The Effect of Conflict, Psychological Safety and Leadership

on the Team Learning Process

Abstract

For today’s business organizations, developing work teams has become an important organizational strategy because doing so helps businesses compete more efficiently. One of the most critical aspects of teams is how they learn and adapt to new challenging situations. Current organizational behavior research identifies conflict, psychological safety, and leadership as important factors that affect the team learning process. Considering team learning as a collective effort, it can be understood as the sum of reciprocal ties of certain key social dynamics from a social network perspective. The team learning process will be more efficient as team members are further encouraged to engage in and reciprocate such behaviors as seeking feedback, reflecting, and finding new solutions to old problems. The learning process might be hindered in situations where team members face too few personal and cognitive differences. Therefore, a transformational leader who promotes a safe environment and the distribution of leadership roles is needed for teams to use conflictive differences in a positive manner. In this study, I propose that the team learning process will be enhanced by the presence of higher levels of relationship- and task-based conflicts. Both psychological safety and shared leadership are expected to be present when the formal team leader engages in transformational behaviors.

Keywords: Team learning, conflict, psychological safety, leadership, social network analysis

**Introduction**

Many of today’s organizations place a special emphasis on teams as a strategic component in the achievement of competitive advantage. Teams encourage levels of interaction that permit team members to share ideas and find strategic solutions to organizational problems. Thus, teams experience a learning process that results from the reciprocal interactions among their members. Conventional wisdom suggests that personal and cognitive differences among team members are beneficial to effective learning interactions. However, whether this positive impact is direct or influenced by a safe environment in which members share leadership roles and can rely on a formal inspirational leader to facilitate the process remains unclear. Therefore, I focus on understanding how relationship and task conflicts among members affect the team learning process and how a safe environment in which leadership is shared is relevant to learning. Additionally, I consider the presence of a transformational leader to be a trigger for teams to depend on an open and positive environment where they can appreciate each other’s talents and learn from one another.

This study considers a process approach (Roloff, Woolley, & Edmondson, 2011) to team learning as it emerges from the reciprocal interaction between the members of a team. The following are among the behaviors identified by previous research which drive the learning process: “asking questions, seeking feedback, experimenting, reflecting on results, and discussing errors or unexpected outcomes of actions” (Edmondson, 1999, p. 129). These behaviors can be found among team members within a work context and are affected by specific social interactions that provide a basis for diversity in experiences, ideas, and even emotions. Thus, conflicting situations related to both task and relationship natures emerge in the learning process and affect team dynamics (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Research indicates that task conflict positively affects team learning (De Dreu, 2006). Similarly, relationship conflict encourages learning-related behaviors, such as reflection and past performance assessment (Breugst, Patzelt, Shepherd, & Aguinis, 2012). Additionally, two factors emerge as key moderators of the effect of conflict on the learning process, namely, psychological safety and shared leadership. First, a psychologically safe environment, in which members can take risks with an understanding that they will not be exposed to embarrassment or ridicule from other team members (Crossan & Berdrow, 2003; Edmondson, 1999; Roloff et al., 2011; Wilson, Goodman & Cronin, 2007), will balance out extreme conflictive situations and allow members to use their differences to find new solutions to old problems. Second, by sharing leadership roles, members will recognize and use each other’s expertise and knowledge. Accordingly, coordinated effort among multiple leaders will allow teams to explore new ideas and set their personal problems aside to focus on sharing information, reflecting on past solutions, and seeking information that aids in solving problems. In the case of these two variables, the role the leader plays is transcendental, especially when such a leader cares for the needs of team members and encourages them to actively collaborate with each other (Edmondson, 1999; Mehra, Smith, Dixon & Robertson, 2006). Research has found that transformational leaders tend to create open environments that increase team member participation by sharing leadership roles on a contingent basis (Mehra et al., 2006).

Thus far, no studies have attempted to simultaneously understand how team learning, conflict, psychological safety, and leadership interact. However, several studies have focused on some of these variables separately (Bunderson & Boumgarden, 2010; De Dreu, 2006; Edmondson, 1999; Koslowski & Bell, 2008). Mitchell and Boyle (2009) propose a model that considers members’ cognitive and affective differences to be precursors of knowledge creation and examines how a transformational leader moderates these interactions. In the present study, however, I extend this proposal beyond the team level perspective to integrate contextual variables that are relevant for member interactions, such as psychological safety and shared leadership. In doing so, I investigate theoretical relationships that will clarify how the team environment moderates the impact of affective and cognitive differences on the team learning process, especially when this environment is encouraged by a caring and inspirational leader.

