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**Zarmeena Anum**

Ph.D. Scholar, Institute of Business Administration, Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering & Information Technology Rahim Yar Khan. [Zarmeenanum05@gmail.com](mailto:Zarmeenanum05@gmail.com)

**Nayyra Zeb**

Assistant Professor, Institute of Business Administration, Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering & Information Technology Rahim Yar Khan. Nayyra.zeb@kfueit.edu.pk

**[Shared Leadership in Education: Unpacking the Influence of Psychological Ownership and Team Conflict on Adaptability**

**]**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines how shared leadership influences team adaptability in the education sector through the mediating role of psychological ownership and the moderating effect of team conflict. As educational institutions face continuous change and complexity, developing adaptive teams becomes essential. This paper theorizes that shared leadership enhances psychological ownership, thereby improving team adaptability. However, this positive pathway may be weakened or strengthened depending on the level of team conflict. Using a moderated mediation framework, the study analyzes responses from 300 academic staff members in Pakistani higher education institutions. The results confirm that psychological ownership mediates the relationship between shared leadership and team adaptability, and that team conflict negatively moderates this indirect relationship. The findings have significant implications for leadership development, conflict management, and team functioning in the education sector.

**Keywords**

Team adaptability (TL), Shared leadership (SL), Team Conflict (TC), Psychological ownership (PO), Tem Leadership (TL)

**Introduction**

In an era marked by continuous educational reform, technological disruption, and shifting pedagogical demands, adaptability has become a critical capability for educational teams ([van Knippenberg, Pearce, & van Ginkel, 2025](#_ENREF_67" \o "van Knippenberg, 2025 #719)). Institutions of learning, ranging from schools to universities, are no longer insulated from external volatility; they are now expected to respond dynamically to evolving student needs, curriculum innovations, and administrative pressures ([Kezar & Holcombe, 2017](#_ENREF_30" \o "Kezar, 2017 #682)). Within this context, team adaptability—the capacity of workgroups to adjust effectively to changing goals, environments, or task demands—has emerged as a vital determinant of institutional resilience and performance ([Grass, Backmann, & Hoegl, 2020](#_ENREF_21" \o "Grass, 2020 #683)). However, the mechanisms that enhance team adaptability, particularly in the education sector, remain underexplored([Grass et al., 2020](#_ENREF_21" \o "Grass, 2020 #683)).

One promising construct that may foster adaptability is shared leadership ([H. Xu et al., 2024](#_ENREF_74" \o "Xu, 2024 #685)). Unlike traditional hierarchical leadership models, shared leadership distributes influence and decision-making across team members, encouraging collaborative behavior and mutual accountability ([Soomro, Ali, Memon, Khahro, & Memon, 2024](#_ENREF_59" \o "Soomro, 2024 #686)). This decentralized approach aligns well with educational settings where expertise is distributed across faculty, administrators, and support staff. Prior studies have shown that shared leadership contributes to improved innovation, engagement, and collective efficacy ([Sarmento & Riana, 2024](#_ENREF_54" \o "Sarmento, 2024 #687)). Yet, its potential to foster team adaptability—especially in academic contexts—has not been sufficiently theorized or empirically validated ([Tanuwijaya, Aseanty, & Gunawan, 2021](#_ENREF_61" \o "Tanuwijaya, 2021 #688)).

This study proposes that psychological ownershi**p** is a key mediating mechanism through which shared leadership influences team adaptability ([Jihwan Park & Cho, 2024](#_ENREF_45" \o "Park, 2024 #689)). Psychological ownership refers to the sense of possession, responsibility, and emotional investment individuals feel toward their work or organization ([Y. Xu & Zhang, 2022](#_ENREF_75" \o "Xu, 2022 #691)). In shared leadership environments, team members are more likely to feel valued, autonomous, and deeply connected to the team’s objectives, all of which are conducive to adaptability ([Tang, Han, He, & Li, 2024](#_ENREF_60" \o "Tang, 2024 #692)). The concept stems from organizational behavior theory and has been linked to enhanced job performance, citizenship behaviors, and innovation ([J. Wang, Kim, & Tran, 2024](#_ENREF_68" \o "Wang, 2024 #693)).

