



Rising Scholars Conference
Organizations & Management Student Research Presentations

Shilaan Alzahawi
shilaan@stanford.edu

Stanford University
Graduate School of Business

Shilaan Alzahawi is a PhD Candidate in Organizational Behavior at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. She is interested in leadership, including leader selection; leader emergence; leader evaluation; and leader effectiveness. Her dissertation focuses on the traits, behaviors, and processes that predict adverse leader selection and evaluation, with the goal of understanding why, despite the strong incentives at play, we often fail to place the right person in charge. In addition to her substantive work in Organizational Behavior, Shilaan is a Stanford Data Science Scholar and a Master's student in Statistics, with a strong interest in Open and Reproducible Science. In her free time, she enjoys deadlifting, hiking, and taking board games much too seriously.

Abstract:

A Legend in One's Own Mind: The Link Between Ambition and Leadership Evaluations

Individuals who are more ambitious – those with a persistent striving for attainment and success – are more likely to become leaders. But are these ambitious individuals also more effective in leadership roles? Studies of leader emergence and effectiveness reveal a discrepancy between the attributes that help individuals attain leadership roles and those that make them effective leaders (Antonakis 2011). Leader emergence and selection may be based on characteristics that seem to matter for leadership but are, in fact, abstract construals, illusory correlations, or stereotypical proxies for leadership effectiveness.

Research on self-serving bias indicates that people struggle to gauge their own effectiveness and often report inflated views of their competence (Dunning et al. 1990). At the same time, leadership roles often come with attractive material and psychological rewards. Rather than calibrating their ambition to their actual effectiveness, individuals drawn to leadership roles for reasons unrelated to their aptitude may instead inflate their self-perceptions to align with their ambition. Relying on theories of motivated reasoning, we hypothesize that ambition reduces self-awareness, leading individuals to perceive greater leadership aptitude in themselves than warranted.

Methods

Study 1a (N = 1,371 ratings of 177 executives) and 1b (N = 2,442 ratings of 291 executives) relied on managers enrolled in an executive education course at a US business school. Each executive rated their personal ambition. To capture their effectiveness, we used an archive of 360-degree leadership assessments independently gathered from each executive's managers, peers, and subordinates, as well as themselves.

Study 2 (N = 829 ratings of 181 MBA students) relied on a leadership simulation rated by expert evaluators. All first-year MBA students at a US business school took a leadership skills course that culminated in a one-day competition, during which they presented and enacted their solution to a leadership challenge. Judges – who held an average of 36 years post-MBA work experience and job titles such as VP, CEO, and Managing Director – rated each presenter on their leadership effectiveness.

Study 3 (N = 305 ratings of 101 leaders) recruited a nationally representative sample to participate in an hour-long leadership simulation focused on a group decision-making task. Participants were randomly assigned to act as the leader or one of three followers and learned they would work together to select a new CFO for a fictitious company, with the group discussion led by the group leader. We partnered with a company to recruit a nationally representative sample with respect to race, gender, age, income, and geographic location.

Results

We rely on third-party evaluations of a leader's effectiveness captured in 360-degree assessments, expert-rated simulations, and zero-acquaintance groups. H1 predicts a positive relationship between ambition and self-rated leadership effectiveness. Ambition and the 360-degree leadership self-assessment are positively related in Study 1a, $r = 0.21$, 95% CI [0.07, 0.35], $p = .005$, and in Study 1b, $r = 0.17$, 95% CI [0.06, 0.28], $p = .003$.

H2 predicts a lack of association between ambition and third-party ratings of leadership effectiveness. We find no significant relationship between self-rated ambition and third-party ratings of leader effectiveness in Study 1A, $b = 0.04$, 95% CI [-0.01, 0.08], $p = .146$, Study 1B, $b = 0.01$, 95% CI [-0.03, 0.04], $p = .680$, Study 2, $b = -0.06$, 95% CI [-0.16, 0.04], $p = .240$, and Study 3, $b = -0.06$, 95% CI [-0.18, 0.06], $p = .312$.

Bayes Factors reveal support for the null hypothesis: 6.29, 20.40, 3.64, and 3.98 in Study 1A, 1B, 2, and 3, respectively. In other words, the data are over 3.5 to 20 times more likely under the null hypothesis than the alternative. The meta-analytic estimate of the effect of ambition on third-party ratings of leader effectiveness is nil and non-significant, $b = .00$, 95% CI [-0.03, .04]. Across all studies, ambition leads to no overall change in third-party ratings of leader effectiveness.

Conclusion

Across four studies (N = 4,947 ratings of 750 leaders), we uncover a discrepancy: while ambitious individuals think they are better leaders, others disagree. Executives rated by peers, subordinates, and managers in a 360-degree assessment; MBA students judged by experts in a leadership skills competition; and a nationally representative sample of adults leading a small team in a leadership task were judged no more effective in a leadership role if they were more ambitious. Nonetheless, more ambitious executives hold more positive views of their own effectiveness and are more likely to self-select into leadership roles.

