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## Shared Leadership And Project Team Performance: Testing Mediating Role Of Stress Propensity And Trust

**\*Farhan Ali Soomro**

Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur

**Mansoor Ahmed Soomro**

Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur Shahdaddkot Campus

**Ghulam Akbar Khaskheli**

Assistant Professor, Institute of Commerce & Management, Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur

**\*Email of the corresponding author;** farhan.soomro@salu.edu.pk

### ABSTRACT

*Project teams in Pakistan are evaluated to see how shared leadership (SL), trust, and stress propensity affect project team performance. This research examines the link between shared leadership (SL) and project team performance (PTP) in Pakistan. Results came from an online survey of 308 team workers, preferably from project-based businesses. The correlation analysis was used to determine the association among variables, and structural equation modeling was used to assess this study's hypotheses. The results showed that shared leadership (SL) positively impacts project team performance (PTP). At the same time, trust and stress propensity are essential mediators in the relationship. In adopting improved work practices in project team environments, working within Pakistan's geographical limitations, the study helps to improve and boost processes in the most effective way possible within time and cost constraints.*

**Keywords:** Shared Leadership, Project Team performance, Trust, Stress Propensity, SEM

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### INTRODUCTION

Economic growth of a country consists of several aspects. This includes interaction of macro-economic variables like GDP, oil prices, inflation, exports, imports, foreign exchange, industrial production, trade cycles other elements with each other or with certain global factors. The revolution in technology, expansions in communication, the emergence of the world, and changing patterns in the work environment have initiated firms and their

management to choose the right team for their organizations in accomplishing a particular project. It happens only when the selected group is committed to their work, appropriate time management, quality assurance, and cost control to reap maximum advantage from the project and achieve the organization's goals and objectives. It is the notion that every project's nature is temporary and unique in its objectives. Moreover, the team who come together to complete a particular project will work as per the project's life. Globally, organizations are focusing on project-based working and trying their best to have a portfolio of projects to gain maximum return. These organizations are project-based, shifting the organizational structure matrix and their functionality.

Furthermore, it reduces the inside bureaucracy of the organization and expands the collaborative theme of efforts with teamwork as a mark of success. Further research and implementation of effective strategies and practices within project processes as well as project teams to high degrees of outcomes and success as a preset criterion of three parameters of time, cost, and performance have been emphasized in studies in the field of project management. Some researchers have even claimed that leadership is essential for optimum team performance (Kozlowski et al., 2020; Hackman & Walton, 2019; Cohen & Bailey, 2019; Zaccaro et al., 2018; Sinclair, 2017). Leadership research and theory were typically focused on formal singular, appointed, or elected leaders after crossing half of the twentieth century (Bass & Bass, 2021). But in recent years, the perspective has shifted to a broader depiction of leadership as an inertial process within organizations where one appointed individual to be the leader plays only a part in achieving the required object (Bass & Bass, 2021; Pearce & Sims, 2002).

The organization's dynamic and highly competitive, project-based environments resulted in the accumulation of changing patterns of team behaviors and leadership styles in reaping high team performance. According to Pearce and Conger (2003), the leadership styles transition has shifted from solitary to the team perspective, termed as shared leadership. Shared or collective leadership allows PBCs (Project-based companies) to have command and control over the whole team. Giving leadership rights to influential individuals makes the unit more prominent and stronger to accomplish a given project. Adding up, organizations are moving away from command and control-based leadership models, which involve hierarchical leadership. They opt for team-based environments with increased autonomy and interdependence granted to the employees. According to Super, (2020) discovered, the building blocks for TI "team innovation" depend on innovative performance and that critical strategy for building effective teams and capabilities for developing leaders and groups that work innovative.