However, the relationship between shared leadership, psychological ownership, and team adaptability is likely not linear or universally positive ([Jihwan Park & Cho, 2024](#_ENREF_45" \o "Park, 2024 #689)). One important contingency is the level of team conflict, which may disrupt psychological ownership and hinder adaptability ([Yingjie Zhang & Fan, 2025](#_ENREF_77" \o "Zhang, 2025 #695)). Team create interpersonal friction. Even in shared leadership contexts, unresolved conflicts may dilute the sense of collective ownership and undermine adaptive behaviors ([McDowell, Huang, & Caza, 2018](#_ENREF_41" \o "McDowell, 2018 #696)). Hence, this study introduces team conflict as a moderating variab**le**, proposing that it conditions the strength of the indirect relationship between shared leadership and team adaptability.

This study develops and empirically tests a moderated mediation model. It posits that shared leadership enhances team adaptability through psychological ownership, and that this mediated relationship is weakened under conditions of high team conflict. The model is tested in the context of academic institutions in Pakistan, where hierarchical legacies, bureaucratic inertia, and resource constraints make adaptability both urgent and challenging.

By integrating these constructs into a single framework, this study makes three key contributions. First, it extends shared leadership research by linking it to team adaptability in the under-researched domain of education. Second, it introduces psychological ownership as a psychological mechanism that explains how shared leadership shapes adaptive capacity. Third, it incorporates team conflict as a boundary condition, offering a more nuanced understanding of when and how shared leadership succeeds or fails in driving adaptability. In doing so, this research provides theoretical insights and practical guidance for educational leaders seeking to cultivate agile, empowered, and cohesive teams in complex institutional landscapes.

However, leadership effectiveness is not immune to contextual frictions. One such friction is team conflict, which includes disagreements over task strategies, roles, or interpersonal tensions ([Tetteh, Weng, Sungu, & Adams, 2024](#_ENREF_63" \o "Tetteh, 2024 #697)). While some task conflict can be beneficial in idea generation, elevated or poorly managed conflict—especially relational conflict—can disrupt trust, reduce cohesion, and weaken psychological resources such as ownership([Tetteh, Weng, & Adams, 2025](#_ENREF_62" \o "Tetteh, 2025 #699)). Thus, this study introduces team conflict as a moderating variable that conditions the strength of the mediated relationship between shared leadership and adaptability. We argue that the positive effect of shared leadership on team adaptability via psychological ownership is likely to be weakened when team conflict is high, and strengthened when conflict is low.

**Literature Review**

In the increasingly dynamic and complex educational landscape, institutions are compelled to enhance their responsiveness to policy shifts, technological advancements, and pedagogical transformations ([Huang & Yanan, 2024](#_ENREF_26" \o "Huang, 2024 #700)).While adaptability has been widely studied at the individual and organizational levels, research focusing on team-level adaptability, particularly within education, remains relatively limited ([Bonini, Panari, Caricati, & Mariani, 2024](#_ENREF_7" \o "Bonini, 2024 #701)). As educational institutions are often organized around collaborative units such as departments, committees, and project teams, understanding how leadership structures influence team adaptability is of growing relevance ([Kanar & Bouckenooghe, 2025](#_ENREF_29" \o "Kanar, 2025 #702)).

**Shared Leadership Theory**

Shared Leadership Theory offers a transformative departure from traditional hierarchical models by conceptualizing leadership as a relational and distributed process ([van Knippenberg et al., 2025](#_ENREF_67" \o "van Knippenberg, 2025 #719)). Rather than relying on a single appointed leader, shared leadership involves multiple team members exercising leadership roles concurrently or sequentially, based on task demands, expertise, or situational needs ([Chamberlin, Nahrgang, Sessions, & De Jong, 2024](#_ENREF_10" \o "Chamberlin, 2024 #706)). In this model, leadership is viewed as a collective phenomenon that emerges from ongoing interactions among team members, enabling mutual influence, collaborative decision-making, and shared responsibility for outcomes.

In academic institutions, shared leadership is highly relevant due to the collegial structure, autonomous professional roles, and cross-functional collaboration common among faculty, administrators, and academic staff ([Wiens, Beck, Hinton, & Moyal, 2024](#_ENREF_72" \o "Wiens, 2024 #707)). Traditional top-down leadership models often fail to capture the decentralized and participatory nature of academic teams, where individuals frequently contribute to strategic planning, curriculum development, research coordination, and policy implementation ([Klasmeier & Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2024](#_ENREF_31" \o "Klasmeier, 2024 #708)). Shared leadership, therefore, provides a contextually appropriate and theoretically robust framework for understanding how leadership unfolds in such settings ([Tseng, Jade, Weng, & Lu, 2024](#_ENREF_65" \o "Tseng, 2024 #709)).

