpose.* The first aim of this study was to test the relationship between shared leadership and team performance. The second aim was to examine how much this relationship can be mediated by knowledge sharing, cognitive-based, and affective-based trust in the team. *Method.* In this study, a sample of 186 full-time employees (76.3% men and 23.7% women) of an Iranian organization were recruited by a simple random sampling technique. Participants were asked to complete scales on shared leadership, cognitive-based trust in the team, affective-based trust in the team, knowledge sharing, and team performance effectiveness and productivity. *Findings.* The path analysis using structural equation modeling (SEM) showed a significant positive relationship between shared leadership and team performance (i.e., effectiveness and productivity). Moreover, it was revealed that knowledge-sharing and affective-based trust in teams significantly mediate the relationship between shared leadership and team performance. However, the mediation role of cognitive-based trust was not supported. Finally, it was found that cognitive-based trust mediates the relationship between shared leadership and knowledge sharing. *Research limitation.* We used a cross-sectional research design to analyze the data which may have limited the generalizability of our findings. *Practical implementation.* A shared leadership style can be suggested for team-building programs for people/managers and companies working in teams. *Originality.* This study suggests shared leadership as a potential source that can enhance a sense of affective-based trust and sharing knowledge in teams, leading to higher levels of team performance effectiveness.

**Keywords:** shared leadership, cognitive-based trust in team, affective-based trust in team, knowledge sharing, team performance.

## Introduction

Today, teams play a critical role in organizational performance (Tasa et al., 2007; Buchori, 2021). Teams bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the workplace and effectively help organizations overcome the complexity of today's work challenges (Torrente et al., 2012; Baard et al., 2014; Han et al., 2017). However, teams always have no satisfactory performance. Team performance is an objective criterion indicating whether a team effectively works to accomplish team-related tasks and achieve intended goals (Turner, Müller, 2005). Accordingly, considering the factors that may affect team performance effectiveness and productivity is essential. Some researchers have aimed to identify these factors (for example: Bohórquez et al., 2022; Edgar et al., 2021; Rivaldo, 2021; Siu et al., 2023). However, the present study looks closely and systematically at the mentioned issue.

Leadership has been known to have a critical role in determining team performance in dealing with complex situations and achieving the goals of organizational teams (Yang et al., 2012; Anantatmula, 2010; Jiang, 2014). Among different styles of leadership, shared leadership is more likely to impact team effectiveness and productivity since teams consist of specialists, and shared leadership can provide the possibility to distribute leadership influence and responsibilities among all members (Carson et al., 2007; Wu et al., 2020). Shared leadership is then considered a dynamic, interactive, and group-level condition of leadership where members collectively exert influence and lead each other toward achieving team goals (Pearce, 2004). Especially where the complexity of knowledge work is high and the members are highly interdependent to perform tasks (Huang, 2013). Shared leadership has been considered a complex and time-consuming process in which the interpersonal interaction of members is more critical to the team's ongoing success than the traditional vertical leadership style.

Literature has shown that a series of factors moderate the relationship between shared leadership and team performance, such as intragroup trust and knowledge-oriented interdependence, organizations increasingly adopt shared approaches to leadership and call for research related to shared leadership consequences (Casimir et al., 2006; Hoch, 2014; Pearce, Manz, 2005; Scott-Young et al., 2019). Although there have been studies examining the relationship between shared leadership and team performance (Lorinkova et al., 2013; Nicolaidis et al., 2014; Ji et al., 2022; Siangchokyoo, Klinger, 2022), little has been known about the mechanisms by which shared leadership is linked to team performance effectiveness and productivity. It is necessary to examine the effects of each factor on other factors in a model since factors like trust among team members and knowledge sharing increasingly improve team performance effectiveness and productivity. Also, they have a relationship with shared leadership (Imam, Zaheer, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021).

Hence, we first aimed to examine the relationship between shared leadership and team performance (i.e., effectiveness and productivity) and second explored the mediation role of knowledge sharing and cognition and affective-based trust in teams in the relationship between shared leadership and team performance.

### Shared leadership and team performance

Many scholars have concentrated on the relationship between shared leadership and team performance since sharing leadership emerged (Nicolaidis et al., 2014). Shared leadership has been 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 or both" (Conger, Pearce, 2003, p 136). Indeed, shared leadership is a dynamic multidirectional social process and collective activity that can give meaning to people's collective experiences (Fletcher, Oaks, 2003). Therefore, in a shared leadership style, each member feels like a leader rather than being led by

a single hand, and leaders emphasize fixing shared project goals (Kozlowski, Chao, 2018). In this regard, C. L. Pearce has suggested that having an opportunity to participate in leadership is crucial in attaining team project goals and enhances team members' potential for achieving those goals (Pearce, 2004).