It was seen that sparkle among leadership concepts ignited after the renowned publication of Pearce and Conger (2003) discovered the shared leadership concept. After his publication, the interest of researchers got initiated to understand more about the perspectives of shared leadership. Distributive or collective leadership are alternative term for shared leadership (Pearce and Conger, 2003). It includes the DIP "Dynamic Interactive Process" between groups and individuals and helps achieve group and interrelated goals. Yammarino et al. (2020) depict that shared leadership encourages individuals to share responsibility among team members, no matter if the structure of the team is informal or formal. However, the story of shared leadership seemed to be more complicated to determine the outcomes like team performance (Hoch et al., 2019). This complication in

the leadership phenomena can be resolved by mediating and moderating variables. The shared leadership in previous studies was taken with unconventional leadership types like Shared cumulative, visionary, and authentic leadership (Carson et al., 2019; Pearce & Ensley, 2020; Hmieleski et al., 2012). However, the present research has immensely focused on the aggregate effect of shared leadership on team performance.

The main objective is to analyze the relationship between shared leadership & its influence on the team's performance. Second, in light of past research, the mediating role of trust and stress propensity in strengthening and weakening the relationship above is investigated as a behavioral construct. The concept of shared leadership is new in Pakistan's organizational structure. It has yet to gain acceptance or popularity because it contradicts the traditional idea of hierarchical leadership, in which a single leader has sole autonomous power over a team, reflecting the prevailing culture's basic notion.

### **Problem Statement**

Project-based businesses need to investigate alternative constructs and leadership styles to help their project teams become more efficient and ultimately help achieve project success by keeping the fixed time frame and limited resources in view. Pakistan's new shared leadership structure has not acquired widespread acceptance since it conflicts with the hierarchical leadership philosophy rooted in the prevalent Pakistani culture. This study's objective is to know how shared leadership influences team performance on project teams and when trust and stress factors are also considered. The quantitative research study on project teams in Pakistan will evaluate the horizontal leadership styles employed and the efficacy of shared leadership within groups. To improve project team efficacy, data may be gathered to examine how to achieve high project efficacy by utilizing shared leadership to encourage a team to use its members' skills and abilities and keep the team's motivation level high.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions will be answered in this research:

- Does shared leadership effects project team performance?
- Does shared leadership affect trust & stress propensity?
- Does trust & stress propensity effects team performance?
- Does trust & stress propensity mediate between shared leadership and team performance?

### **Significance of study**

This research study will present a favorable image of adopting shared leadership in projects for project-based organizations in Pakistan. Giving equal attention to the importance of effective horizontal leadership compared to conventional vertical leadership for team effectiveness ultimately results in superior performance. Currently, the country is at a stage of development for project-based work environments, and research is desperately needed to determine the most effective work practices that would lead to better project outcomes, drawing in foreign stakeholders to do business in Pakistan. CPEC infrastructure is an essential element of the future economic prospects for Pakistan, and various project deviations will begin in the future. These projects must investigate and implement best practices in project team environments.

This study will provide more insight into team dynamics, specifically regarding shared leadership, concerning focus leadership methods in horizontal contexts, such as those seen in project-based companies. Thus, the study will serve both project management literature and practitioners by contributing to shared leadership in boosting project management performance while informing them of possible areas of improvement within the organization's cultural environment.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES**

### **Social Identity Theory**

Considering the social identity theory (SIT) of leadership is suitable elaborated the concept and relationship between team performance & shared leadership (Hogg, 2001). The SIT states that when group membership increases, it enhances the identification process within the group and influences leadership. It also increases the acceptance ratio of leaders as a leader by their members and considers them prototypical leaders (Hogg et al., 2012). The fundamental premise is that team members' identification with their support and trust group serves as their prototypical leader and member when group membership is salient within the team environment (Hogg, 2001). Shared leadership expands the range of the proto-typicality of a leader. Prototypical leadership is a significant aspect of team members' social identity due to commonly employed leadership strategies. Higher trust among team members causes qualities of prototypical leadership qualities. (Hogg, 2001; Hogg et al., 2012)