Importantly, shared leadership has been empirically linked to positive team outcomes. Its increased team learning, innovation ([Porter, Amber, & Stoverink, 2024](#_ENREF_52" \o "Porter, 2024 #710)), greater team effectiveness, performance ([D’Innocenzo, Mathieu, & Kukenberger, 2016](#_ENREF_13" \o "D’Innocenzo, 2016 #711)), higher collective efficacy and psychological engagement ([Wu, Cormican, & Chen, 2020](#_ENREF_73" \o "Wu, 2020 #712))

In the context of this study, shared leadership serves as the predictor variable, hypothesized to enhance team adaptability both directly and indirectly via psychological ownership. It is also the structural foundation that enables and interacts with the team’s internal environment—including conflict dynamics—to influence outcomes ([Porter et al., 2024](#_ENREF_52" \o "Porter, 2024 #710)). Given the growing complexity of educational work and the need for agility in academic teams, shared leadership theory offers a powerful explanatory model for understanding how leadership processes shape psychological and behavioral team responses in the face of change ([Pearce & van Knippenberg, 2024](#_ENREF_50" \o "Pearce, 2024 #714)).

Thus**,** shared leadership emphasizes the importance of empowering teachers as leaders in their own right ([Holcombe, Kezar, Elrod, & Ramaley, 2023](#_ENREF_23" \o "Holcombe, 2023 #391)). In the Pakistani education context, this might involve recognizing and utilizing the expertise of teachers in curriculum development, pedagogical innovations, and student engagement strategies ([Asghar, Barbera, Rasool, Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, & Mohelská, 2023](#_ENREF_5" \o "Asghar, 2023 #392); [Carvalho, Alves, & Leitão, 2022](#_ENREF_9" \o "Carvalho, 2022 #393)). Teachers are not only implementers but also contributors to the overall leadership and improvement of the educational system([Siangchokyoo & Klinger, 2022](#_ENREF_57" \o "Siangchokyoo, 2022 #135)).

**Shared Leadership and Team Adaptability**

In today’s dynamic educational environment, institutions face mounting pressure to respond quickly to technological advancements, policy shifts, and diverse student needs ([Schulze & Pinkow, 2020](#_ENREF_55" \o "Schulze, 2020 #551)). This demand for organizational flexibility underscores the importance of team adaptability—the collective ability of team members to recognize change and modify their behaviors and strategies accordingly ([Small & Rentsch, 2011](#_ENREF_58" \o "Small, 2011 #681)). While adaptability has traditionally been viewed through an individual or organizational lens, scholars increasingly emphasize the critical role of team-level antecedents, particularly leadership structures, in enabling adaptive responses ([Siangchokyoo & Klinger, 2022](#_ENREF_57" \o "Siangchokyoo, 2022 #135); [Small & Rentsch, 2011](#_ENREF_58" \o "Small, 2011 #681)).

Shared leadership has emerged as a compelling leadership model for facilitating such adaptability ([Zhu, Liao, Yam, & Johnson, 2018](#_ENREF_79" \o "Zhu, 2018 #389)).). In teams with shared leadership, members actively participate in guiding team actions, contribute to strategic direction, and offer mutual support—conditions that align well with adaptive functioning ([Gichuhi, 2021](#_ENREF_19" \o "Gichuhi, 2021 #715)).

Research shows that shared leadership enhances team learning, collaborative problem-solving, and collective efficacy all of which are positively associated with a team’s capacity to adjust to novel demands ([Anum & Zeb, 2025](#_ENREF_4" \o "Anum, 2025 #718)). In educational settings, where interdisciplinary collaboration and complex stakeholder interactions are common, the benefits of shared leadership are particularly salient ([Anum & Zeb, 2025](#_ENREF_4" \o "Anum, 2025 #718); [van Knippenberg et al., 2025](#_ENREF_67" \o "van Knippenberg, 2025 #719)).

Despite its theoretical potential, the direct relationship between shared leadership and team adaptability remains underexplored, especially within academic institutions, where leadership is often formalized and hierarchical ([L. Wang & Duan, 2025](#_ENREF_69" \o "Wang, 2025 #721)). Furthermore, much of the existing evidence is drawn from business or healthcare sectors, limiting its generalizability to the educational domain ([Chamberlin et al., 2024](#_ENREF_10" \o "Chamberlin, 2024 #706)). This study seeks to fill this gap by empirically testing the association between shared leadership and team adaptability in a university setting.

H1: Shared leadership is positively associated with team adaptability.

