

Will Time Pressure Stimulate Shared Leadership in Temporary Teams? — An Explanation Based on Social Exchange Theory

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ABSTRACT

Temporary teams are increasingly prevalent in modern organizations, yet the mechanisms driving their shared leadership formation remain under-explored. Framed by Social Exchange Theory, this study investigates the influence of time pressure and individual political skill on the emergence of shared leadership. Empirical data were collected from 28 temporary teams (N = 95) and analyzed using Latent Moderated Structural Equations (LMS) in Mplus 8.3. The results demonstrate that: (1) time pressure significantly and positively predicts swift trust; (2) swift trust serves as a critical mediator between time pressure and shared leadership; and (3) political skill positively moderates the relationship between time pressure and swift trust. These findings reveal the adaptive mechanisms of shared leadership in time-constrained environments and provide managerial recommendations for optimizing temporary team performance through swift trust-building and the development of members' social competencies.

Keywords: Temporary teams, Shared leadership, Social exchange theory, Swift trust, Time pressure, Political skill

INTRODUCTION

With the increasing use of temporary teams in modern organizations, shared leadership has gained attention due to its positive impact on team dynamics (Wang et al., 2013; Zhu et al., 2018; Wang & Wan, 2020). In the event industry, temporary teams are frequently utilized; however, research on the antecedents of shared leadership remains limited, particularly in temporary teams (Zhu et al., 2018). To date, less study has examined shared leadership in the context of event management (Abson & Schofield, 2022). While previous studies have explored factors such as team characteristics, team climate, and organizational context (Abson & Schofield, 2022), little is known about the mechanisms behind shared leadership in temporary teams (Wu et al., 2020). This study, based on Social Exchange Theory, investigates the key role of swift trust in the emergence of shared leadership. Additionally, the study

examines how time pressure, as an external stimulus, influences both swift trust and shared leadership, while also considering the moderating role of political skills. This research explores the formation mechanisms of shared leadership in the context of event management, offering guidance for the management of temporary teams.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) posits that relationships are essentially value exchanges driven by mutual support and the pursuit of goals (Blau, 1956; Lawler & Thye, 1999). During this exchange, one party provides help and support to the other but cannot confirm whether or when the other party will reciprocate, resulting in risks and uncertainties in the exchange process (Xu, Han, & Yu, 2016). This uncertainty is particularly prominent in temporary teams. Since team members in temporary organizations typically work together for short periods, their ability to assess others' risks is limited, which may hinder social exchange among organizational members. However, empirical research by Xu et al. (2016) supports the applicability of Social Exchange Theory in temporary teams (Xu et al., 2016), introducing the concept of swift trust as a key variable to explain social exchange within such teams. Therefore, this study will build on Social Exchange Theory, using the perspective of swift trust to investigate the formation mechanisms of shared leadership under the influence of external stimuli such as time pressure in temporary team contexts.

Time Pressure and Swift Trust

Team time pressure refers to the stress experienced by team members when required to complete tasks within a limited timeframe set by clients or leaders, typically measured by the extent to which team members feel they lack sufficient time to accomplish their work (Maruping et al., 2014). Current research largely follows Chong et al.'s perspective, categorizing time pressure into challenge-related (which stimulates motivation and growth) and hindrance-related time pressure (which induces fatigue) (Chong et al., 2011; Sacramento et al., 2013; Ford & Jin, 2015). In the context of this study, temporary teams typically have clear work goals and task deadlines, with members usually having a strong sense of purpose. The relationship between pressure and work content is high, and thus, the team time pressure discussed in this research primarily refers to challenge-related time pressure.

Swift trust is a special form of trust that enables temporary organizations to manage instability, uncertainty, risks, and expectations through collective understanding and associations (Meyerson et al., 1996). Unlike traditional trust, swift trust does not rely on the cognitive judgments developed through long-term interpersonal interactions (Xu et al., 2016); instead, it is a short-term, rapid process of establishment (Qi et al., 2015), making it well-suited to explain the development and manifestation of trust in temporary teams.

From a Social Exchange Theory perspective, challenge-related time pressure acts as a motivator (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Crawford et al., 2010), prompting members to prioritize resource exchange and autonomous cooperation to achieve shared goals (Xu et al., 2016). Such environments facilitate rapid communication and goal alignment, thereby accelerating the formation of swift trust. Consequently, we propose: H1: Time pressure in temporary teams has a positive impact on swift trust.

The Mediating Role of Swift Trust

From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, temporary teams facing high time pressure are more likely to strengthen internal communication and relationships, thereby actively establishing swift trust. On the other hand, time pressure also leads employees to place more trust in each other, resulting in passive swift trust (Xiao & Li, 2014). In teams where trust has been established, employees are more willing to invest their leadership as a resource, as they believe in the possibility of exchange in such a context. Existing research also highlights that the trust-based context is critical for employees to exert influence over others and form shared leadership (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Li et al., 2019). Therefore, the challenging time pressure faced by temporary teams drives the formation of swift trust within the team, and swift trust, in turn, actively promotes the development of shared leadership. Consequently, we propose: H3: Swift trust in temporary teams mediates the relationship between time pressure and shared leadership.