From a theoretical perspective, this study relates to the understanding of how the relational structure of a team affects its learning process (Krackhardt, 1987). From a social network perspective, this study specifically measures team learning as a reciprocal dyadic interaction among the members of a team, rather than as an individual self-reported measure, as it is traditionally assessed (Edmondson, 1999). By considering a social network perspective to team learning, researchers will be able to focus on learning behaviors that are actually reciprocated rather than basing their studies on aggregated individual perceptions that could be biased at the moment the questionnaire is being answered. This study also contributes to a positive perspective on types of conflict. Both task and relationship conflicts influence the learning behaviors that allow team members to thrive. A third contribution of this study extends the research on leadership by considering individual and shared leadership as complementary approaches. Thus, this study expands the idea of a single leader by specifically proposing a complementary approach that suggests that leadership functions will be more easily shared among team members when the formal team leader exhibits transformational behaviors.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The following section discusses the theoretical concepts that frame the hypotheses that comprise the model. In the method section I present the results obtained from the moderated regression model. Later, I provide a discussion of the results presented in the preceding section, and include directions for future research.

**Literature Review**

The Team Learning Process

Edmondson (1999) defines team learning as “an ongoing process of reflection and action, characterized by asking questions, seeking feedback, experimenting, reflecting on results, and discussing errors or unexpected outcomes of actions” (p. 353). Even when this definition is the most widely used, other authors suggest that theorists have not reached a consensus in relation to defining this construct, especially with regard to the level at which it is operationalized (Crossan, & Berdrow, 2003; Wilson et al., 2007). In their extensive review, Wilson, Goodman, and Cronin (2007) note that research should not focus on studying individuals inside groups but should rather consider the group as the ultimate level of analysis. Thus, studies that operationalize team learning through a self-report instrument and aggregate individual answers to obtain a team-level measure have the limitations that Wilson et al. (2007) consider to be the main reasons for the confusion in the understanding of team learning. The focus should be on group processes, such as the sharing of ideas and behaviors, the storing of the knowledge acquired by the group, and the retrieval of that knowledge. A key factor obtained from these authors is that team learning should be conceptualized as a learning process that occurs collectively at the group level (Ellis et al., 2003), and it is precisely that collectivity that I suggest is directly connected to the social interaction fostered by the dynamics inherent to the group.

The assumption that members will cooperate is behind all activities, behaviors, and stages related to the learning process. Most theoretical approaches refer to this assumption by highlighting the idea that team learning is more than the sum of individual efforts (Crossan et al., 1999; Edmondson, 1999; Wilson et al., 2007). However, empirical research often collects data on individual members and subsequently aggregates their scores to obtain a team-level measure. For team members to learn as a group, they must share knowledge, seek and provide feedback to each other, and jointly reflect on team processes. All of these behaviors take place through interactions, or what is referred to in social network analysis as reciprocity in the relationship. This study focuses on observing and measuring team learning behaviors as they occur reciprocally among team members.

### Task and Relationship Conflict

Organizational studies generally define conflict as incompatibilities among the members of a group due to discrepancies related to perspectives or interpersonal factors (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003b; Jehn, 1995). Jehn (1995) distinguishes between two types of conflict: relationship conflict, which “exists when there are interpersonal incompatibilities among group members, which typically includes tension, animosity, and annoyance among members within that group” (p. 258), and task conflict, which “exists when there are disagreements among group members about the content of the tasks being performed, including differences in viewpoints, ideas, and options” (p. 258). Most research on these types of conflict relates them to specific outcomes, such as performance and satisfaction, finding that relationship conflict is negatively related to both, whereas certain levels of task conflict are beneficial even when both types of conflict are correlated (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003b; Jehn, 1995).