### **Shared Leadership and Project Team Performance**

Until far, research conducted purely on roles and measures of leadership and their correlation to team performance has focused on the leadership of a single leader (Gronn, 2002). In one of his earliest studies, Gibb (1954) observed that in teams, either distributed leadership occurs, in which more than one individual takes responsibility for the team's procedures, or focused leadership, in which a single individual carries out all of the team's activities. When team members are assigned leadership roles in a group where leadership is spread, they follow the lead of other team members who have knowledge in different areas and need to lead different functions, such as stages of the project's life cycle. Researcher Kozlowski et al. (2020) discovered that shared leadership is a process by which two or more team members work toward accomplishing project objectives. The researchers of that study developed a team leadership theory proposing that while a leader who is single always responsible for all actions of team members, no one person can carry out the work alone. When working on projects, team members should assume leadership responsibilities to provide an environment where everyone is ready to share leadership during a project. Study authors have discovered a connection between improved team performance and distributed leadership structures, particularly those structured to minimize traditional leader-centered arrangements (Mehra et al., 2006). In traditional leadership structures, methods of influence are highly stressed; in shared leadership, they are less crucial. Cohesive leadership is seen as a highly developed team organization in which the leadership techniques are understood as an expression of transformational leadership. Avolio et al. (1996) found that employees granted leadership recognition to their colleagues, concurrently claiming leadership roles for themselves (DeRue, 2011).

Numerous studies demonstrate that “shared leadership has a positive influence on team performance compared to vertical leadership (Ensley et al., 2006; Pearce & Sims, 2002)”. As one of the fundamental factors of team performance, a team's ability to enhance multiple facets over a specific period may be evaluated through team performance (Hackman, 2018). Researchers have concentrated on altering team activities and developing self-managed teams to enhance team performance (Langford, 2004; Man and Lam, 2003). Team effectiveness and performance are seen to be increased when groups use a shared leadership approach in place of traditional hierarchical arrangements (Avolio et al., 1996; Carson et al., 2019). Additionally, reduced power disparities can be achieved through collaboration as shared leadership positions are shared, and connections among team members are increased (Pearce & Sims, 2002). Another study done on shared leadership via meta-analysis discovered that SL correlates with different moderators and mediators; in this range, the link holds between 0.21 and 0.35 (D'Innocenzo et al., 2014; Nicolaides et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2014).

### **Shared Leadership, Trust, Stress Propensity, and Team Performance**

Although trust has several definitions, conceptually, it can be defined as a person's beliefs and expectations that cause him to place his faith in the words or actions of another (Rousseau et al., 1998; Robinson, 1996; Dirks, 1999; Cummings and Bromiley, 1996). The collective attitude of a group or team is shared by total group members (Simons & Peterson, 2000). Trust is a meaningful idea for reaching specified goals that strengthen the team's capabilities. The shared perception that the team is ready to build a risk of interpersonal is called team trust (Bass, 2019). Trust is regarded as the primary referent among the team's members because it is the belief on which their performance is based. Even though trust has the potential to produce a wide range of positive results (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001), too much trust can be damaging, just as too much of anything is never useful (Langford, 2004). Trust is critical in enhancing a team's collaboration capacity (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001).

