MANAGEMENT INSIGHTS & DIALOGUE SERIES

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Getting Ahead, Getting Along, and Getting Prosocial: Examining Extraversion Facets, Peer Reactions, and Leadership Emergence

Abstract

Drawing upon socioanalytic theory of personality, the authors of this study hypothesize and test inverted U-shaped relationships between team members’ assertiveness and warmth (i.e., the “getting ahead” and “getting along” facets of extraversion) and peers’ reactions (i.e., advice seeking by peers and peer liking, respectively) which, in turn, predict members’ emergence as informal leaders in self-managed teams. Integrating research on prosocial motivation, we also examine prosocial motivation as a moderator that enhances the positive curvilinear influences of assertiveness and warmth on peer reactions. Based on 223 members in 69 student project teams (Study 1) and 837 employees in 79 self-managed work teams (Study 2), we found support for the inverted U-shaped relationships between assertiveness and advice seeking by peers, and between warmth and peer liking. Further, prosocial motivation enhances the inverted U-shaped effect of assertiveness in Study 2 and those effects of warmth in both studies. Advice seeking by peers and peer liking, in turn, were positively related to leadership emergence in both studies. Our findings have important theoretical and practical implications for dispositional and motivational factors that shape peer reactions and facilitate leadership emergence in teams.

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Zhen Zhang is Professor of Management and Dean's Council of 100 Distinguished Scholar in the Department of Management and Entrepreneurship at the W. P. Carey School of Business, Arizona State University. His research focuses on leadership process and leadership development, work teams and groups, biological basis of work behavior, start-ups and entrepreneurship, and advanced research methods. Prof. Zhang’s work has appeared in leading management journals including Academy of Management Journal, Personnel Psychology, Journal of Applied Psychology, Organization Science, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, and the Leadership Quarterly, and has been cited in media outlets such as the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, and the Globe and Mail. He currently serves as an associate editor at Personnel Psychology.