This discrepancy suggests that society may need an alternative approach to leadership development and selection. Leader selection often relies on a strong default of self-selection: individuals must actively "opt-in" to the candidate pool for leadership positions (Erkal et al. 2022; He et al. 2021). Our findings show that the underlying premise – that individuals with the greatest leadership potential will apply – is unfounded. Rather than allowing ambitious individuals to dominate candidate pools for leadership roles, researchers and practitioners

should consider ways to actively identify individuals who may be fully capable, but not fully confident, candidates for leadership roles.

Ashlyee Freeman
ashlyee.freeman@emory.edu

Emory University
Goizueta Business School

Ashlyee Freeman is an Organization & Management doctoral candidate at Emory University's Goizueta Business School. Her research investigates how networks shape employee emotions, well-being, and performance. She uses a variety of methodologies, including social network analysis, experiments, archival, natural-language processing, and various qualitative approaches. Ashlyee earned an MBA from Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan and a BA in Broadcast Journalism and Advertising from Seaver College of Pepperdine University.

Abstract:

Under the surface: Effect of secret conversations on emotional dissonance and individual performance

Summary: Organizations place myriad emotional demands on their employees and expect employees to conform to emotional display norms (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Diestel & Schmidt, 2001; Hochschild, 1983). This form of labor is linked to negative consequences such as job strain, emotional exhaustion, and decreased task performance (Diestel & Schmidt, 2001; Hülshager & Schewe, 2011). The interpersonal emotion regulation literature shares strategies individuals use to involve others to change the trajectory of their own emotions (e.g., venting, social sharing, co-rumination, etc.), but studies present mixed results for individuals or could even harm more than they help (Barinik et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2005; Zellars and Perrewé, 2001).

The present work-in-progress research will accomplish three objectives. First, it will introduce a product of a network-based interpersonal emotion regulation strategy called a secret conversation—a covert conversation between a subset of attendees who are also present in a dominant conversation (e.g., meeting, e-mail chain, etc.). It often occurs in a different medium than the dominant conversation—for example, when an affective event occurs in an in-person meeting (i.e., dominant conversation), an individual reacts to another attendee via a secret conversation in the form of a text message. Because of its real-time attribute, engaging in secret conversations is a risky, informal, context-specific, and time-bound communication that allows for authentic communication and occurs below the surface of formal organizational activities—which require organizational display norms. Second, this research will also demonstrate the link between secret conversations, emotional exhaustion (decrease) and task performance (increase). This is because it reduces the effort needed to facilitate understanding (grounding costs; Clark & Brennan, 1991) and provides relief from emotional dissonance (expressing emotion that does not match felt emotion; Abraham, 1998) experienced in the formal organization. Third, it will provide a view of the network that individuals use for secret conversations and predict organizationally relevant outcomes, including turnover, job strain, well-being, and performance.

Method: Study 1 will use a survey and network analyses to: a) Establish the link between secret conversations and emotional dissonance improved affect and b) Uncover attributes that predict secret conversation tie formation. Study 2 will deploy an experiment to establish causality between secret conversations, reduced emotion exhaustion, and increased task performance. Study 3 will leverage a longitudinal field study that will detect secret conversation networks and

predict organizationally relevant outcomes such as turnover, job strain, well-being, and performance.

Implications: Secret conversation ties are novel vehicles for emotional regulation. These ties are content-based ties, akin to advice ties, typically involving technology. They are also affective ties that provide emotional instrumentality and ultimately task instrumentality. Scholars and practitioners can analyze these networks to predict the health of an organization including turnover intentions, job strain, emotional exhaustion, and performance. Understanding its network formation can also inform team and organization design to mitigate the negative demands of organizational life.

Bruce Mei
bruce.mei@duke.edu

Duke University
Fuqua School of Business

I am a second-year PhD student at the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University. I am recently interested in how people seek and use information from others in organizations. Specifically, I have explored two central questions: (1) What are the social psychological barriers that prevent people from harnessing different, especially conflicting, perspectives when making organizational decisions (2) Given the common organizational processes such as power and hierarchy, what influences how people share and evaluate information from others that alters decision outcomes. The aim of my work is to improve group decision making processes so we can reliably help organizations perform the best they can under uncertainty environments.

Abstract:

Empowering Change: Unlocking Keys to Effective and Well-received Employee Voice in Organizations

Lower-level employees often have unique insights from their work experience that can benefit higher-level decision makers in the organization. This research examines how employees' messages are perceived when they choose to share information with those above them. Specifically, we focus on the distinction between promotive (positive, future, and solution-oriented messages) and prohibitive voice (negative, present, and non-solution-oriented messages) and analyze how different properties of voice contribute to whether messages are judged favorably. We operationalize the properties of voice as three separate factors: framing (positive vs. negative), temporal orientation (present vs. future), and the presence of a solution vs none.