De Dreu and Weingart (2003b) run a meta-analysis on both types of conflict with regard to how they relate to team performance and team satisfaction, finding that even when low levels of task conflict may be beneficial to team performance, both types of conflict may actually harm team performance and team satisfaction. In a related study, De Dreu (2006) finds support for a positive relationship between task conflict and innovation in teams, which implies that higher levels of task conflict might be more beneficial to the team learning process than low or no conflict (Rahim, 2002). These studies focus on how task conflict affects specific team outcomes; however, such outcomes are the result of previous processes (i.e., the collective effort of sharing ideas, providing feedback, and seeking information) that require interactions among team members. Thus, task conflict is expected to have a positive effect on team processes, which leads to hypothesis 1:

*Hypothesis 1: A high level of task conflict will have a positive effect on team learning.*

More recently, Breugst, Patzelt, Shepherd, and Aguinis (2012) have analyzed relationship conflict in a multilevel study to determine its effect on team performance assessment. Their findings indicate that as relationship conflict in a team increases so does the team´s performance assessment objectivity, which positively affects team processes and effectiveness. As team members face personal and emotional differences, it becomes easier for them to set aside feelings that would otherwise cause them to overestimate their performance levels and more objectively assess opportunities for performance improvement than if they did not have any type of relationship conflict. As relationship conflict increases, team members might feel more inclined to reflect on team tasks and on whether the problem-solving activities engaged in thus far have been optimal or whether there remains room for future improvement. Therefore, a higher level of relationship conflict is beneficial to team learning. Thus, hypothesis 2 follows:

*Hypothesis 2: A high level of relationship conflict will have a positive effect on team learning.*

### Psychological safety

Research confirms that a supportive context increases team effectiveness (Hackman, 1987), especially when team members share a “belief that a team is safe for interpersonal risk taking” (Edmondson, 1999, p.350), which leads to psychological safety. In other words, members feel comfortable or safe to openly discuss problems or errors, knowing that their opinions will not be diminished or judged (Edmondson, 1999). With regard to the relationship between conflict and team effectiveness, De Dreu and Weingart (2003a) find that open-minded debates and collaboration will balance extreme levels of conflict so that the team is more effective. Considering that team learning is a process that takes teams to higher levels of effectiveness and performance (Edmondson, 1999), both open-minded debates and collaboration are relevant because they are both related to a psychologically safe environment. Open-minded debates are indicative of clear and open communication in which team members know that they can speak their mind because their opinions are considered assets in the team learning process. Similarly, collaboration relates to joint experimentation and reflection because members know that it is safe to take risks given that any potential mistakes they make in the process will be regarded as learning opportunities. Thus hypothesis 3 is presented:

*Hypothesis 3: A psychologically safe environment will moderate the relationships of both task and relationship conflict with team learning.*

### Leadership

A vast stream of research recognizes the importance of leadership in promoting learning in groups (Bass, & Riggio, 2006; Berson, et al., 2006; Crossan et al., 2011; Kozlowski & Bell, 2008; Parry, 2011; Yukl, 1998). Leaders must be effective in encouraging team members to perform beyond what is expected of them to facilitate group interactions (Kozlowski & Bell, 2008). Leadership research, however, considers that leadership is not solely an attribute of one person but rather a group characteristic (Burke et al., 2006) that involves shared leadership responsibilities among the multiple leaders who emerge through the lifespan of the team (Gronn, 2002; Pearce & Sims, 2002). Individual and shared leadership complement each other because they are focused on different aspects of team dynamics.

**The team leader**

Open communication channels, motivation for achieving common goals, and encouragement to find new solutions to old problems are key goals that a leader should provide (Parry, 2011). From the broad definitions of leadership, transformational leadership is conceptually more closely related to accomplishing such tasks. A transformational leader is one who “fosters group or organizational performance beyond expectation by virtue of the strong emotional attachment with his or her followers combined with the collective commitment to a higher moral cause” (Diaz-Saenz, 2011); thus, he or she is portrayed as a leader who will encourage interpersonal learning behaviors.

In an extensive review of what constitutes transformational leadership, Podsakoff et al. (1990) find support for the idea that a transformational leader displays a high level of sensitivity toward the needs of his or her followers, as well as other behaviors that have been regarded as less transformational, such as providing public rewards in exchange for good performance (i.e., transactional behaviors). These authors find that transformational leadership comprises six transformational dimensions and one transactional dimension, namely, *identifying and articulating a vision*, *providing an appropriate model*, *fostering the acceptance of group goals*, *high performance expectations*, *providing individualized support, intellectual stimulation*, and *contingent rewards*.