The Moderating Role of Political Skill

The Moderating Role of Political Skill Pfeffer (1981) introduced the concept of “political skill” within the context of organizational power struggles, arguing that it is vital for securing and leveraging scarce resources—a cornerstone of professional success. Building on this, Ferris et al. (2005) defined political skill as an individual’s ability to blend a distinct interpersonal style with social effectiveness. Individuals with high political skill read others accurately and use that insight to exert influence, helping them achieve both personal and organizational objectives. This construct comprises four core dimensions: social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity. Research indicates that politically skilled employees are better equipped to navigate high-stress environments and manage personal pressure. When faced with challenge-related time pressure, their adeptness at stress management allows them to remain productive and focused. Moreover, these individuals often possess higher intrinsic motivation, making them more likely to lean into, rather than retreat from, task-related challenges. Beyond mere coping, politically skilled members are generally perceived as more trustworthy by their peers. Challenge-related pressure acts as a catalyst for these individuals, activating their ability to adapt to situational demands and, consequently, earn the confidence of both team members and formal leaders. In time-sensitive settings, they leverage their social effectiveness to build trust—specifically swift trust—by tailoring their behaviour to the

immediate needs of the group. This behavioural flexibility facilitates trust even under duress, which in turn fosters the emergence of shared leadership. We therefore propose:

H4: Political skill positively moderates the relationship between time pressure and swift trust. Specifically, the positive impact of time pressure on swift trust is more pronounced for employees with high political skill. The research model for this study is proposed as shown in Figure 1.

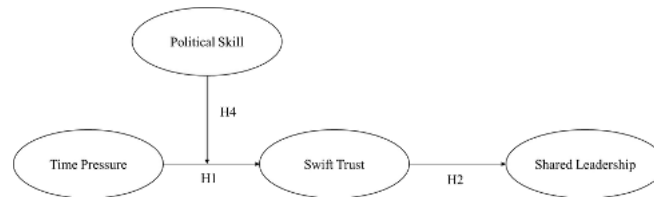


Figure 1: Research model.

METHODOLOGY

Data were collected through snowball sampling from 28 student-led temporary teams ($N = 95$) engaged in academic projects. The sample comprised 22 males (23.2%) and 73 females (76.8%), with all participants aged between 18 and 25 years. To mitigate common method bias, the survey ensured respondent anonymity and utilized randomized item sequences. All variables were assessed using validated 5-point Likert scales that underwent standard back-translation procedures: Time Pressure was measured using a 3-item scale (Maruping et al., 2014); Political Skill utilized an 18-item scale (Ferris et al., 2005); Swift Trust was assessed with 6 items (Yang, 2006; Xu et al., 2016); and Shared Leadership employed a 7-item scale (Muethel et al., 2012).

The statistical analysis followed a multi-stage approach: SPSS 20 was used for descriptive statistics and common method bias testing; the SPSSAU platform verified the feasibility of team-level data aggregation; and Amos 22 was employed for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Finally, mediation and moderated mediation effects were analyzed in Mplus 8.3 using Latent Moderated Structural Equations (LMS). The LMS method was selected for its superior accuracy in controlling measurement errors and providing robust estimates compared to traditional product-indicator approaches (Cheung and Lau, 2017; Sardeshmukh and Vandenberg, 2017; Fang and Wen, 2018).

RESULTS AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Revised Measurement Quality Analysis

Common method bias was assessed via Harman's single-factor test, with the first factor explaining 33.27% of the variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Reliability was robust, as Cronbach's α ranged from 0.845 to 0.912 (Hair et al., 2014). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) performed in Amos 22 demonstrated good model fit: $\chi^2/df = 1.715 < 3$, $TLI = 0.911 >$

0.9, CFI = 0.940 > 0.9, and RMSEA = 0.073 < 0.8—reflect a good overall model fit (Qiu and Lin, 2009). The factor loadings of each item on its respective construct in the measurement model, along with the composite reliability and average variance extracted for each construct, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of confirmatory factor analysis.

Variable	Item	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE
Political Skill			0.884	0.657
PS1	In my work, I have encountered many key figures and developed an extensive network.	0.775		
PS2	I am skilled at leveraging my network to facilitate work-related matters.	0.882		
PS3	I seem to have an instinctive ability to know what to say and do to influence others.	0.803		
PS4	I have a natural talent and insight when it comes to presenting myself to others.	0.777		
Time Pressure			0.846	0.650
TS1	Our team usually does not have enough time to complete our tasks.	0.772		
TS2	The time given to our team to complete tasks is very short.	0.927		
TS3	The duration of tasks is usually very short.	0.704		
Swift Trust			0.772	0.537
ST1	You quickly sense the harmony within the team.	0.887		
ST2	You and the other members quickly feel that there is no need for mutual supervision.	0.638		
ST3	You and the other members quickly believe that each other will cooperate with the progress and work attentively.	0.645		
Shared Leadership			0.821	0.607
SL1	You make efforts to ensure the collaboration among everyone is more effective.	0.698		
SL2	You seek advice from other team members.	0.760		
SL3	You ask other team members for information related to your own work outcomes, and this information may impact your work.	0.870		

Item quality was robust, with all 13 factor loadings exceeding the “very good” threshold of 0.63, and nine items surpassing 0.71 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006). Convergent validity was confirmed as all constructs met the criteria suggested by Hair et al. (2014): composite reliability (CR) > 0.7, average variance extracted (AVE) > 0.5, and Cronbach’s α > 0.7. Finally, discriminant validity was established using the AVE comparison method; as

shown in Table 2, the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs (Qiu & Lin, 2009).