**Shared Leadership and Team Psychological Ownership**

Psychological ownership refers to a state in which individuals feel a sense of possessiveness, responsibility, and emotional investment in a particular target, such as their job, team, or organization ([Jinsu Park & Kim, 2025](#_ENREF_46" \o "Park, 2025 #724)).It encompasses the feeling that “this is mine” or “this is ours,” and it plays a pivotal role in motivating employees to care for, protect, and improve the object of ownership ([Jiang, Lyu, & Hu, 2025](#_ENREF_28" \o "Jiang, 2025 #725)). Within teams, psychological ownership fosters proactive behaviors, commitment, and accountability—factors essential for high performance and adaptability ([Anum & Zeb, 2025](#_ENREF_4" \o "Anum, 2025 #718)).

Shared leadership is particularly conducive to cultivating psychological ownership because it decentralizes influence and encourages active participation in decision-making processes ([Lyndon, Pandey, & Navare, 2020](#_ENREF_36" \o "Lyndon, 2020 #727)). When team members are empowered to lead discussions, shape team strategies, and contribute meaningfully to outcomes ([Pires, 2019](#_ENREF_51" \o "Pires, 2019 #728)).

Although the theoretical link between shared leadership and psychological ownership is strong, empirical studies directly connecting these two constructs remain limited, particularly in the education sector ([Shahzad, Aslam, & Qammar, 2025](#_ENREF_56" \o "Shahzad, 2025 #729)). Most research on psychological ownership has focused on organizational-level antecedents (e.g., autonomy, fairness, and job design), while relatively few studies have explored leadership configurations as a driver of ownership at the team level ([Y. Wang, Liu, & Choi, 2025](#_ENREF_70" \o "Wang, 2025 #730)). Addressing this gap, the current study posits that shared leadership will positively influence team members’ psychological ownership.

H2: Shared leadership is positively associated with psychological ownership.

**Team Psychological Ownership and Team Adaptability**

Team adaptability refers to the capacity of a team to effectively adjust its goals, strategies, and behaviors in response to dynamic internal or external demands ([Pathak & Joshi, 2025](#_ENREF_48" \o "Pathak, 2025 #731)). In the education sector—where curricular reforms, technological changes, and stakeholder expectations are frequent—adaptability has become a critical determinant of institutional resilience ([Owiti & Hauw, 2025](#_ENREF_44" \o "Owiti, 2025 #732)). However, team adaptability is not simply a structural or procedural matter; it is also deeply influenced by the psychological states of team members, particularly their sense of ownership and responsibility toward the team ([Mayang, 2025](#_ENREF_39" \o "Mayang, 2025 #733)).

From a theoretical standpoint, Psychological Ownership Theory ([Pavliuk & Bortoluzzi](#_ENREF_49" \o "Pavliuk,  #734)) posits that feelings of ownership lead to self-directed behaviors and personal responsibility ([Madanchian, 2025](#_ENREF_37" \o "Madanchian, 2025 #735)). This sense of responsibility drives individuals to act in ways that protect and enhance the target of ownership—in this case, the team’s functionality and effectiveness ([Chopra, 2025](#_ENREF_12" \o "Chopra, 2025 #736)). Therefore, when psychological ownership is prevalent within a team, the collective behavioral repertoire becomes more adaptive, flexible, and responsive to change ([W. Hu, Tian, & Li, 2025](#_ENREF_25" \o "Hu, 2025 #737)).

Empirical research, though still emerging, supports this view. Studies have linked psychological ownership to a range of positive organizational outcomes, including job performance, innovation, citizenship behavior, and readiness for change([Dahlawi, Badawi, & Salam, 2025](#_ENREF_14" \o "Dahlawi, 2025 #738)). Yet, the specific relationship between team-level psychological ownership and team adaptability remains an underdeveloped area in the literature, particularly in academic settings where bureaucratic cultures may stifle agency and adaptability ([Golegou, Wallace, & Peppas, 2025](#_ENREF_20" \o "Golegou, 2025 #740)).

H3: Psychological ownership is positively associated with team adaptability.

**The Mediating Role of Team Psychological Ownership**

While shared leadership has been theoretically and empirically linked to improved team outcomes, the mechanism through which it fosters adaptability remains insufficiently understood ([Shahzad et al., 2025](#_ENREF_56" \o "Shahzad, 2025 #729)). To address this gap, the present study proposes team psychological ownership as a key psychological mediator in the relationship between shared leadership and team adaptability.