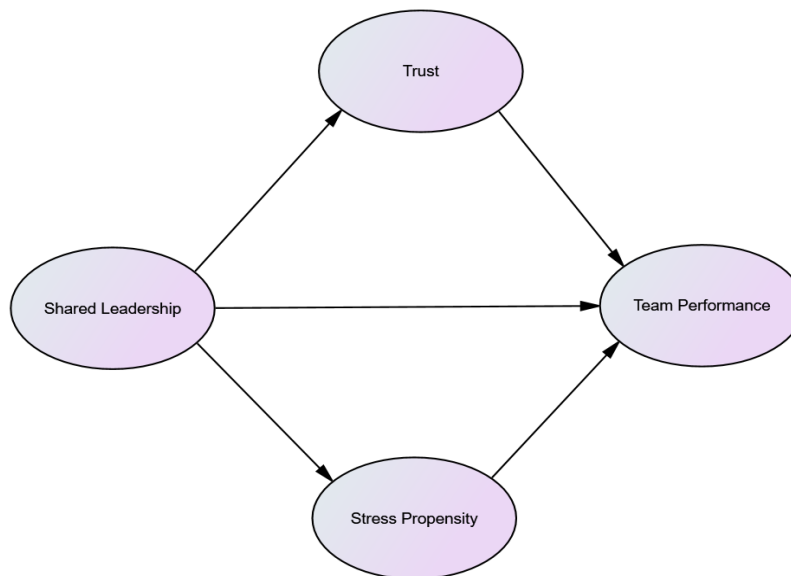
We use the term team to describe a group of two or more people with a high degree of task interdependence and with common, highly valued goals (Salas, Cooke, & Rosen, 2008). Team and group are used interchangeably in this chapter. Team & Group has been used by various work groups and task teams (Devine, 2002). Team stress is pronounced as a "connection between the team and its environment, including other team members, that is assessed as exhausting or beyond their resources and endangering their well-being" (Weaver et al., 2001). Another study discovered longitudinal data collected from two hundred-fifty members of fifty-three teams of students. SL & TP were positively & reciprocally related to each other over time. Additionally, SL and TP grow ultimately, while TP toward SL is consistent over time (D'Innocenzo, Kukenberger, Farro, & Griffith, 2021).

Leadership effectiveness hinges on a high level of trust (Zand, 1997). Another critical role played by trust has been emphasized in numerous leadership theories, whether it's because of a charismatic leader's ability to inspire others by building their trust or because trust is a critical element of transformative leadership. Regarding effective leadership, subordinates' perceptions are centered on trust (Hogan et al., 1994). Developing shared leadership based on trust gives it a solid foundation. When leadership is divided into team members, trust strengthens over time to ensure smooth working, as the group with growth and development potential is dynamically attributed by trust (Drescher et al., 2014). Another

research data collected data from two hundred thirty-six as a sample on team members and success via process model; results discovered that SL directly influences project success and it also influences cohesion as well as knowledge sharing (Hassan & Zaheer, 2021)

According to new research, shared leadership may help develop a shared vision, which could significantly affect team dynamics and performance (Pearce & Ensley, 2020). Researchers discovered that SL positively impacts TP with the mediating effect of TMS, which was stronger during creating team groups at the starting stage of the team life cycle (Hongwei & Yansong, 2021). Scholars have proposed that shared leadership positively influences team member interactions (Bergman et al., 2012) and attitudes (Hoch & Dulebohn, 2013). Project teams, in particular, are time and cost-constrained and cannot afford delays and conflicts (Aime et al., 2014; Burke et al., 2003) while also boosting the cognitive resources of the group (Burke et al., 2003; Day et al., 2004).TE “Trust establishment” among team members improves group performance. When individuals trust one another and teams have better levels of innovation, the team avoids unneeded conflict and wastes less time monitoring each other's actions. Instead, the team concentrates more on individual duties (Aime et al. 2014). According to research, trust encourages people to work more than they would otherwise (Colquitt, Scott & LePine, 2007) and increases cooperation to attain common goals (McEvily et al., 2003). This research has inferred the concept of shared leadership and inducted trust and stress propensity as mediators to assess the emphasized outcome on project team performance in Pakistan. The study model and hypotheses are developed based on the above discussion on variables.