Table 2: Discriminant validity.

	Political Skill	Time Pressure	Swift Trust	Shared Leadership
Political Skill	0.810			
Time Pressure	-0.341	0.806		
Swift Trust	-0.366	0.675	0.733	
Shared Leadership	-0.178	0.131	0.459	0.779

Team-Level Data Aggregation

To justify aggregating individual responses to the team level, we calculated the r_{wg} , ICC(1), and Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) for Shared Leadership. Upon calculation, the r_{wg} for shared leadership was 0.845 (> 0.7), ICC(1) was 0.201 (> 0.12), and ICC(2) was 0.761 (> 0.7), all of which satisfied the requirements for statistical aggregation standards (LeBreton and Senter, 2008; Bliese, 2000; James et al., 1984; James et al., 1993), supporting the use of team-level mean scores for subsequent analysis.

Hypothesis Testing

First, the direct paths and the mediating role of swift trust between time pressure and shared leadership were examined. Based on the model constructed in Mplus 8.3 and standardized estimates obtained after 5000 Bootstrap re-samplings, results indicated that all direct paths reached significance levels. Group time pressure significantly and positively predicted swift trust among members ($\beta = 0.675$, $p < 0.001$), and swift trust among group members significantly and positively predicted shared leadership of the group ($\beta = 0.679$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 were supported. The standardized effect value of the mediating effect of time pressure on shared leadership was 0.455 ($p = 0.001 < 0.05$), with a 95% confidence interval of [0.209, 0.835], which excludes zero, indicating that swift trust plays a positive mediating role between time pressure and shared leadership (Hayes et al., 2011). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Next, the moderating effect of political skill between time pressure and swift trust was examined. The interaction term between time pressure and political skill had a significant positive impact on swift trust ($p = 0.002$), where for every one-unit increase in members' political skill, the impact of time pressure on swift trust increased by 0.275 units. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported. Figure 2 illustrates the impact of time pressure on swift trust at high and low levels of political skill. Regardless of whether political skill was at a low or high level, higher time pressure led to a higher degree of swift trust among members. However, compared to low levels, the positive impact of time pressure on swift trust was further enhanced when members' political skill was at a high level.

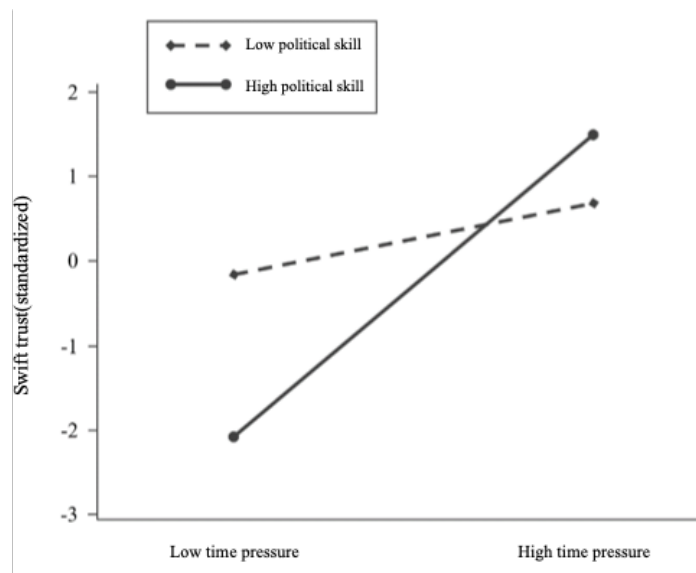


Figure 2: The moderating effect of political skill on the relationship between time pressure and swift trust.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (SET), this study examines how time pressure drives shared leadership in temporary teams. Results indicate that time pressure positively impacts swift trust, which mediates the link to shared leadership. Additionally, political skill positively moderates the relationship between pressure and trust.

The research offers three theoretical contributions. First, it shifts focus toward unique trust dynamics under temporary constraints, clarifying how teams foster collective leadership. Second, it extends SET to high-velocity environments by framing swift trust as a system-based expectation rather than a result of historical risk assessment. Third, it identifies political skill as a catalyst for trust; while socially adept members build exchange networks, those lacking these skills define the boundary for leadership emergence.

Practically, managers should leverage challenge-related pressure to incentivize trust and shared leadership. Establishing efficient communication is vital to mitigate uncertainty in short-term settings where traditional risk assessment is unfeasible.

Despite these insights, the study has limitations. First, using student teams may introduce prior familiarity; future work should isolate purely temporary settings. Second, the current model focuses on specific variables; future research could incorporate other predictors, such as empathy or leader authorization.

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