

Leading others to lead themselves: Followers' perceptions of leaders' self-leadership¹

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ABSTRACT

Self-leading leaders can act as positive role models and could positively influence the self-leadership skills of their followers. Although self-leadership perceptions are of central importance for empowering and shared leadership, the social consequences of self-leaders' interpersonal behaviors have thus far not been studied. We elucidate how self-leading leaders are perceived by their followers. Thirty-five leaders provided self-ratings on self-leadership, while 151 followers provided other-ratings on their leaders' self-leadership. Multilevel analyses were used to investigate consensus and self-other agreement of self-leadership ratings. Findings yielded high consensus, but almost no self-other agreement in self-leadership judgments. Follower-reported self-leadership was associated positively with leader-reported natural reward strategies and negatively with leader-reported self-observation. Thus, leaders could act as positive self-leadership role models and have the possibility to transform and reinforce their followers' self-leadership.

Keywords

Self-leadership – empowering leadership – shared leadership

¹ The term „(self-)leader“ is not used as a diagnostic label, type, or categorization here; rather, it should be considered an abbreviation for „people who score highly on the dimension of (self-)leadership“ (Chung et al., 2011; Manz, 1986). Thus, „(self-)leader“ will be used as a rhetorical means of communication rather than implying any classification via any cut-off criteria whatsoever.