**Study Model, Figure 2: Research Model**



### **Hypotheses Development**

*H1: Shared leadership significantly and positively affects Project Team Performance.*

*H2: Trust mediates the relationship between shared leadership and project team performance.*

*H3: Stress propensity mediates the relationship between shared leadership and project team performance.*

## **METHODOLOGY**

The positivist approach is used as predictions about constructs and interrelationships of variables will be formed based on previous studies, observations, and points of view without interfering with the research model. Researchers are now conducting a systematic analysis to understand further the impact of horizontal shared leadership on project team performance. Because the study is primarily concerned with the shared leadership practices of project teams in Pakistan,

The study's target audience was restricted to project-based organizations and project team members within Pakistan's borders. This study sample is a project-based team population working in Pakistan. People who work as team members in project-based companies or any project within Pakistan's borders were studied to see how shared leadership impacted their work performance. When it comes to distributed leadership processes, which are based on distributive leadership and need participation from every project team member, the standard approach was to reach out to project teams and collect data from each member individually. A cross-sectional study was conducted because the goal was to distribute and gather nearly 300 replies. Time was not a factor because all the data could not be collected at once. National and multinational Pakistani project-based organizations engaged in social service, healthcare, infrastructure, and software development projects. The information is gathered using an online questionnaire that had to be completed using Google forms' online facility. Non-probability sampling is utilized in this investigation because it is convenient and allows for judgment.

### **Research Instrument & Reliability**

Below research instruments were used in the data collection process.

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Nature</i>	<i>Citation</i>	<i>Reliability</i>	<i>Items</i>
Shared Leadership	IV	Pearce & Sims (2002)	90	7
Team Performance	DV	Barrick, Murray (1998)	87	6
Trust	M	Kirkman, Bradley L. (2006)	76	6
Stress Propensity	M	Colquitt, Jason A. (2001)	82	4

## **RESULTS:Demographics**

*Table 2: Gender Distribution.*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
Male	200	64.9	64.9	64.9
Female	108	35.1	35.1	100
Total	308	100	100	

As seen in Table 2, the present study sample included a diverse mix of men and women. The table shows that 64.9 percent of the 200 people who participated in the survey were men, and 108 were female, with 35.1 percent.

*Table 3: Age Distribution*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative
20-30 Years	124	40.3	40.3	40.3
31-40 Years	96	41.2	41.2	71.4
41-50 Years	49	15.9	15.9	87.3
50 and above	39	12.7	12.7	100
Total	308	100	100	

Data on the frequency and percentage of people in the current study sample that fit into different age categories are shown in Table 3. Results show 40.3% of respondents were between the ages of 20 and 30; 41.2% were between the ages of 31 and 40; 15.9% were between the ages of 41 and 50, and 12.7% were over the age of 50.

**Table 4: Experience Distribution**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative
1-3 Years	36	11.7	11.7	11.7
4-6 Years	128	41.6	41.6	53.2
7-9 Years	81	26.3	26.3	79.5
10 Years and above	63	20.5	20.5	100
Total	308	100	100	

Table 4 displays data on the frequency and percentage of respondents in the current study sample about work experience. According to the data, 11.7% of respondents have work experience between one and three years, 41.6% have work experience between four and six years, 26.3% have work experience between seven and nine years, and 20.5% have work experience of ten years or more.

### Correlation Analysis

The bi-variate analysis is used to investigate and measure the association and strength of the relationship between two variables and is known as correlation analysis. Pearson's correlation coefficient measures the strength of a statistical association between two variables and is used in testing statistics and statistical analysis. The relationship between the independent variable, shared leadership, the dependent variable, team performance, the mediating variable, trust, and the stressing propensity was investigated using Pearson's correlation analysis in SPSS (Asada et al., 2020; Junoh et al., 2019; Basheer et al., 2019a; Muneer et al., 2019; Basheer et al., 2019b; Basheer et al., 2018; Hameed et al., 2019). Table 5 shows the correlation between all of the theoretical variables.

**Table 5: Pearson Correlation**

	1	2	3	4
Shared Leadership	1	.392**	.451**	-.420**
Team Performance		1	.551**	-.362**
Trust			1	-.610**
Stress Propensity				1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



The above table shows that shared leadership has a positive association with team performance ( $r=.39, p<.01$ ). Moreover, shared leadership has a significant positive association with trust ( $r=.45, p<.01$ ) and a negative correlation with stress propensity ( $r=-.42, p<.01$ ). Team performance has a significant positive association with Trust ( $r=.55, p<.01$ ) and negative with stress propensity ( $r=-.36, p<.01$ ). Lastly, Trust and stress propensity are negatively correlated. Statistics shows ( $r=-.61, p<.01$ ).