Moreover, all members work collectively to facilitate group processes and improve performance (Kolb, 2011). In a situation with shared leadership, team members would discuss the best possibility to complete the task and — if allowed to decide in a shared manner — what, when, and how to do things rather than having one person make decisions for the whole a team (Imam, Zaheer, 2021). In this scenario, they could all use their skills better. Therefore, scholars have emphasized the concept of shared leadership (i.e., collective leadership, distributed leadership) because it can affect team performance, especially as teams become more complex (Pearce, Sims, 2000; Pearce, 2004; Jani, 2011; Goffnett, 2020; Castellano et al., 2021; Han et al., 2021).

Leaders who are likely to share more information and knowledge within the team and, in turn, improve information sharing among multiple team members can ultimately enhance the effectiveness and productivity of team performance. Based on this, we have developed the first hypothesis as below:

*Hypothesis 1: Shared leadership is positively associated with team performance.*

### **The mediating role of knowledge sharing on the relationship between shared leadership and team performance**

C.-Y. Chiu with colleagues argue that a well-developed team structure does not guarantee a high collective performance (Chiu et al., 2016). As social capital theory says, talent is also required among the members. Team performance increases when its composition makes the availability of tangible and intangible resources possible (Oh et al., 2006). Hence, it is expected that the effectiveness of a shared leadership structure is based on the information shared among members.

In implementing the shared leadership style, responsibilities are distributed among the team members and instead of the formal position of individuals, their knowledge and competencies regarding the ongoing task are essential (Goksoy, 2016). Therefore, people are interdependent and need extensive knowledge sharing as one alone may not possess all the knowledge required to complete a task (Imam, Zaheer, 2021). Moreover, employees who work in a workplace that requires a higher degree of knowledge sharing are more likely to mobilize their inventive potential and improve their knowledge and skills due to the collective learning process (Park, Lee, 2014).

P. H. Christensen defines knowledge sharing as “identifying existing and accessible knowledge, to transfer and apply it to solve specific tasks better, faster and cheaper than they would otherwise have been solved” (Christensen, 2007, p. 37). Therefore, sharing knowledge, ideas, and information in a team leads to faster problem-solving rather than seeking help from outside the team, which may cause extra costs. According to shared mental models (SMM), it has been suggested that team efficacy is affected by shared mental demonstration of team tasks, responsibility, and attitude because it refines harmonization and normative values for shared efforts (Mohammed et al., 2000). The shared mental model in teams refers to team members' responsibilities and functions, communication processes, and how they engage with one another depending on each participant's abilities and interests. Therefore, finding ways by which information is shared enhance team performance because it leads to a shared mental model.

Shared leadership can facilitate knowledge sharing in several ways. When people perceive a distributed leadership role among themselves, they are more motivated to share information (Usmanova et al., 2021; Pearce, 2004). Therefore, shared leadership facilitates knowledge sharing since the leader with formal authority is not the only person who directs the team process, and everyone may act as a leader and share his knowledge and expertise depending on the ongoing topic

(Houghton et al., 2003). Accordingly, one may be asked to share available information and knowledge with other team members to achieve a collective goal (Srivastava et al., 2006). Sharing information and expertise improves the team's performance, particularly in a shared leadership context (Hoch, 2014). Given the mediation role of knowledge sharing, we hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 2: Knowledge sharing mediates the positive relationship between shared leadership and team performance.*

### **The mediating role of cognitive and affective-based trust in team on the relationship between shared leadership and team performance**

Trust is fundamental for effective team performance (Wu et al., 2020) this study aims to advance our understanding along the many dimensions of the shared leadership phenomenon: its antecedents, moderators, and consequences. In this article, we provide a critical and comprehensive analysis of the extant literature and generate an integrated framework that presents seven hypotheses and five research questions. We then empirically test this framework via a systematic meta-analysis from 40 studies (team  $n = 3,019$ ). Research has shown that higher levels of trust in a team are associated with higher collaboration among team members, team success, and team performance (Bond-Barnard et al., 2018; DeOrtentiis et al., 2013; Gillespie, Mann, 2004; Stephens, Carmeli, 2016). D. Gambetta defined trust as people's belief that "another member will perform an action that is beneficial or at least not detrimental to consider engaging in some form of cooperation with him" (Gambetta, 1988, p. 217). When team members trust other team members, their bond with other members becomes strong encouraging them to perceive themselves as one unit that tries to achieve goals (DeOrtentiis et al., 2013). However, failure to develop trust in the team affects the team's performance and eventually causes low performance and effectiveness (Lencioni, 2002).