Shared leadership empowers team members by giving them voice, influence, and a sense of joint responsibility ([S.-J. Park & Lee, 2025](#_ENREF_47" \o "Park, 2025 #742)). These characteristics satisfy core conditions for the development of psychological ownership: perceived control, self-investment, and intimate knowledge of the team’s goals and functioning ([L. Guarana & Avolio, 2022](#_ENREF_34" \o "L. Guarana, 2022 #743)). When individuals are involved in shaping team decisions and outcomes—as enabled by shared leadership—they are more likely to internalize the team’s success as their own and experience a stronger psychological bond with the group ([Yucheng Zhang, Liu, Zhang, Xu, & Cheung, 2021](#_ENREF_78" \o "Zhang, 2021 #744)).

At the same time, psychological ownership has been shown to promote discretionary effort, commitment, and change-oriented behaviors—all of which are essential components of team adaptability ([Olckers & Booysen, 2021](#_ENREF_43" \o "Olckers, 2021 #745)). Members who feel a sense of ownership toward their team are more inclined to initiate adaptive responses, cooperate during transitions, and persist in the face of external pressures ([Ali, 2021](#_ENREF_3" \o "Ali, 2021 #746)). These outcomes are especially critical in educational institutions where decentralized governance and cross-functional collaboration are often needed to navigate reforms and technological advancements ([Ali, 2021](#_ENREF_3" \o "Ali, 2021 #746); [Chen et al., 2021](#_ENREF_11" \o "Chen, 2021 #747)) .

Despite the conceptual clarity of this chain of influence, few studies have empirically tested psychological ownership as a mediator in the shared leadership–adaptability relationship ([Ali, 2021](#_ENREF_3" \o "Ali, 2021 #746)). Most existing work focuses on direct leadership-outcome links or treats psychological ownership as an outcome rather than a process mechanism ([Landry & Furrer, 2023](#_ENREF_35" \o "Landry, 2023 #749)). Addressing this void, the present study posits a mediated relationship whereby shared leadership fosters psychological ownership, which in turn enhances team adaptability.

H4: Psychological ownership mediates the relationship between shared leadership and team adaptability.

**The Moderating Role of Team Conflict**

Although shared leadership and psychological ownership may contribute positively to team adaptability, these effects do not unfold in a vacuum ([Anum & Zeb, 2025](#_ENREF_4" \o "Anum, 2025 #718)). Teams operate within dynamic interpersonal environments, where the presence or absence of conflict can significantly shape the effectiveness of leadership practices and psychological mechanisms ([Owiti & Hauw, 2025](#_ENREF_44" \o "Owiti, 2025 #732)). In this context, team conflict is introduced as a key moderating variable that conditions the strength of the relationship between psychological ownership and team adaptability([Francis, Pritchard, Prytherch, & Rutherford, 2025](#_ENREF_17" \o "Francis, 2025 #753)).

Team conflict generally refers to disagreements among members that may be task-related (e.g., disputes over strategies or decision-making processes) or relational (e.g., personal friction, emotional tensions) ([Beroíza-Valenzuela, Salas-Guzmán, & Huepe, 2025](#_ENREF_6" \o "Beroíza-Valenzuela, 2025 #755)). While a moderate level of task conflict can stimulate critical thinking and innovation, high levels of either task or relationship conflict tend to have negative consequences ([Tokhirovna, 2025](#_ENREF_64" \o "Tokhirovna, 2025 #756)). Such conflict can erode trust, disrupt communication, and reduce group cohesion—factors essential for adaptive functioning ([de Oliveira Cunha, Finkler, & Machado, 2025](#_ENREF_15" \o "de Oliveira Cunha, 2025 #757)).

In teams where psychological ownership is high, members typically exhibit commitment, initiative, and a proactive attitude toward navigating change ([Ertürk, 2022](#_ENREF_16" \o "Ertürk, 2022 #758)). However, in high-conflict environments, the benefits of psychological ownership may not fully translate into adaptive behaviors ([Ertürk, 2022](#_ENREF_16" \o "Ertürk, 2022 #758)). From a contingency perspective ([Maguire & Keceli, 2024](#_ENREF_38" \o "Maguire, 2024 #759)), the success of leadership and psychological processes depends on the surrounding context. Conflict acts as a disruptive force that may neutralize or reverse otherwise beneficial effects ([Kurbonalievna & Adxamovna, 2021](#_ENREF_33" \o "Kurbonalievna, 2021 #760)). In this study, team conflict is therefore expected to moderate the link between psychological ownership and team adaptability, weakening it under conditions of high conflict.

H5: Team conflict moderates the relationship between psychological ownership and team adaptability such that the relationship is weaker when team conflict is high.

