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Review of the PhD dissertation

titled "Individual differences in preference for shared leadership" written by Dominic Schulze MA under the supervision of Prof. dr hab. Grażyna Wieczorowska-Wierzbińska and associate advisor Dr Anna Kuźmińska at the University of Warsaw, Faculty of Management, Department of Managerial Psychology and Sociology

The formal basis for the preparation of this review is the letter of Prof. dr hab. Grzegorz Karasiewicz, Chairman of the Scientific Council of the Discipline of Management and Quality Science of April 6, 2023, on the appointment of me as a reviewer of the dissertation of mgr Dominic Schulze by the Scientific Council of the Discipline of Management and Quality Science of April 5, 2023.

1. Assessment of the selected research area, research problem, and dissertation goals

The issues constituting the subject of the reviewed doctoral dissertation by Mr. Dominic Schulze are included in the scope of management studies, and even more specifically human resource management (HRM) and organizational behavior (OB). It is devoted to the issue of leadership. In particular, it concerns the relationship between the employees' individual characteristics and preferences for shared and focused leadership. These differences concern the control orientations (dominance, submission, collaboration, autonomy) and social motives (power, achievement, affiliation). For decades, the issue of leadership has been one of the key research areas willingly undertaken both in the international dimension and in Poland. At the same time, as Pocztowski (2018) [1] emphasizes, the multitude of concepts, approaches and models of leadership has not led to the emergence of a general and comprehensive theory of leadership, as individual studies usually highlight certain aspects or give them special importance. The supranormative exploration of diversified aspects of leadership is dictated by the strategic importance of leadership practices related to influencing others in order to motivate them to voluntarily engage in the implementation of organizational goals. The effectiveness of

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[1] Pocztowski A. (2018), Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi, PWE, Warszawa.

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leadership is determined, as indicated in the literature, by diversified factors, including, among others, personal characteristics of leaders, their behavior (leadership styles) and situational factors or the context of the organization or team functioning. In the currently explored concepts of leadership, a change in the approach to the functioning of an employee in an organization is clearly manifested. As a consequence, scientific inquiries concentrate on such issues as: motivating and inspiring employees, creating change and innovation, empowering employees' engagement, and participation. The analysis of the thesis reveals that Mr. Schulze is fully aware of the actual trends regarding the main trajectories of studies regarding the phenomena of leadership. This awareness is manifested primarily in the fact, that he decided to undertake research aimed at better understanding the phenomenon of shared leadership, which clearly resonates with the changes taking place in contemporary organizations, including recognition of employees as a source of competitive advantage.

The research undertaken by the PhD student aimed at examining the relationship between individual characteristics of employees and their preferences for shared or focused leadership is gaining in importance in the context of changes that are taking place in modern organizations. Changes that relate to the role and importance of employees in these organizations and their empowerment, engagement and participation. Justifying his choice of research area, the PhD student clearly points to the change in the specificity of a modern employee. He emphasizes that especially knowledge workers expect a subjective approach from their employers, not an objective one. They want to participate in decision-making processes, feel responsible for achieving goals and have an impact on the content of their work. What is also important to them is the working climate, interpersonal relations and the working atmosphere. In his work, the PhD student also gives examples of organizations that have successfully implemented the shared leadership model.

The literature review conducted by the PhD student allowed him to conclude that although the issues of shared versus focused leadership are important in the context of the functioning of organizations, there is a scarce number of researches regarding the phenomena. Additionally, there is a clear research gap relating to the area of research indicated by the PhD student that is from the perspective of an individual (employee). The identification of a research gap allowed Mr. Schulze define the key research question: *Do employees' individual characteristics explain differences in preferences for shared or focused leadership?* Also, three main objectives have been developed for the research execution:

1. Identify strategies to conceptualize and operationalize shared leadership in teams.

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2. Identify employee characteristics that predict individual-level preferences for teams with shared or focus leadership.

3. Test common employee characteristics that predict individual preferences for teams that share or do not share leadership.