In a meta-analytic review, two different types of trust in leadership were conceptualized: affective and cognitive-based trust (Dirks, Ferrin, 2002). Affective-based trust refers to a social and emotional exchange-based relationship based on care, concern, and mutual obligation among leaders and followers. When leaders show respect, care, and concern to subordinates, they reciprocate this action by showing more desired behaviors and emotional attachment (Dirks, Ferrin, 2002). When leaders incorporate employees in decision-making and leading processes, affective-based trust increases, leading to more desired behaviors and team effectiveness. Besides, the cognitive-based trust approach is concerned with the leader's character. "This dimension is typically reflected in a belief or expectation that the referent is reliable, has integrity, is predictable, will tell the truth, will act in a fair or just manner, and so forth" (Dirks, Ferrin, 2002, p. 628). They observed that "trust-related concerns about a leader's character are important because the leader may have authority to make decisions that significantly impact a follower and the follower's ability to achieve his/her goals (e.g., promotions, pay, work assignments, layoffs)" (Dirks, Ferrin 2002, p. 628). When people cognitively trust their leaders, they can focus on their work and perform better.

Employees' inclination to trust a leader is influenced by the function and character of the leader (Heyns, Rothmann, 2015). In a shared leadership context, sharing responsibilities and tasks among the team members will enhance respect, dignity, integrity, and trust among the members. In a shared leadership context, team members assume themselves as leaders and consequently take greater ownership of the work. It unites them to accomplish their goals and trust each other (Daspit et al., 2013). Therefore, sharing and setting goals collectively in a shared leadership setting improves cognitive and effective-based trust and increases the likelihood of team success (Hansen et al., 2002; Imam, Zaheer, 2021; Jong et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2021; Zhu, Lee, 2017).

To sum up, team trust is a critical outcome of shared leadership because first, sharing leadership role leads to more communication in the group, which strengthens bonds of social exchange among

employees (Aime et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2022; Drescher et al., 2014). Moreover, this social exchange helps solving the imbalance states between team members and provides conditions in which people can convey their trustworthiness and develop trust in their colleagues (Drescher et al., 2014). Therefore, shared leadership develops trust. Thus, we hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 3: Cognitive-based trust in a team mediates the positive relationship between shared leadership and team performance.*

*Hypothesis 4: Affective-based trust in a team mediates the positive relationship between shared leadership and team performance.*

### Further study

The high trust among team members encourages sharing information through informal methods (Lesko, Hollingsworth, 2010). Research indicated that the degree of trust between team members has a significant relationship with knowledge acquisition (Han et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2022). That means a low level of trust may mean that team members prefer to avoid being vulnerable within the group and not participating in interdependent activities (Lin et al., 2009; Maurer, 2010). Therefore, increasing trust in a team is associated with higher knowledge-sharing among members (Wiewiora et al., 2014). When team members trust each other, they are more likely to transmit knowledge and information.

Therefore, in a shared leadership context, cognitive and affective-based trust increasingly lead to the sharing of knowledge and information, which finally enhances team performance effectiveness and productivity. Hence, we study the mediating effect of cognitive and affective-based trust and knowledge sharing in the relations as below:

*Hypothesis 5: Cognitive-based trust in a team mediates the positive relationship between shared leadership and knowledge sharing.*

*Hypothesis 6: Affective-based trust in a team mediates the positive relationship between shared leadership and knowledge sharing.*

*Hypothesis 7: Knowledge sharing mediates the positive relationship between cognitive-based trust in team and team performance.*

*Hypothesis 8: Knowledge sharing mediates the positive relationship between affective-based trust in team and team performance.*

According to the discussed literature and hypotheses, Fig. 1 illustrates the study's conceptual model.