**Shared leadership**

Team dynamics are so complex that it is difficult for only one person to be the sole provider of the required leadership behaviors (Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004; Carson, Tesluk & Marrone, 2007; Gronn, 2002). A perspective relevant to the social conceptualization of a team is that leadership in teams is typically shared among team members (Mehra, Smith, Dixon, & Robertson, 2006). This perspective recognizes the role of the informal leaders who emerge naturally from interactions among team members (Kilduff & Balkundi, 2011). Informal team leaders emerge from the perceptions of other team members regarding the experiences they bring and share with the team (Gronn, 2002). As a result, leadership roles are distributed or shared among these informal leaders, depending on the needs of the team, to accomplish its goals. When both formal and informal leaders work closely together within a team, respecting each other’s authority and relevance to specific team dynamics, they can guide the team through an enriching and positive process that ultimately results in high performance and effectiveness (Mehra et al., 2006). In contrast, discrepancies between the two types of leaders have a negative impact on the team by creating a disruptive environment (Kilduff & Balkundi, 2011; Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993; Mehra et al., 2006). Hypothesis 4, 5 and 6 are then presented:

*Hypothesis 4: Shared leadership will moderate the relationships of both task and relationship conflict with team learning.*

*Hypothesis 5: Transformational leadership will promote a psychologically safe environment.*

*Hypothesis 6: A formal transformational leader will foster shared leadership among team members.*

**Method**

Study 1

Study 1 was executed with two purposes: to assess the feasibility of the hypothesized model in team settings and to evaluate the survey, which was adapted from a psychometric design to a social network design. In study 1 (i.e., the pilot study), all variables were measured and tested according to the proposed model, with the exception of shared leadership. The sample used in study 1 included teams of graduate students that had assignments lasting one trimester, as part of diverse business-related classes in the areas of marketing and organizational behavior. All teams performed similar tasks and were asked to consider the interactions they had with their team members in relation to the class project on which they were working. Data were obtained from 109 participants, which represents a 91% response rate and accounts for 23 teams. Team size ranged from 3 to 7 members, with an average of 5. The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 45 years, with an average of 27.65, and 50% of them were women.

The results of study 1 provided the foundation for this dissertation. First, regression results indicated that both types of conflict had contrasting effects on team learning. Relationship conflict was not shown to affect team learning, whereas task conflict was found to have a significant positive effect on team learning. Second, psychological safety did not appear to moderate the impact of either type of conflict, although it had a significantly positive effect on team learning. Third, transformational leadership was found to be an important factor for teams because both types of conflict appeared to have a strong negative effect on the team learning process in the presence of a transformational leader.

The final section of the questionnaire included a section for participants to provide their insights on how teamwork could be enhanced within their teams and how the questionnaire could be improved. In relation to teamwork, most respondents agreed that team members were not open to providing an opinion regarding personal or emotional differences, given that they had not spent a sufficient amount of time together as a team to be able to recognize whether personal or emotional differences were present. Moreover, they were largely focused on delivering the class project on time; thus, differences of opinion did not always arise. Second, leadership was a key factor in coordinating team effort, and seemed to have a stronger effect on effectiveness when everyone’s talents were considered. This small qualitative portion of study 1 was a trigger to consider shared leadership as a variable affecting the team leadership process because it is through this type of leadership that the different talents of all team members are recognized, valued, and used (Day, Gronn & Salas, 2004).

Study 2

Study 2 was performed considering the results of study 1. Previous research has been designed considering a first study using graduate-level participants and a second study that includes professional teams from organizations (Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001).

Study Participants

The subjects considered for this study included work teams from four companies that represent different industrial sectors, namely, telecommunications, construction, mining services, and banking. There were a total of 241 participants who composed 40 teams, with a response rate of 88.27%. In social network analysis, a minimum response rate of 80% per network is required to be able to evaluate relationships. Thus, only the teams that complied with this requirement were considered. Overall, 40% of the total sample was composed of women; 70% of respondents held a bachelor’s degree, and 17% held a graduate degree.

**Measures**

A summary of all measures with an example of an adapted item is displayed in Table 1. In all cases, data was collected using the roster method in which a list of team members is included in each question for respondents to indicate with whom they related to others regarding a specific behavior (Marsden, 1990). Once data was collected, the first step was to calculate social network analysis measures for each variable according to their theoretical definitions. Team learning and psychological safety were measured with reciprocity, which considers the direction of relationships to be relevant to understanding how people within small groups behave with each other (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Both conflict types, as well as shared leadership were calculated using density, which is the proportion of actual relationships to the total possible relationships (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Finally, degree centrality was used to calculate the extent to which a team leader was transformational, because degree centrality considers the number of links adjacent to each particular actor (Freeman, 1979), i.e., the number of immediate people connected to each individual.