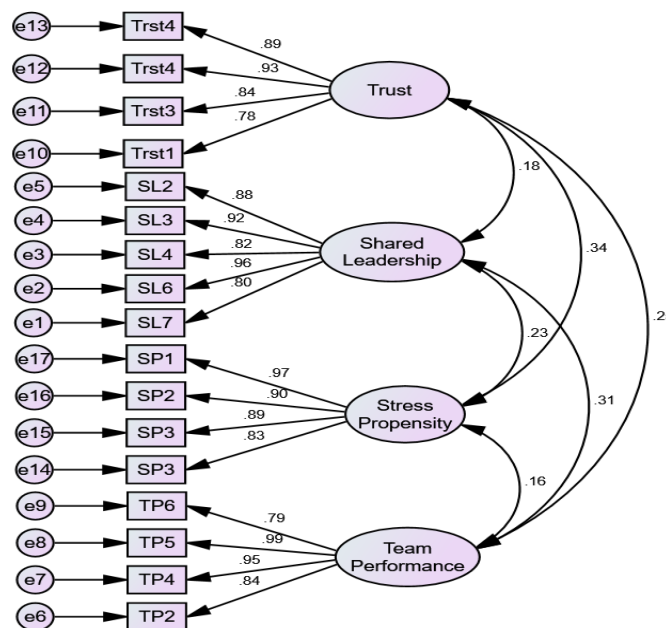
## Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

### Measurement Model

Structural equation modeling is a comprehensive statistical approach, including measurement and structural models. The measurement model determines the construct validities, and the structural part helps assess hypotheses. Structural equation modeling, as defined by Hair et al. (2017), is a multivariate approach that includes both measurements and structural model evaluation. The model's goodness of fit (GoF) was first determined using confirmatory factor analysis. The results of the modified CFA are shown in Figure 2. The model modification was implicated in achieving better model fitness and model identification. In this regard, CFA outcomes revealed that shared leadership would be well estimated with SL2, SL3, SL4, SL6, and SL7. These measured items have suitable loadings, and other things like SL1 and SL5 were eliminated due to low item loading.

In the same way, Trust is now estimated with Trst2, Trst3, and Trust 4. Other measured items were removed due to low loadings. The stress propensity and team performance also show suitable item loadings. Moreover, validities like AVE and CR were observed after assessing factor loadings. The average variance extracted and composite reliability shows that measured items were hung together to explain each construct. Further, discriminate validity was also observed, and results showed that all study constructs were in line with the respective measured items. Lastly, model fit indices show the model's suitable goodness of fit.

**Figure 2: CFA Modified**



**Table 6: Convergent Validity**

Criterion	Shared Leadership	Team Performance	Trust	Stress Propensity
If AVE score >.50	.79	.84	.92	.84
If CR >.70	.91	.90	.94	.92
	Established	Established	Established	Established

**Table 7: Discriminant Validity**

Constructs	Factor Correlation	Correlation Squared	AVE <sub>1</sub> (AVE should be >r <sup>2</sup> )	AVE <sub>2</sub>	Discriminant Validity
Trust<-->Shared Leadership	.18	.032	.92	.79	Established
Trust<-->Stress Propensity	.34	.115	.92	.84	Established
Trust<-->Team Performance	.25	.062	.92	.84	Established
Shared Leadership<-->Stress Propensity	.23	.052	.79	.84	Established
Shared Leadership<-->Team Performance	.31	.096	.79	.84	Established
Stress Propensity<-->Team Performance	.16	.025	.84	.84	Established