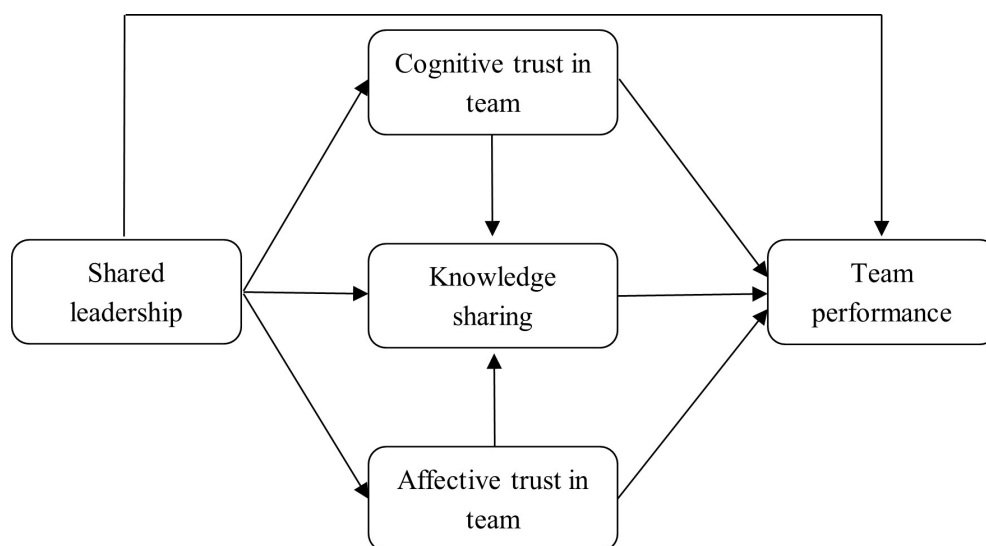


Figure 1. Theoretical model

## Method

### Sample and procedure

To test our hypotheses, using a simple random sampling method, 200 full-time middle-level managers who were a member of a team were invited from a servant company located in Rasht, Iran, to participate in our study. 186 completed surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 93 %. Participants included 76.3 % men and 23.7 % women managers. The mean work experience of the participants was approximately 18 years ( $SD = 8.36$ ).

To collect data, first, a guideline was provided on how to distribute the scales among the managers and to collect them correctly. The guidelines included the study purpose, the importance of genuinely responding, and the procedures for collecting data. Afterward, the scales were presented to the managers, and they ensured that the items of each scale were simple and understandable for them. Then, all participants were ensured that their personal information and responses were confidential. The data collection process lasted almost two months.

### Measurements

We performed five scales to collect our study's data. All items of the scales were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). The alpha reliability coefficients of the scales have been reported in Table 1. Following, the details of them have been discussed:

#### *Shared leadership*

Shared leadership was measured with a scale developed by A. Grille and S. Kauffeld (2015). The scale contains 20 items measuring five aspects including task leadership orientation, relation leadership orientation, change leadership orientation, and micropolitical leadership orientation, each aspect with 5 items. Respectively, an example item for each aspect is: "As a team, we clearly assign tasks", "As a team we take sufficient time to address each other's concerns", and "We help each other to correctly understand ongoing processes in our team", and "We use networks in order to support our team's work". We conducted a set of confirmatory factor analyses to test whether the scale represents four distinct constructs. The results showed that compared to the one-factor model ( $\chi^2 (170) = 263.54, p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.934; TLI = 0.926; RMSEA = 0.074; SRMR = 0.045), the four-factor model ( $\chi^2 (164) = 226.44, p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.956; TLI = 0.949; RMSEA = 0.062; SRMR = 0.041) resulted in a significantly better fit (Satorra—Bentler  $\Delta\chi^2 (6) = 29.156, p < 0.001$ ).

#### *Cognition and affective trust in team*

We adopted these scales from P. Kanawattanachaia and Y. Yoo to assess trust among team members (Kanawattanachaia, Yoo, 2002). Any of these scales included four items. Respectively, an example of an item is "most of my teammates approach his/her job with professionalism and dedication" and "I can talk freely to my team about difficulties I am having at work and know that my team will want to listen". To examine whether the scale measures two distinct constructs, using a set of confirmatory factor analyses, we compared the two-factor model with a one-factor model. The results showed that compared to the one-factor model ( $\chi^2 (27) = 60.45, p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.921; TLI = 0.895; RMSEA = 0.111; SRMR = 0.056), the two-factor model ( $\chi^2 (26) = 43.759, p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.958; TLI = 0.942; RMSEA = 0.083; SRMR = 0.053) provides a better fit (Satorra—Bentler  $\Delta\chi^2 (1) = 10.942, p < 0.01$ ) to the data.

#### *Knowledge sharing*

We measured knowledge sharing of managers with five items from C. E. Connolly with colleagues. A sample of an item is "My teammate explains everything very thoroughly" (Connolly et al., 2012).

### Team performance

Team performance was measured by 15 items including 10 items for the aspect of effectiveness and five items for the aspect of efficiency. This scale was adopted by M. Hoegl and H. G. Gemuenden (2001). Respectively, an example of an item for each aspect is “The customer was satisfied with the quality of the project result” and “Overall, the project was done in a cost-efficient way”. To examine whether the scale represents two distinct subscales, we ran two confirmatory factor analyses and the results showed that the two-factor model ( $\chi^2(89) = 138.71, p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.935; TLI = 0.923; RMSEA = 0.075; SRMR = 0.056) fits to the observed data significantly better (Satorra—Bentler  $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 14.584, p < 0.001$ ) than the one-factor model ( $\chi^2(90) = 158.49, p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.910; TLI = 0.895; RMSEA = 0.087; SRMR = 0.059).

### Data analysis

The research hypotheses were examined using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM method provided the possibility to test the path coefficients of the hypothesized direct and indirect relationships between the variables of interest. To analyze the data and examine the direct and indirect hypothesized paths, we used Mplus statistical software version 7 (Muthén, Muthén, 2017) and evaluated model fit using five indicators including the chi-square goodness of fit test, comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker — Lewis index (TLI); root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root-mean square residual (SRMR). Using the SEM approach, all the hypothesized paths were simultaneously tested. Accordingly, 95% confidence intervals for the indirect paths were calculated using the Monte Carlo Method (Preacher, Selig, 2012). Moreover, a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted to evaluate the factorial validity of the critical study variables. Accordingly, the five-factor model was compared with several possible models with fewer factors. due to the cross-sectional nature of the collected data, Harman’s one-factor model test (Podsakoff et al., 2003) was applied to test whether the common method bias might be a problem.

## Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations. Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, Cronbach’s alphas, and correlations of the study variables.

Table 1. Correlations and descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean (SD)	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Gender	1.23 (.42)	-	-									
2 Organizational tenure	17.68 (8.36)	-	.22**	-								
3 Task-oriented leadership	3.94 (.68)	.87	.01	.15*	-							
4 Relation-oriented leadership	3.82 (.74)	.89	-.01	.16*	.81**	-						
5 Change-oriented leadership	3.87 (.71)	.90	-.02	.12	.75**	.79**	-					
6 Micropolitic-oriented leadership	3.72 (.74)	.86	-.03	.11	.73**	.74**	.79**	-				
7 Cognitive trust in team	3.72 (.82)	.87	.06	.08	.58**	.64**	.66**	.62**	-			
8 Affective trust in team	3.78 (.76)	.89	-.11	.17*	.61**	.70**	.71**	.61**	.72**	-		
9 Knowledge sharing	3.70 (.77)	.90	.01	.07	.64**	.95**	.68**	.62**	.69**	.69**	-	
10 Team effectiveness	3.82 (.62)	.92	-.04	.17*	.62**	.68**	.62**	.59**	.62**	.67**	.67**	-
11 Team productivity	3.74 (.68)	.88	-.02	.12	.56**	.63**	.57**	.56**	.65**	.62**	.64**	.82**

Note:  $N = 186$ ; \* —  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* —  $p < 0.01$ .

To evaluate the construct validity of the key variables of the study, we applied a series of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The results demonstrated that the hypothesized five-factor model fit the data better than the four-factor model (Satorra — Bentler  $\Delta\chi^2(4) = 24.072, p < 0.001$ ) and other possible models. These results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of confirmatory factor analysis

Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2 (df)$
1 Hypothesized model (five-factor model)	219.659	148	1.42	.07	.954	.942	.046	-
2 Four-factor model (CTT and ATT combined into one factor)	241.163	152	1.44	.077	.943	.929	.047	24.07*** (4)
3 Three-factor model (CTT, ATT and KS combined into one factor)	244.66	155	1.44	.076	.943	.930	.055	23.67*** (7)
4 Two-factor (SL, CTT, ATT and KS combined into one factor)	263.12	157	1.47	.082	.933	.918	.050	39.77*** (9)
5 One-factor model	356.02	158	1.65	.112	.874	.849	.055	128.39*** (10)

*Note.* SL = Shared Leadership; CTT = Cognitive-based Trust in Team; ATT = Affective-based Trust in Team; KS = Knowledge Sharing; RMSEA = Root-Mean-square Error of Approximation (RMSEA values equal to or < 0.05 indicates good fit; RMSEA values between 0.05 and 0.08 indicates fair fit); CFI = Comparative Fit Index (CFI values > 0.90 indicates good fit); TLI = Tucker — Lewis Index (TLI values > 0.90 indicates good fit); SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR values equal to or < 0.05 indicates good fit).

Considering the data were collected from the same subjects in a cross-sectional survey, the data might be subject to common method biases. We conducted Harman's one-factor model test to examine this possibility by including the 49 items collected from the same source in one model. We compared its model fit indices with the measurement model. The results showed that the one-factor model with all self-reported items provided a poor fit with the data ( $\chi^2 (1127) = 2163.312$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.92$ , CFI = 0.726, TLI = 0.714, RMSEA = 0.096, SRMR = 0.076; compared to the measurement model (Satorra—Bentler  $\Delta\chi^2 (36) = 494.772$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, it is concluded that the common method variance did not significantly bias our results.