In two pre-registered studies, we explore how these factors independently influence perceptions of an employee's suggestion by having participants take a managerial perspective and evaluate the employee on a number of dimensions, including perceived employee performance, perceived employee warmth and competence, and intention to implement the employee suggestion. The studies provide four main insights: first, Study 1 clarifies past mixed findings by demonstrating that an employee speaking with a purely promotive voice is judged more favorably than an employee speaking with a purely prohibitive voice. Second, by crossing the three voice factors in a full factorial design, Study 2 reveals that one factor, the presence of a solution, is a more important determinant of favorable employee evaluations than either a positive frame or a focus on the future. Third, Study 2 reveals that the factors frequently interact in a theoretically important way; we found a number of predicted interactions among the factors, such as when voice message is present oriented, framing the message negatively yielded even more managerial actions than when the message is future oriented even if it does not yield more favorable impressions on the employee. Finally, both studies show the importance of distinguishing between perceived employee performance and the intention to implement the employee suggestion by showing that prohibitive voice factors (a negative frame and present tense) have opposite effects on perceptions of employee performance and intentions to implement the employee suggestion—prohibitive voice harms perceptions of employee performance but increase intentions to implement the employee suggestion.

Overall, this work not only generates insights on how individual employees should best express voice to be more effective at bringing change, but it illustrates that managers may have

underappreciated the impact of employees who speak directly about organizational problems on the actual performance of the organization.

.

Elena M. Wong
elenawong@arizona.edu

University of Arizona
Eller College of Management

Elena M. Wong is a fifth-year PhD candidate in Management and Organizations at the University of Arizona, Eller College of Management. Her research centers on employee wellbeing which she approaches from multi-level perspectives using various types of data gathered using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Elena received her undergraduate degree in Psychology at the University of Arizona (go Heels!). Prior to starting her PhD program, she worked with hospitals and healthcare systems around the country as a management consultant for Huron Consulting Group. When not working, Elena enjoys a variety of activities, such as backpacking, dancing, and taking her dog for walks.

Abstract:

Understanding the Spillover Effects of Eldercare at Work: A Mixed Methods Investigation

Authors: Elena M. Wong, Rebecca L. MacGowan, Mahira L. Ganster, Allison S. Gabriel, Christopher C. Rosen; University of Arizona

Recently, researchers have begun to recognize that the effects of eldercare are distinct from other types of caregiving (e.g., Halinski et al. 2018; Perrigino et al. 2021). More explicitly, whereas employees may plan on working and having children with the expectation that the care-recipient will become more independent over time, eldercare responsibilities are often assumed unexpectedly with the care-recipient becoming more dependent over time (National Alliance for Caregiving, 2009; Carr et al., 2016; Scharlach et al., 1991). Additionally, issues unique to caring for elders may create constraints on employees that they must cope with while simultaneously handling work responsibilities (e.g., acuity and progression of the elder's illness). Thus, an important question arises: When it comes to balancing work-family responsibilities, what are the behaviors that constitute eldercare provision, and how does engaging in those behaviors impact employee work-life?

To help bring clarity to the burgeoning scholarship on the eldercare experiences of employees (e.g., Clancy et al. 2020), we utilized a mixed-methods design, starting with an inductive approach to identify specific eldercare behaviors, develop a comprehensive measure of informal eldercare activities, and explicate the downstream effects of informal eldercare in the workplace. We first conducted an exploration of the range of activities that informal caregivers who work full-time jobs may perform (Study 1a). We then utilized semi-structured interviews to further clarify and refine our understanding of the eldercare experiences of this population

(Study 1b), which served to (a) confirm the findings of Study 1a, (b) provide insight into the most common activities enacted by care providers, and (c) identify how informal eldercare experiences can be meaningfully categorized into distinct groups. Based on the insights provided by Studies 1a and 1b, we proceeded to develop and validate a multi-dimensional measure of eldercare (Study 1c). Following our validation study, we developed and tested a conceptual model utilizing an experience sampling study that examined the incidence and impact of how engaging in eldercare activities may spill into employees' experiences at work, specifically considering two distinct types of eldercare activities— illness eldercare activities and social eldercare activities—and their downstream effects on employees' emotions (e.g., fear, gratitude) and behaviors at work (e.g., work withdrawal, helping).

The results of our investigation emphasize the importance of examining the nuances of work-family demands and associated behaviors. We highlight that engaging in caregiving for elders who have a high level of centrality in the caregiver's life may result in dual pathways wherein eldercare represents not only an additional responsibility and burden, but it can have generative implications for employees. The results of our study illustrate that (a) not all time spent on eldercare involves the same activities; (b) activities can be grouped into categories which are distinct in their theoretical underpinnings; and (c) these types of activities can have unique implications for how the care provider affectively reacts and responds at work. In sum, we engage in a comprehensive development of a measurement of elder caregiving behavior and investigate the implications of this specific form of caregiving for employees as they navigate this unique work-family challenge day to day.