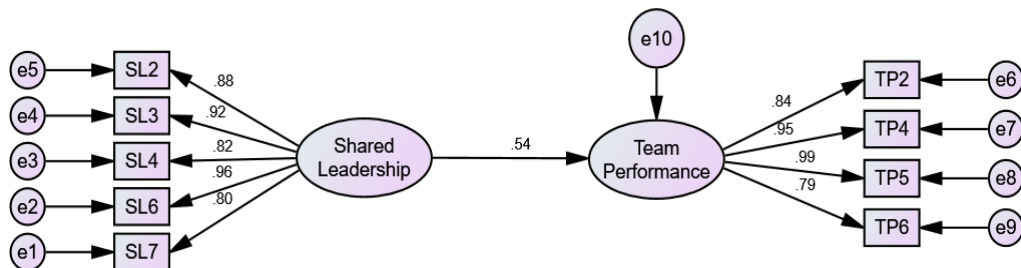
**Model Fit Indices**

CMIN/DF=1.77, GFI=0.97, AGFI=0.96, RFI=0.95, TLI=0.98, CFI=0.94, RMSEA=0.06

*Fornell&Larcker, (1981)*

**1.1.1. Structural Model Assessment**

**Figure 3: Shared Leadership and Team Performance**



After model identification in CFA analysis, the structural part reports the model outcomes for hypothesis 1. The results demonstrate that shared leadership significantly and positively affects team performance. In this regard, the coefficient value shows a .54 positive effect at a 0.001 level of significance. Hence, proposed hypothesis 1 is retained in this study.