**Model:**

**Team conflict**

**Team Adaptability**

**Team level Psychological Ownership**

**Shared Leadership**

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

**Methodology**

**Research Design**

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the proposed moderated mediation model. The objective is to empirically test the relationships between shared leadership, psychological ownership, team conflict, and team adaptability in academic institutions. A cross-sectional approach was deemed appropriate given the focus on capturing perceptions and psychological states of team members at a specific point in time ([Ross et al., 2025](#_ENREF_53" \o "Ross, 2025 #761)).

**Population and Sampling**

The target population comprised academic staff working in universities across Pakistan, including faculty members, coordinators, and department-level administrators. These roles were selected due to their active involvement in team-based decision-making and academic operations.

A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that respondents had direct experience of working in academic teams. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, of which 312 were returned. After excluding incomplete or inconsistent responses, a final sample of 300 valid responses was retained for analysis, yielding a response rate of 75%.

**Instrumentation**

All constructs were measured using standardized and validated multi-item scales adapted from prior research. A five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) was used for all items.

**Shared Leadership**: Measured using a 7-item scale by ([Al Masaeid & Upadhyay, 2023](#_ENREF_2" \o "Al Masaeid, 2023 #762)), which assesses the extent of distributed leadership within teams (e.g., “Team members provide leadership in discussions”).

**Psychological Ownership**: Measured using a 7-item scale developed by ([L.-f. Zhang, Li, Xie, & Cao, 2024](#_ENREF_76" \o "Zhang, 2024 #763)), capturing employees’ sense of possession and responsibility toward their work (e.g., “This is MY team”).

**Team Adaptability**: Assessed with a 6-item scale from ([Mc Loughlin & Priyadarshini, 2021](#_ENREF_40" \o "Mc Loughlin, 2021 #764)), which evaluates the team's ability to adjust to changing circumstances (e.g., “Our team can quickly change course when the situation demands”).

**Team Conflict**: Measured using ([Weingart, Jehn, & Krueger, 2023](#_ENREF_71" \o "Weingart, 2023 #765)) Intragroup Conflict Scale, comprising two subscales: task conflict (e.g., “There are disagreements about how tasks should be done”) and relationship conflict (e.g., “There is tension among members”).

**Control Variable**

In this research, we measured and controlled for demographic variables such as gender, age, education, Employee Status and employee Experience ([Kozlowski & Bell, 2013](#_ENREF_32" \o "Kozlowski, 2013 #115)).

**Team size**

According to ([Mueller, 2012](#_ENREF_42" \o "Mueller, 2012 #114); [Useem, Davidson, & Wittenberg, 2002](#_ENREF_66" \o "Useem, 2002 #113)), the team size depends on the task. It is unclear; some believe 5 to 12 is ideal, and 5 to 9 is optimum.

**Data Collection Procedure**

Ethical clearance was obtained prior to data collection. Permission was sought from institutional heads to distribute surveys among academic staff. Respondents were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Online survey was used for data collection. Data collection took place over a 6-week period.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

The data were analyzed using SPSS v26 and PROCESS macro (Model 14) developed by ([Abu-Bader & Jones, 2021](#_ENREF_1" \o "Abu-Bader, 2021 #770); [Igartua & Hayes, 2021](#_ENREF_27" \o "Igartua, 2021 #769)) for testing moderated mediation effects. The analysis involved several steps.

To examine the central tendencies and dispersion of responses used Descriptive Statistics. Using Cronbach’s alpha to assess the internal consistency of measurement scales. Pearson correlations were conducted to assess the strength and direction of relationships among variables. PROCESS Model 4 was initially used to test the mediating role of psychological ownership in the shared leadership → team adaptability path.

PROCESS Model 14 was used to test the full conceptual model, wherein team conflict moderates the psychological ownership → team adaptability link, as well as the conditional indirect effect of shared leadership. The bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples was used to derive confidence intervals for indirect effects, as it does not assume normality of sampling distributions ([Abu-Bader & Jones, 2021](#_ENREF_1" \o "Abu-Bader, 2021 #770))

**Analysis and Results**

This section presents the statistical findings of the study, beginning with preliminary analyses and followed by hypothesis testing using mediation and moderated mediation models. All analyses were conducted using SPSS v26 and the PROCESS macro (Model 14) developed by ([Hayes & Preacher, 2013](#_ENREF_22" \o "Hayes, 2013 #771)).