The problem selected by the Doctoral candidate can be assessed as to-date, significant and original. The presented dissertation therefore presents an important research problem dealt with critically on a doctorate level. Mr. Dominic Schulze successfully identified the research gap, properly defined the research problem and precisely framed the dissertation objectives.

2. The analysis of the structure and the thesis content

The work includes a total of 136 pages and consists of an introduction, four chapters, appendices, bibliography and lists of figures and tables. Worth noticing is that the list of the literature included within the dissertation is broad, subject-specific and up to date. The structure of the work is clear and appropriate for reporting the results of the empirical research (quantitative approach). Moreover, despite the fact that in the tradition of Polish doctoral dissertations we are used to more extensive elaborations, I find the condensed form of presenting the doctoral student's research work convincing. It is devoid of threads that are often unnecessary and secondary to the mainstream research and which *de facto* build up a number of pages but bring less value to the research itself. At the same time, which I am underlining later in the review, the dissertation sometimes lacks the development of some threads (concepts, ideas). This could be done in the form of footnotes (see comments included below).

The thesis is initiated by the Introduction which is divided into three parts: Justification and problem statement; Objectives, scope and structure; and Key terminologies and editorial remarks. The part of the dissertation includes justification for the researched problem importance and usefulness of the empirical research. The main strength of this part of the dissertation is that it serves as a specific guide to the whole thesis. It clearly defines the propose and area of the empirical exploration.

Chapter 1 titled "Literature review for the hypothesis development" is divided into four parts. In this chapter, the Author conducted a multidimensional review of the literature on the subject related to the undertaken research issues. The literature review opens with an analysis focused on identifying research trajectories in the field of organizational leadership. The key stream of considerations is to show the changing leadership approach in contemporary organizations, from the one focused on a single leader's contributions towards a social network

perspective where leadership is shared among team members. At the beginning of the discourse, reference was made to the essence of the concepts of 'leadership' and 'management'. The Author clearly points out that he personally does not perceive the indicated concepts as identical. Yet he points out that *their precise definition perceives as irrelevant to the main stream of the research* (p. 13). In my opinion, this topic should be more firmly grounded in the thematic literature review and its effect, and as I mentioned earlier, an aggregated discussion on the topic should be included in the footnote. Later in the thesis the Author presents two distinct approaches to the leadership concept: a leader-perspective (focused) and leadership-perspective (shared). Table 1.1. summarizes the most important characteristics of the perspectives. Within the table the Author systematized the state of knowledge about both focused leadership and, more importantly, shared leadership. He has pointed out several ideas eroding from the concept of shared leadership perceived as a social network i.e.: *"... employees ... emerge as both leaders and followers throughout complex processes within the teams itself* (p. 16)", *"...leadership in not only behaviors, but also cognitively constructed* (p. 18)", *"...leadership as a group dynamic* (p. 18)"*. The identification of key research trends in the field of leadership, including the author's systematization of knowledge related to shared leadership, was crowned with a review of the definition of the 'shared leadership' concept (subchapter 1.2.) and the adoption of a definition of this concept. Additionally, the Author pointed out the commonalities of shared leadership (lateral, emergent and dispersed) which create the implications for further studies on shared leadership. This subchapter is summarized with some insights on how shared leadership influences team innovation, cohesion, performance and satisfaction. In my opinion, the examples included in the part of the thesis could strengthen the justification of the research and so it could be included into Introduction. Subchapter 1.3 is dedicated to the cognitive consequences within social networks and it is divided into following sections. First the basic human needs (autonomy, competence and relatedness) are defined along with their implications for the social interactions. Secondly, preferences for different social networks are determined and discussed in reference to the basic motives (power, achievement and affiliation). On page 29 Author lists a set of theoretical concepts which connect with idea of dispositions in social orientations. Although each of item is supported by a reference, I believe that a short description of each would add value to this part of the thesis. Especially that later the Author refers to them reflecting on their usefulness within the research. Later in this part of the dissertation most prominent motives (power, achievement, affiliation) and their interactions are discussed. Within this subchapter more detailed attention is given to social hierarchies as the predominant forces in social networks (1.3.2). The Author argues that the preferences for hierarchies are

