

EFFECTS OF TEAM HELPING BEHAVIOR ON LEADER BEHAVIOR

There is a rich and consistent history of scholarship on the impact of various types of leader behaviors on the performance outcomes of followers, both individual and teams. These studies have focused on leadership's impact on task performance (executing assigned job duties) as well as on citizenship or helping behaviors (voluntary actions that support the organization or fellow coworkers). Accordingly, HR departments have long trained leaders in behaviors that they hope will produce the best outcomes from their teams. Much less well studied, however, is the impact that teams have on their leaders' behaviors – the reverse pattern of events. This is despite the fact that teams and leaders work closely together and each have a profound influence on the other.

The current study examined how leader behaviors emerge as a result of their perceptions of their teams' helping behaviors and the teams' levels of positive affect (team climate). Based on surveys completed by 76 firefighting teams across 5 departments in the Midwest and Southeast regions of the United States, Dr. Jenny Hoobler, Jarvis Smallfield, and Dr. Don Kleumper found

- Team leaders are more likely to engage in empowering leadership behaviors when they perceive greater levels of team helping behavior and team positive affect.
- From a negative perspective, team leaders are more likely to engage in abusive supervision behavior (verbal and nonverbal undermining of followers) when they perceive lower levels of team helping behavior and team positive affect.
- Leader perceptions of team helping behavior triggers leaders' perceptions of positive team climate.

Implications of the Results:

We must understand that leadership does not happen in a vacuum. Rather leaders' behavior is likely strongly influenced by their perceptions of the actions and climate of their teams. Therefore, leaders are encouraged to be aware of how their perceptions of their teams might alter how they treat those who work under them. Even something as seemingly insignificant as team members having low spirits could prompt managers to engage in negative leadership. Similarly, if a manager simply believes that his or her team is in a good mood, that manager may empower the team to achieve their best performance.