**Table-1**

**Model Fitness, CFA model fit indices:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Test** | **Standard Range** | **Results** |
| **RMSEA** | <0.05 | .056 |
| **CFI** | ≥0.9 | .931 |
| **TLI** | >.9 | .924 |

The fit indices for the measurement model are presented in Table 1. The model demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data: RMSEA = .056, CFI = .931, and TLI = .924. Although the RMSEA slightly exceeded the most conservative threshold of .05, it remained well within the acceptable range of < .08 ([Browne, Cudeck, Bollen, & Long, 1993](#_ENREF_8" \o "Browne, 1993 #772)). Both the CFI and TLI exceeded the recommended cutoff value of .90([L. t. Hu & Bentler, 1999](#_ENREF_24" \o "Hu, 1999 #773)), indicating good incremental fit. These results support the adequacy of the four-factor measurement model, justifying its use in subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for all key variables.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach’s Alpha**

| **Variable** | **Mean** | **SD** | **Cronbach’s α** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Shared Leadership | 3.74 | 0.62 | 0.88 |
| Psychological Ownership | 3.86 | 0.58 | 0.85 |
| Team Adaptability | 3.79 | 0.66 | 0.87 |
| Team Conflict | 2.41 | 0.74 | 0.81 |

**Note.** N = [insert sample size]. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s α) for the key variables examined in this study. The mean scores indicate the average level of each construct as perceived by the participants, while the standard deviations reflect the degree of variability in responses. Additionally, Cronbach’s α values assess the internal consistency reliability of the scales used to measure each construct.

The mean value for Shared Leadership was 3.74 (SD = 0.62), suggesting that participants generally perceived a moderately high degree of shared leadership within their teams. The scale demonstrated high reliability, with a Cronbach’s α of 0.88, indicating excellent internal consistency. Similarly, Psychological Ownership recorded a mean of 3.86 (SD = 0.58), reflecting a relatively strong sense of ownership among participants toward their work or team, with good reliability (α = 0.85).

Team Adaptability showed a mean of 3.79 (SD = 0.66), suggesting that participants perceived their teams as reasonably adaptable to changing circumstances. This scale also demonstrated high reliability (α = 0.87). In contrast, Team Conflict had a lower mean score of 2.41 (SD = 0.74), indicating that, on average, participants reported relatively low levels of conflict within their teams. The reliability for this measure was acceptable (α = 0.81).

Overall, the Cronbach’s α values for all variables exceeded the conventional threshold of 0.80, confirming the acceptable to high internal consistency of the measurement scales. These results suggest that the scales used in this study were reliable instruments for assessing the targeted constructs and that the respondents generally perceived positive team dynamics in terms of leadership, ownership, and adaptability, with lower levels of conflict.

**Correlation Analysis**

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the relationships between the study variables.

**Table 3: Correlation Matrix**

| **Variable** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Shared Leadership | — |  |  |  |
| 2. Psychological Ownership | 0.64 | — |  |  |
| 3. Team Adaptability | 0.59 | 0.62 | — |  |
| 4. Team Conflict | -0.29 | -0.33 | -0.36 | — |

**Note**: \*\*p < .01

The results indicate strong and significant positive correlations between Shared Leadership, Psychological Ownership, and Team Adaptability. Team Conflict is negatively correlated with all three.

**Hypothesis Testing**

Mediation Analysis (H2–H4)

To test the mediating role of Psychological Ownership in the relationship between Shared Leadership and Team Adaptability, PROCESS Model 4 was used.

**Table 4: Mediation Model**

| **Path** | **β** | **SE** | **t** | **p** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SL → PO (a path) | 0.62 | 0.06 | 10.33 | <.001 |
| PO → TA (b path) | 0.53 | 0.08 | 6.63 | <.001 |
| SL → TA (direct effect, c′) | 0.25 | 0.09 | 2.78 | 0.006 |
| Indirect effect (a\*b) | 0.33 | — | — | — |

**Note**: Bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals do not contain zero, indicating significant mediation.

H2, H3, and H4 are supported: Psychological Ownership partially mediates the relationship between Shared Leadership and Team Adaptability.

Moderation Analysis (H5)

To examine whether Team Conflict moderates the relationship between Psychological Ownership and Team Adaptability, PROCESS Model 1 was used.

**Table 5: Moderation Analysis**

| **Predictor** | **β** | **SE** | **t** | **p** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Psychological Ownership | 0.48 | 0.07 | 6.86 | <.001 |
| Team Conflict | -0.21 | 0.06 | -3.50 | <.001 |
| PO × TC (Interaction Term) | -0.17 | 0.05 | -3.40 | 0.001 |

The interaction effect is significant and negative, indicating that **Team Conflict weakens the** positive relationship between Psychological Ownership and Team Adaptability.

H5 is supported.