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non-homogeneous and that they depend on various determinants from which the desire for rank is the most important. Taking into consideration a general characteristic of knowledge workers, one cannot disagree that a desire for rank might be an important determinant for the team's structure. Chapter one is concluded by the theoretical model, which not only serves as a specific literature review summary, but also reveals the frames for empirical research. In this part of the dissertation the Author refers to two main objectives of the research explaining the rationale for the further actions. Here two distinct forms of leadership are defined (shared versus focus) and a set of the individual responses toward shared versus focus leadership identified. In my opinion, this fragment of the dissertation could be supplemented by a scheme aggregating the multithreaded theoretical analysis contained in this chapter.

The review of the theoretical part of the doctoral thesis (Chapter 1) indicates that the Author has extensive knowledge in the field of leadership, especially in the area of shared leadership. The theoretical chapter systematizes knowledge in the field of shared leadership, pointing to the key role of employees' predispositions and characteristics when choosing the type of leadership: shared leadership or focus one. In the context of the analysis of this part of the doctoral thesis, it is important to articulate three questions:

1. How was the literature review performed? What was the strategy for the literature gathering, inclusion or exclusion? Which databases have been searched and when?

2. Concerning the present knowledge of the research issue, shared leadership in particular and how would the Author define this construct with his own words?

3. Does the Author see a possibility to develop a hybrid model of shared leadership which would include both some of the indicators of shared and focused leadership? And if 'yes': which indicators for such the hybrid solution would the Author include?

Chapter 2 titled "Methods and objectives" is dedicated to various aspects of the empirical research methodology. First the set of hypotheses and the rationale for their development have been presented. In addition, there are four main hypotheses:

H1: Focused leadership preferences depend on control orientations.

H2: Focused leadership preferences are weaker than shared leadership preferences.

H3: Focused leadership depends on social motives.

H4: Supervisors have stronger focused leadership preferences than non-supervisors.

The hypotheses are constructed properly based on the literature review. They are consistent and logical. Each one of them have been argued based on the appropriate literature items. However, one can argue that the sequence of them could be reranked by the Author. In addition, a more general, not in-depth defined hypotheses, could have been listed higher than the ones that have

been operationalized in more details. Considering amendments H2 would be the most general one and serve as H1. H4 also, as a more general statement could be listed second. H2 and H4 could be listed as H3 and H4. The analyzed chapter also includes detailed information about the empirical research procedure (subchapter 2.3). There have been three studies performed, and each of them precisely described by the Author (later referred as Study 1 and 2 due to the research procedure). The first study engaged 184 US located respondents. The study was performed via the MTurk platform. The second study, the methodological experimental one, testing two forms of target descriptions, engaged 51 respondents, also US based. The study was also performed via the MTurk platform. The aim of the study was to test the construction of the research tools for their reliability. The third study, the appropriate one, experimental with the manipulation of the type of leadership and preceded by the measurement of individual variables, engaged 178 US based respondents. It was also performed via the MTurk platform. The studies were properly planned and described. Diversified research tools were used to conduct the research. Both those already used and those designed by the Author. The use of the former has been justified on the basis of adequate literature on the subject. In the case of the self-developed tool and the tool modified for the needs of the conducted empirical research, a procedure was used to authenticate their use. The values of credibility tests of the research tools used justify their use.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to results of the performed studies. Their presentation and analysis is divided into two corresponding parts. First, the data gathered from 'Study 1' is analyzed. That is employees' control orientation as predictors of leadership structure preferences. The data was analyzed with appropriate statistical methods in order to verify the H1 hypothesis. Results reviled that H1 were not fully supported. That is H1a, H1c and H1d are confirmed but H1b is not. Secondly the data from 'Study 2' is analyzed. As previously the data was analyzed with the appropriate statistical methods. In this part of the dissertation hypothesis H2, H3, H4 are tested. H2 is confirmed. H3a is partially confirmed. H3b is partially confirmed. H3c is confirmed. H4 is partially confirmed. In both of the cases, that is 'Study 1' and 'Study 2', descriptive statistics are presented in appropriate appendixes, which in my opinion ensure clarity of presentation of key research results.