### Test of hypotheses

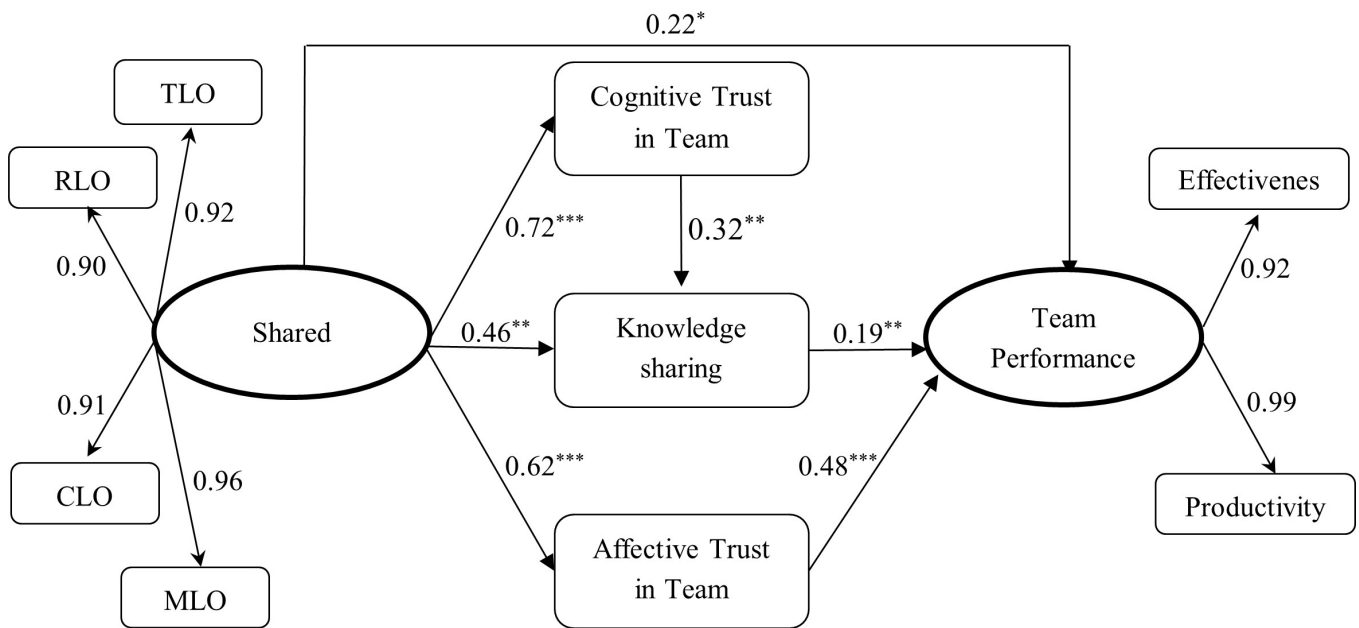
SEM analysis was conducted to examine all the direct and indirect relationships simultaneously. According to the acceptable fit indices suggested by L. T. Hu and P. M. Bentler (1999), the examined model provided a good fit to the observed data ( $\chi^2(21) = 20.099$ , CFI = 0.991, TLI = 0.982, RMSEA = 0.058, SRMR = 0.029). Table 3 presents the results for the overall research model, and Figure 2 presents the significant path coefficients yielded by SEM. The results showed that shared leadership is significantly related to team performance. This finding indicates that managers with higher levels of shared leadership approach reported higher levels of team performance ( $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). *Hypothesis 1* was then supported. The results also showed that higher levels of shared leadership are significantly associated with higher knowledge sharing and cognitive and affective trust in the team.

The model provided evidence for the indirect relationship between shared leadership and team performance via knowledge sharing and affective trust in the team, supporting *Hypothesis 2* ( $\beta = 0.088$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , 95% confidence interval [CI] = 0.019 to 0.157) and *Hypothesis 4* ( $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI = 0.155 to 0.452), respectively. These findings indicate that managers with higher levels of shared leadership experience better team performance through higher knowledge sharing and affective trust in their teams. The indirect relationship between shared leadership and team performance via cognitive the trust in team was insignificant. Therefore, *Hypothesis 3* was not supported.

The results support *Hypothesis 5*, indicating that shared leadership is significantly associated with higher knowledge sharing via higher levels of cognitive trust in the team ( $\beta = 0.234$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , 95% CI = 0.056 to 0.412). However, the model did not provide evidence for *Hypothesis 6* (the indirect relationship between shared leadership and knowledge sharing via affective trust in the team) and *Hypothesis 7 and 8* (the indirect relationships between the two aspects of trust in a team and team performance via knowledge sharing).

Finally, we compared the examined partial mediation model with a full mediation model in which the direct path between shared leadership and team performance was excluded. The results

showed that compared to the full mediation model (log-likelihood = -506.910; Akaike information criterion [AIC] = 1069.821; Bayesian information criterion [BIC] = 1142.765, scaling correction factor = 1.518; number of free parameters = 28), the partial mediation model (log-likelihood = -503.938; AIC = 1065.875; BIC = 1141.425, scaling correction factor = 1.510; number of free parameters = 29) provides a significantly better fit to the data ( $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 4.466, p < 0.05$ ). This finding indicates partial mediation roles of knowledge sharing, cognitive trust in the team, and affective trust in the team on the relationship between shared leadership and team performance. Therefore, it is concluded that



these three variables are not the only mechanisms that link shared leadership to team performance.