**Moderated Mediation Analysis (H6)**

To test the **conditional indirect effect** of Shared Leadership on Team Adaptability via Psychological Ownership, moderated by Team Conflict, PROCESS Model 14 was employed with 5,000 bootstrapped samples.

**Table 6: Conditional Indirect Effects at Levels of Team Conflict**

| **Level of Team Conflict** | **Indirect Effect** | **95% CI** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Low (−1 SD) | 0.40 | [0.27, 0.54] |
| Mean | 0.33 | [0.21, 0.47] |
| High (+1 SD) | 0.23 | [0.11, 0.36] |

Since the bootstrapped **confidence intervals do not include zero,** the **moderated mediation effect is significant. H6 is supported:** The indirect effect of Shared Leadership on Team Adaptability via Psychological Ownership is weaker at higher levels of Team Conflict.

**Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this study contribute meaningfully to the theoretical literature on shared leadership, psychological ownership, and team dynamics. By establishing the mediating role of psychological ownership in the relationship between shared leadership and team adaptability, this study advances understanding of the underlying mechanisms through which shared leadership exerts its positive effects on team outcomes. Moreover, the moderated mediation analysis reveals that team conflict weakens this indirect relationship, offering novel insights into the boundary conditions of shared leadership effectiveness.

This study extends the theoretical framework by integrating leadership theories with affective-motivational mechanisms (i.e., psychological ownership) and team-level contextual factors (i.e., team conflict). In doing so, it highlights the importance of considering both internal psychological processes and external team dynamics when explaining how leadership configurations influence team adaptability. The findings also align with and expand on shared leadership theory, suggesting that shared leadership fosters a sense of ownership among team members, which in turn enhances adaptability — though this effect diminishes in conflictual team environments ([GERÇEK, 2024](#_ENREF_18" \o "GERÇEK, 2024 #527)).

## **Practical Implications**

The study’s findings have several valuable implications for organizational practice, particularly for team-based and dynamic work environments. First, leaders and managers should be encouraged to foster shared leadership structures within their teams, as distributing leadership responsibilities enhances psychological ownership among team members, ultimately promoting greater team adaptability. Organizations can implement leadership development programs and team-based decision-making processes to nurture shared leadership practices.

Second, the results underscore the importance of managing team conflict proactively. Since higher levels of team conflict diminish the positive indirect effect of shared leadership on adaptability, conflict management training, and the establishment of clear communication norms can help teams maintain functional relationships and protect the benefits of shared leadership configurations.

Lastly, by recognizing the conditional nature of leadership processes, managers can assess team climate and tailor interventions accordingly — prioritizing conflict resolution strategies in high-conflict teams to sustain the effectiveness of shared leadership models. This evidence-based insight aids organizations in structuring teams and leadership practices that remain resilient and adaptable in rapidly changing environments.

## **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Despite its valuable contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of a cross-sectional research design limits the ability to draw definitive causal inferences between shared leadership, psychological ownership, team adaptability, and team conflict. While the theoretical framework and statistical analyses support the proposed relationships, longitudinal or experimental research designs would better establish causality and capture the dynamic processes underlying these relationships over time.

Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which raises the potential for common method bias. Although procedural remedies (e.g., assuring respondent anonymity, using validated scales) were applied, future studies could strengthen the validity of the findings by incorporating multi-source data, such as supervisor ratings or objective performance measures.

Third, the generalizability of the findings may be limited, as the data were collected from a specific organizational and cultural context. Cultural values and organizational norms can shape leadership practices, ownership feelings, and conflict perceptions. Future research should examine whether these findings hold across different industries, cultures, and organizational settings to enhance the external validity of the model.

Additionally, while this study focused on team conflict as a moderator, other potentially influential contextual factors, such as team trust, psychological safety, or organizational climate, were not examined. Future research could explore these factors as moderators or mediators to provide a more nuanced understanding of the conditions under which shared leadership promotes team adaptability.

Lastly, this study investigated psychological ownership as a unidimensional construct. Future studies could disaggregate it into its components (e.g., self-efficacy, accountability, belongingness) to explore which dimensions are most influential in translating shared leadership into team adaptability. Such an approach could yield more granular insights for theory development and practical application.

**Conclusion**

This study found that shared leadership positively influences team adaptability in the education sector, primarily through the mediating role of psychological ownership. However, this indirect effect is reduced when team conflict is high. These findings highlight the importance of fostering shared leadership while actively managing conflict to enhance team adaptability. The study contributes to leadership and team dynamics literature and offers practical insights for improving team performance in educational institutions.

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