Chapter 4 titled "Summary" is divided into three parts: Summary of findings, Research implications, future research directions and implications for management practice, and Conclusion. The chapter begins with a Table 4.1. where the results of the hypotheses testing are exposed. Although I find the table useful, I also think that it could be developed. In addition, in the column 'Results' the Author could include a brief description regarding the partial

confirmation of the hypotheses. I am aware of the fact that in detail, the results are discussed in Chapter 3, but here a main reason for the state-of-art could be included. Later in the chapter a brief discussion on the hypotheses' verification is performed. The dissertation also includes a set of limitations. These are reported in regards to measurement of employees' personal characteristics and samples. The set of limitations indicated by the Author clearly reveals his knowledge in the field of methodology of conducting empirical research. His awareness of the use of the Mturk platform to conduct scientific research is also emphasized. In the analyzed fragment of the dissertation, the Author also points to the need to conduct further research related to employees' preferences towards shared and focused leadership. Among the other recommendations, he indicates that such research should be conducted in the environment of already functioning teams, and not in isolation from organizational reality or in other cultural context. He also encourages the replication of the research with the usage of the tools already verified by him. At the end of the chapter, the PhD student indicated the main theoretical and practical implications of his research.

Regarding the empirical part of the thesis, I would like to ask the PhD Candidate the following questions:

1. What competences should a present focused oriented manager develop in order to be able to implement shared leadership concept?

2. What competences should be developed by employees in order to become valuable team members with organization which acts upon the shared leadership model?

3. Would the Author support the idea of the usage of psychological tests during recruitment processes for organizations, especially these implementing shared leadership?

3. Conclusion

In my opinion the presented doctoral dissertation is written in a scholarly and methodologically appropriate manner. The Author has proven to possess the knowledge in the field, as well as has shown the research competences. The scientific level of the study can be positively assessed, thus proving that Mr. Dominic Schulze has all the necessary skills to solve original research problems on the doctoral level in the management science. The dissertation as a whole is coherent and contributes to expanding the existing knowledge in this field. The critical remarks raised in the review were intended to indicate those areas which, in the opinion of the reviewer, could have been presented differently or required improvement in terms of potential publication. However, this does not change the overall positive assessment of the

thesis, both in the theoretical and empirical layers. Specifically, the following elements of the dissertation can be highlighted:

- Up-to-date research on shared versus focused leadership performed from the perspective of employees.
- Exhaustive explanation of the researched issues from the theoretical side, based on the rich, properly selected and used in the work literature on the subject.
- Proper preparation and conduct of empirical research using the quantitative approach based on both, tools already used in scientific research as well as adapted and self-constructed tools that have been properly validated.
- Detailed, reflective and mature analysis of empirical material obtained during empirical research.
- Contribution to expanding knowledge in the field of leadership, in particular individual differences in preferences for shared leadership.
- Outlining the limitations of the PhD student's own research and indicating the need for further action in this regard.
- Elaboration of the set of practical recommendations for managers regarding a possibility to implement the research results into their practice.

Concluding, in my opinion the PhD dissertation "Individual differences in preference for shared leadership" written by Mr. Dominic Schulze at the University of Warsaw under the supervision of Prof. dr hab. Grażyna Wieczorowska-Wierzbińska and associate advisor Dr Anna Kuźmińska, Faculty of Management, Department of Managerial Psychology and Sociology fully corresponds to the 179 article, paragraph 1 of the Law of Higher Education and Science (3rd July 2018, Official Law Gazette, position 1669 with further changes). Hereby, I am recommending the Scientific Council of the Management and Quality Studies at the University of Warsaw to accept the dissertation for the doctoral defense and further proceedings.