Figure 2. Path coefficients of the hypothesized relationships

Table 3. Results of the indirect influences of all variables

Variables	Estimate (standardized estimate)	SE	t	p	Lower	Upper
SL on TP (H1)	.221 (.244)	.105	2.108*	.035	.016	.427
SL on KS	.465 (.420)	.127	3.660**	.000	.216	.715
SL on CTT	.726 (.720)	.097	7.474***	.000	.536	.917
SL on ATT	.625 (.706)	.083	7.522***	.000	.462	.788
KS on TP	.189 (.231)	.069	2.757**	.006	.055	.323
CTT on TP	.003 (.004)	.087	.037	.971	-.167	.173
ATT on TP	.485 (.474)	.120	4.053***	.000	.251	.720
CTT on KS	.323 (.294)	.111	2.907**	.004	.105	.540
ATT on KS	.165 (.132)	.129	1.277	.202	-.088	.419
SL on TP via KS (H2)	.088	.035	2.509*	.012	.019	.157
SL on TP via CTT (H3)	.002	.063	.037	.971	-.121	.126
SL on TP via ATT (H4)	.303	.076	4.004***	.000	.155	.452
SL on KS via CTT (H5)	.234	.091	2.581*	.010	.056	.412
SL on KS via ATT (H6)	.103	.088	1.265	.206	-.057	.263
CTT on TP via KS (H7)	.061	.033	1.823	.068	-.005	.127
ATT on TP via KS (H8)	.031	.028	1.113	.266	-.024	.086

Note: All paths were simultaneously examined in one model. SL = Shared Leadership, TP = Team Performance, KS = Knowledge Sharing, CTT = Cognitive-based Trust in Team, ATT = Affective-based Trust in Team. \* -  $p < .05$  (two-tailed). \*\* -  $p < .01$  (two-tailed). \*\*\* -  $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

## Discussion

According to the shared leadership theory, distributing leadership responsibilities among people can lead to good results especially when people are mature and experts (Castellano et al., 2021; Goffnett, 2020; Grille, Kauffeld, 2015; Grille et al., 2015; Han et al., 2021; Jani, 2011; Kozlowski, Chao, 2018). This study's findings showed a positive and significant relationship between shared leadership and team performance. It means that in a shared leadership style, team members share leadership roles that provide conditions and mechanisms for better and more effective performance. E. Lawler and C. G. Worley pointed out three advantages of shared leadership. First, it provides the possibility to distribute knowledge and influence across members and allows a quick collective response to information without a hierarchy top-down organizational direction. Second, it may develop members' leadership and management skills by involving them in implementing strategy, creating value, and other tasks in the organization. Third, leaders at different organizational who understand the external environment and the organization's internal capabilities are seen as important trends for corporate change (Lawler, Worley, 2006).

Accordingly, shared leadership can improve team performance because each team member acts as a leader and tries to assign tasks well, shares their ideas for accomplishing the tasks, and has a close relationship supporting each other in different and challenging situations. Also sharing leadership gives meaning to the collective experiences of team members (Fletcher, Oaks, 2003). This way, people lead each other to achieve the team's goals. They can respond to situations more quickly, and it facilitates group processes and improves team performance.

Regarding the second aim of this study, the findings aligned with the findings of many studies which supported that knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between shared leadership and team performance (Mohammed et al., 2000; Usmanova et al., 2021; Pearce 2004; Srivastava et al., 2006; Hoch, 2014). Other studies have shown that all members are responsible for the results of a team (Zhang et al., 2021; Christensen, 2007). Therefore, team members need to share their information and experience to improve each other's knowledge and skills, encouraging them to enhance their performance (Usmanova et al., 2021; Park, Lee, 2014). In other words, when people share leadership and feel like leaders, they share information, responsibilities, and tasks. It causes shared mental models among team members because they have shared mental demonstrations of team tasks, responsibilities, attitudes, and functions (Mohammed et al., 2000). In this way, they understand how they engage with one another according to each other's abilities and interests. Therefore, since sharing leadership between all team members leads to sharing knowledge and information, a shared mental model occurs, and it can help enhance team performance.

Also, the findings showed that affective-based trust in the team mediates the positive and significant relationship between shared leadership and team performance. As the concept of trust was presented in the literature, when members of a team trust each other, they create a stronger community, leading to supporting, encouraging, and following beneficial goals for the whole team that provide a condition for team performance effectiveness and productivity (Gambetta, 1988; DeOrtentiis et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2020). Exchanging respect, emotion, and caring about each other gives members a sense of belonging, positive energy, and affective commitment, affecting their productive follow-up on the team goals. Hence, by reinforcing an affective-based trust atmosphere and characters in a team, shared leadership indirectly affects team performance. Furthermore, as our findings showed, cognitive-based trust did not support the relationship between shared leadership and team performance, which is an unexpected result and is unlike what we reviewed in the literature (Dirks, Ferrin, 2002).

