

ABSTRACT

Purpose: *“Shared leadership reflects a situation where multiple team members engage in leadership and is characterized by collaborative decision-making and shared responsibility for outcomes.”* (Hoch 2013, p. 161). This seems to be particularly important if a project team is geographically dispersed or more than one team exists. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the impact of shared leadership in a hybrid multi-team project. In particular the collaboration within a multi-team project using a hybrid project management approach is examined.

Research design: In order to examine the impact of shared leadership a literature review and a case study were conducted. In the case study a research project was investigated by reviewing documents and conducting experts surveys.

Findings: Results confirm that a good functioning communication is essential for a good collaboration. Further defined structures are important in order to ensure clear responsibilities. A tailored hybrid approach can provide structures and leave flexibility to adapt to changes and challenges at the same time. Moreover it is assumed that shared leadership can foster the collaboration by increasing commitment and cohesion.

Research limitations/implications: The study supports existing findings that shared leadership can affect team performance and the collaboration in multi-team projects depends on the communication between and within teams. Further and a hybrid approach must always be adapted to the context. However, since only a single research project was considered, it is not possible to make general statements without further studies.

Keywords: *shared leadership, multi-team projects, hybrid project management, modular, self-leadership, research project*

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1. Introduction

Global competition is influenced by rapid change, innovation and time-to-market. As a result, companies increasingly have to manage projects. Effective and efficient execution requires certain control and coordination activities. (Larson and Gray 2011, p. 13). Dynamic relationships within a project, the roles and different states of power of a project manager are just some of the context factors within projects that arise in regard to project leadership. Depending on the project management methodology, the project manager's power varies (Clarke 2012a, p. 128). Leadership has been identified as a key skill in project management, thus much research has focused on the optimum leadership style and leadership profiles (Clarke 2012a, p. 130). Due to the fact that every project is different behavior must be adapted to the particular context. Project Managers are mainly employed because of their technical expertise than for their leadership skills though (Clarke 2012b, p. 199). In hybrid project management, agile and classic approaches are combined. In some agile approaches no formal leader exists. Thus, the investigation of leadership, especially shared leadership in hybrid project management occurs as an interesting context. Based on the demand for certain skills, the need to coordinate and control distributed teams has increased. Thus Multi-Team systems get more attention. These teams offer a certain degree of flexibility in terms of location and qualification, which is attractive for both companies and individuals (Barley *et al.* 2017, p. 112, Panteli *et al.* 2019, p. 2). Both synchronous and asynchronous technologies enable companies to attract distributed talent regardless of location or distance. Based on the existence of such technological capabilities, organizations can respond to internal needs and draw on the creativity of team members who have unique skills and know-how (Chamakiotis and Panteli 2017, 38f.). In order to explore the impact of shared leadership on the collaboration of hybrid multi-team projects, at first the theoretical considerations are introduced. Then the state of research is represented in order to develop the research question of the underlying thesis. After that the theoretical frame of reference is developed in order to depict the assumed relationship and to provide a basis for the examination. In order to answer the research question the joint research project SIDDATA is investigated. At first the project is assigned and classified in the context of this thesis. Then expert surveys were conducted in order to explore the collaboration within the SIDDATA project. After methodology and results are presented, the results are discussed critically. Moreover limitations of the thesis are demonstrated and implications and recommendations for practice and research derived. The thesis closes with a conclusion and an outlook.

12. Conclusion

This thesis has examined the influence of shared leadership on collaboration in hybrid multi-team projects. After the procedure of the thesis was described, an overview of the theoretical basics was given. Chapters two to five describe underlying theories. Based on the presented theories, studies were examined to gain an impression of the current state of research. A research gap was identified and the research question of this work, how and why does shared leadership have an impact on the collaboration in hybrid multi-team projects, was derived. In the following chapter, the theoretical frame of reference was developed. This served as a basis for the following investigation. The research project SIDDATA was examined in order to test the reference framework. First, the project was integrated into the context of the work. Furthermore, an expert survey was carried out to investigate the identified research gap. The material was evaluated with the help of a qualitative content analysis. The results were presented below and then critically discussed. Furthermore, the limitations and implications for practice and research were derived.

The investigation showed that a well functioning communication is decisive for the success of a multi-team project. This showed the literature analysis as well as the expert survey. Furthermore, the use of hybrid project management is always context-specific. Selected practices must always be chosen individually. These structures in turn, form the framework for a successful collaboration. For this reason, especially in multi-team projects, it is important to develop these together with all parties involved. Collaboration can be further improved by promoting the existence of shared leadership. It has been found that in most cases this already happens unconsciously. Measuring the construct has been shown to be difficult because it is an invisible construct based on subjective perception. The research question could therefore not be answered completely, which is why further research is necessary. In order to gain a holistic impression, quantitative methods should also be used. Thus, the SIDDATA project should be investigated even more deeply in certain areas. Furthermore, further multi-team projects from other industries and with other project types should be investigated in order to make the results transferable and representative.