Table 1. Measures

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Concept | Literature | Example Items |
| Team learning | Edmondson, 1999 | A: From the following list of people, please select the one(s) who you take time with to figure out ways to improve your team's work processes. |
| Task conflict | Jehn, 1995 | A: From the following list of people, please select the one(s) you disagree with regarding the work being done. |
| Relationship conflict | Jehn, 1995 | A: From the following list of people, please select the one(s) you have friction with. |
| Psychological safety | Edmondson, 1999 | A: From the following list of people, please select the one(s) with whom, if you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you. |
| Shared Leadership  Transformational Leadership | Gronn, 2002 Podsakoff et al., 1990 | A: From the following list of people, please select the one(s) you believe inspire others with his/her plans for the future, are always seeking new opportunities for the organization, and has a clear understanding of where we are going. |

**Results**

**Reliability Test**

Reliability of measures was tested using Cronbach’s alpha to assess whether the instrument used for this study appropriately measured all of the relevant variables. In the case of team learning, I obtained an alpha of 0.75, to which all items contributed significantly. Regarding relationship conflict, the item “From the following list of people, select the ones with whom you have emotional conflict” had to be deleted because it significantly lowered the reliability of the construct. Thus, alpha increased from 0.60 to 0.64 for the three remaining items. In the case of task conflict, all items contributed to measuring the construct, for which alpha was 0.644. For psychological safety, the item “From the following list of people, please select the ones with whom it is difficult to ask for help”, had to be deleted, which increased alpha from 0.65 to 0.70. Finally, alpha was calculated for both shared and transformational leadership. Alpha was 0.95 for shared leadership and 0.92 for transformational leadership.

**Factor Analysis**

A factor analysis was performed on each variable to assess the convergent validity of the measures employed for each variable. For this study, I employed existing and rigorously tested scales (Edmondson, 1999; Jehn, 1995; Podsakoff et al, 1990) and adapted them to a social network analysis approach. Although I explored and confirmed the validity of each measure in study 1, in study 2, I ran an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to strengthen the robustness of my instrument.

In the case of team learning, the EFA loaded all seven items into two components of learning that account for 58.23% of total variance. Component 1 includes all of the items that evaluate learning interactions inside a team. Component 2, in contrast, includes the two items that evaluate the learning interactions of team members with others outside their teams. Regarding relationship conflict, all three items loaded into one single factor that explained 57.94% of the total variance, while for task conflict, the EFA results indicated the existence of a single factor that explained 53.94% of the total variance, which confirms past research on this type of conflict (De Dreu et al., 2003; Jehn, 1997). Regarding team psychological safety, EFA also loaded all seven original items in two different components that comprise 61.59% of the total variance. The first component loaded all items that were worded in a positive manner. In contrast, the second component loaded all items that were written in a negative form. Regarding both leadership measures the analysis loaded all items into a single item. For shared leadership, all seven items explained 78.39% of total variance, while for transformational leadership style loaded all seven items in one component that accounted for 68.61% of total variance.

**Variable Correlations**

Pearson bivariate correlations were calculated for all variables. Only psychological safety and shared leadership were significantly correlated with team learning (p < 0.01). In both cases, the correlation was positive and had mid-range coefficients. Neither relationship nor task conflict displayed a significant correlation with team learning. However, they were positively correlated with each other (0.536, p < 0.01), which implies that the presence of one will most likely indicate the presence of the other. This correlation coefficient between the two conflict types was as expected and similar to that found in previous research (De Dreu et al., 2003). Table 3 displays variable correlations.