As we discussed earlier, the cognitive-based trust approach concerns the leader's character. In this kind of trust, followers trust their leaders' decisions. They know their leader makes good decisions about followers' willingness (e.g., promotions, pay, work assignments, layoffs). However, it is not imminent that followers have more effective performance. In other words, when the leading role is shared between team members, they trust their leader cognitively, but it will not predict their performance. Therefore, we need to study more specific variables (other influential related variables). This interesting issue is one that we have considered below.

In the further study section, our findings revealed that cognitive-based trust in the team mediates the positive relationship between shared leadership and knowledge sharing. It means that when a leader shares leadership with people in a shared leadership context, team members first trust each other cognitively and then share their ideas, skills, and experience. However, our findings showed that affective-based trust did not mediate the positive relationship between shared leadership and knowledge sharing. Also, as a mediation variable, knowledge sharing did not facilitate the relationship between the two kinds of trust (cognition and affective) and team performance. These findings were not aligned with the study in which trust was discussed generally (Wiewiora et al., 2014). Moreover, they suggest trust has a positive relationship with performance. But they did not investigate sub-dimensions of trust separately.

### **Theoretical contributions**

Unlike the previous studies, this study systematically considers the relationship between shared leadership and team performance. The results of this study can expand the literature related to shared leadership and team performance. We can also suggest future studies to fortify the current literature; First testing the role of moderated variables such as level and degree of trust, work record, and team members' character as a leader. Second, specific team performance outcomes may be mediated more by the tested mediators. Third, testing the different kinds of team performance (virtual team, operational teams, ...) affected by shared leadership and the tested mediators' variables. Fourth, investigating what aspects of trust can affect knowledge sharing and can mediate the relationship between shared leadership and knowledge sharing, which leads to better team performance. By this means, we will have a better insight into the effects of trust in this relationship.

### **Practical contributions**

This study's results can help improve team performance in organizations and companies. Organization and company officials can distribute a sense of collective responsibility among people by developing shared leadership capacity in a team. In this case, all members will feel a strong responsibility for the intended purpose, which enhances the team's performance.

### **Limitations**

In this study, the team performance construct is considered as a general concept. Thus, we did not study a special kind of team performance (e.g., virtual team, informal team, operational team). Also, the research design of this study was cross-sectional, which may limit the results since multiple variables may influence team performance in different situations. Moreover, the study participants were middle-level managers from a servant company in Iran, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other samples and companies. Finally, study's findings were based on five self-report scales; hence, it may be biased by the respondents' social desirability.

## **Conclusion**

Team performance is impressed directly and indirectly by shared leadership. As the study findings reveal, shared leaders, as a capable resource, improve team performance by considering

each member of a team as a leader who spends all their thought and potential on obtaining goals that are beneficial for all team members, also by providing a reliable background for trust and knowledge sharing in a team-leading to team performance effectiveness.

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# Распределённое лидерство и эффективность команды: опосредующая роль обмена знаниями, когнитивного и эмоционального доверия в команде

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**Аннотация.** Цель. Первой целью данного исследования было изучение взаимосвязи между распределённым лидерством (*shared leadership*) и эффективностью команды. Вторая цель состояла в том, чтобы изучить, в какой степени эта связь может быть опосредована обменом знаниями, когнитивным и аффективным доверием в команде. *Метод.* В данном исследовании выборка из 186 штатных сотрудников (76,3% мужчин и 23,7% женщин) иранской организации была набрана с помощью метода простого случайного отбора. Участникам было предложено заполнить шкалы по распределённому лидерству, когнитивному доверию в команде, аффективному доверию в команде, обмену знаниями, а также эффективности и производительности работы команды. *Результаты.* Анализ пути с использованием структурного моделирования уравнений (SEM) показал значительную положительную связь между распределённым лидерством и производительностью команды (то есть эффективностью и производительностью). Более того, было выявлено, что обмен знаниями и аффективное доверие в команде в значительной степени опосредуют связь между распределённым лидерством и производительностью команды. Однако опосредующая роль когнитивного доверия не была подтверждена. Наконец, было обнаружено, что когнитивное доверие опосредует связь между распределённым лидерством и обменом знаниями. *Ограничения исследования.* Для анализа данных мы использовали метод кросс-секционного исследования, что могло ограничить обобщение наших результатов. *Практическая реализация.* Стиль распределённого лидерства может быть предложен для программ формирования команды для сотрудников или менеджеров и компаний, работающих в командах. *Оригинальность.* В этом исследовании распределённое лидерство рассматривается как потенциальный источник, который может усилить чувство доверия, основанного на эмоциях, и обмен знаниями в командах, что приведёт к более высокому уровню эффективности работы команды.

**Ключевые слова:** распределённое лидерство, когнитивное доверие в команде, аффективное доверие в команде, обмен знаниями, эффективность работы команды.