**Figure 4: Shared Leadership → Trust → Stress Propensity → Team Performance**

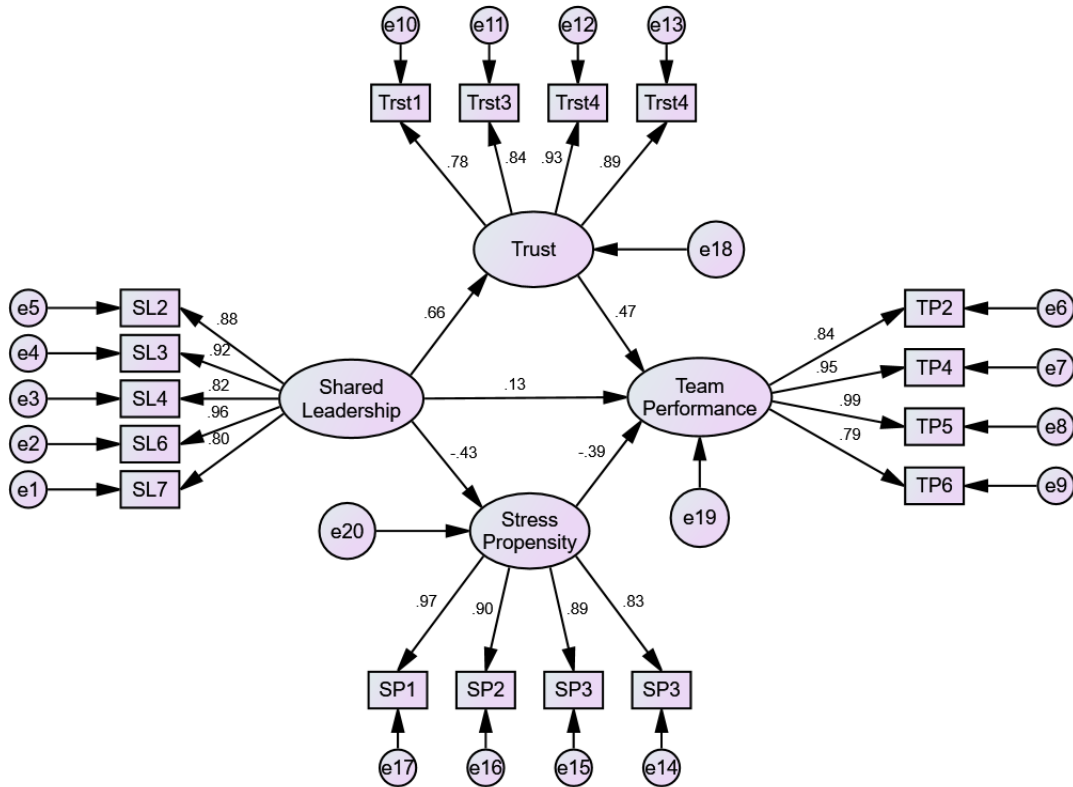


Figure 3 represents the final model outcomes to assess hypotheses 2 and 3. This study shows the multi-mediating mechanism of trust and stress propensity on the relationship between shared leadership and team performance. It is seen that the coefficient values of total effect (Shared leadership → Team performance) which was .54 at 0.001 level of significance after induction of mediators stress propensity and trust, the full impact reduced to .13 between shared leadership and team performance. The results confirmed that hypotheses 2 and 3 had been retained and the model has a multi-mediating mechanism. The results report that trust and stress propensity work as possible causes of shared leadership, emphasizing team performance. Lastly, the model's goodness of fit was suitable enough.

## DISCUSSIONS

Project teams working in Pakistan were interested in seeing how shared leadership affected their performance. That's why this study focused on that topic. In Pakistan, project-based organizations have only been introduced recently, so the assumption has been that vertical leadership will be the norm from now on. However, research into project management has

shown that shared leadership (also known as rotating leadership) is more suitable and promising for project teams, and acceptance of adopting it is increasing, which led to the creation of this study. It was shown that trust and stress tendencies acted as mediating factors between shared leadership and team productivity. Studying project teams working within Pakistan's borders, the data was gathered from individuals who were part of various project teams, including IT, infrastructure, healthcare, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A recent study used these variables as mediators to predict the relationship between trust and stress propensity between shared leadership and project team performance. Trust and stress propensity are essential in any leadership practice because it aids the leader in influencing the followers. However, in shared leadership, trust and stress propensity are even more critical because there is no single leader to follow.

## **CONCLUSION**

With work settings and practices constantly changing due to the increasing prevalence of organization models based on projects, it's critical to identify how project teams may become highly efficient and effective. This research is based on investigating shared leadership strategies that improve team performance by building trust among team members to find out the same. The results corroborated the original hypothesis. There were 308 questionnaires sent out to project teams in Pakistan, and quantitative data was culled from those. To arrive at the results, researchers gathered and examined the relevant data. Correlation and structural equation modeling (sem) analyses were performed using SPSS, and a mediation test was conducted using Sobel (1982). Trust and stress tendencies positively affect shared leadership and team performance. Shared leadership has been shown to favorably impact team performance by reducing the likelihood of stress and increasing trust.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

It adds to previous theoretical studies and has theoretical implications for project management. With the introduction of CPEC and its associated industries, project-based businesses are booming in Pakistan. What necessitates the maintenance of high-performance levels within project teams to meet project deadlines and costs. There needs to be an overhaul of the work environment and leadership styles in these project teams, as vertical leadership with a single designated leader is expected and widely recognized traditionally as horizontal leadership. According to the current research findings, project teams in Pakistan should follow a more effective strategy. The study adds to the project management literature by examining the role that confidence in shared leadership plays in helping project teams perform at their best. Although the concept of shared leadership is relatively new, it has become a focus of recent studies that examine its effects as a predictor, mediator, and moderator. Further research into its practices and their impact on team environments is also being conducted, with multiple elements influencing them being examined. This study opens new perspectives for study and research in the context of project teams working inside Pakistan's geographical boundaries on shared leadership and its consequences and factors affecting and mediating them.

This research also contributes to understanding the importance of trust and stress propensity inside teams to improve intra-team practices and reach a common goal more quickly and effectively. Developing trust is critical to getting the most out of project team

members and avoiding unnecessary disagreement, which can squander valuable project team time and lead to failure. The success of a project is determined by the length of time it takes to accomplish it and the amount of money it costs.

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