Table 3. Pearson Correlations

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Correlations** | | | | | | |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1. Team learning | 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Relationship conflict | -.029 | 1 |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Task conflict | .188 | .536\*\* | 1 |  |  |  |
| 4. Psychological safety | .631\*\* | .127 | .136 | 1 |  |  |
| 5. Shared leadership | .489\*\* | -.377\* | -.014 | .066 | 1 |  |
| 6. Transformational Leadership | .263 | -.343\* | -.150 | .027 | .742\*\* | 1 |
| \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses were tested using moderated regression analysis to assess the effects of both types of conflict on team learning and the moderating effect of psychological safety and shared leadership following Baron and Kenny (1986). In Moderated regression analysis (MRA) a moderator variable z and predictor variable x are linked multiplicatively into an interaction term xz to test for and analyze the moderation effect based on its scope and significance (Helm & Mark, 2010). Table 4 presents the results from running the hypothesized model.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 originally suggested that both relationship and task conflict, respectively, have a positive effect on team learning. Thus, higher levels of conflict were expected to have a positive effect on team learning (Jehn, 1995; De Dreu, 2006). The regression results indicate that neither type of conflict has a significant effect on team learning. Thus, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were not supported. Hypothesis 3 considers the moderation effect of psychological safety (PS) on the causal relationships of both relationship and task conflict with team learning. To test this hypothesis, I completed the hierarchy of steps suggested by Aiken and West (1991) and Helm and Mark (2010). The results shown in Table 11 (Models 2 and 3) indicate that only psychological safety has a significant positive effect on team learning (*b3* = 0.083, p < 0.01). However, the regression coefficients of both types of conflict, as well as those for the interaction terms, were not significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is not supported.

Table 4. Moderated Regression Analysis



For Hypothesis 4, only the regression coefficient for shared leadership was shown to significantly cause team learning. However, when the moderation effect was included in the regression (Model 5), the effect of shared leadership on team learning increased (from 0.069, p < 0.01 to 0.076, p < 0.05). Finally, Hypotheses 5 and 6 propose that transformational leadership has a direct positive effect on psychological safety and shared leadership. When regressing transformational leadership on team psychological safety results indicate an insignificant effect, which implies that, at least for this sample, a team leader who exhibits a transformational leadership style does not create a sense of safety for team members. In contrast, a transformational leader was shown to have a positive and significant effect on shared leadership in the team.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The purpose of this dissertation was to understand how team learning, different types of conflict, psychological safety, and leadership interact, particularly in relation to how these interact to promote a positive team learning process. However, for space limitations, I will only consider the most relevant contributions of this dissertation. Overall, the greatest contribution of this dissertation relates to the approach used to measure all the relevant variables. The employed measurement instrument was developed based on robust psychometric surveys (Edmondson, 1999; Jehn, 1995; Podsakoff et al., 1990). The instrument was adapted for use from a social perspective in an attempt to contribute to the understanding of how these variables can be explained through the relationships established by individuals in a group. The basic assumption behind all theoretical arguments exposed throughout this dissertation is that individuals are relational interdependent beings, and it is precisely through the relationships they build with others that work dynamics can be explained. This approach is closer to the theoretical and intangible components of which teams are composed, which many researchers describe as more than the sum of individual efforts (Crossan et al., 1999; Dodgson, 1993; Huber, 1991). To date, no other studies have been identified that have used this procedure; thus, this dissertation takes an important step in the measurement of organizational behavior phenomena.

Additionally, the results indicated that neither relationship nor task conflict had a significant effect on the team learning process. Several reasons could explain the rejection of Hypotheses 1 and 2. First, considering each variable independently, their reliability is rather low. This finding was completely unexpected because reliability tests in study 1 had shown higher alpha values (0.89 for relationship conflict and 0.77 for task conflict), and no modifications were made to any of the items. One possible reason for this result is that respondents did not feel comfortable indicating the people with whom they hold either personality or professional differences. This idea led me to reflect on the fact that the nature of teams in both samples differed in relation to time. Sample 1 consisted of temporary student teams with a higher sensitivity to understanding the relevance of answering questionnaires as realistically as possible, while sample 2 consisted of permanent professional teams where that speaking up and telling a stranger about their negative interactions was not likely to be their best option.

Another contribution has to do with a transformational leader as an antecedent of psychological safety and shared leadership. In the case of psychological safety, despite all theoretical arguments, the empirical evidence gathered from the participating teams did not prove that for teams to feel sufficiently safe to take risks, perhaps factors other than a transformational leader are necessary (Edmondson, 1999). Nonetheless, the presence of a formal transformational leader was relevant for the sharing of leadership behaviors among team members. This finding expands the knowledge on the factors that enable team members to share leadership behaviors (Sivasubramaniam, Murry, Avolio, & Jung, 2002; Yukl, 1999). Consequently, this finding can be used to support the argument that the development of transformational leaders will improve leadership as a team-level experience.

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