

The dark side of emergent leadership: A qualitative investigation of the processes and consequences in team settings

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Abstract

Although emergent leadership is portrayed as a positive concept in the literature, recent studies have called for more research on addressing the negative consequences emergent leadership can have. Hence, through the lens of Social Identity Theory of Leadership, this study aimed to address these “dark sides”, and shed light on the processes and mechanisms whereby such negative influences happen. Considering this, an inductive qualitative study was set up, and data was collected by conducting 16 semi-structured interviews with individuals experienced in working in team settings. The sample was collected using a maximum variation sampling strategy, including experiences in many different industries. By using the Gioia method, this thesis found 12 different factors, which were clustered into 3 themes, namely indirect factors, direct factors, and boundary conditions. These 12 factors can be connected to the emergent leadership process, and could negatively influence individual-, team- and organization-level outcomes. The findings contribute to the literature on both the emergent leadership field and the Social Identity Theory of Leadership field, by providing a novel processual model with new insights on factors and negative consequences resulting from emergent leadership. Furthermore, in terms of practical implications, organizations and their leaders might be able to reduce or avoid these negative consequences by acquiring a greater understanding of the factors influencing these outcomes in the context of emergent leadership.

Keywords: Emergent leadership, Social identity theory of leadership, Work teams

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Glossary

| Term | Definition |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Emergent leadership | The multilevel interactional processes where one or more team members, based on their specific characteristics, are perceived as a leader and gain influence over the other team members over time, without having any formal authority over the team (Tabassum et al. 2023; Acton et al. 2019) |
| Social identity theory | It is built around the idea that individuals not only identify themselves with what their distinct and unique qualities are from an individual point of view, but they also identify themselves with how they are similar (or different) to other members of a social group they take part in (Steffens et al. 2020). |
| Social identity theory of leadership | It revolves around the notion that 'leadership derives from social identity-based perceptions of the leader as a group member' (Steffens et al., 2020, p. 36). |
| Leader group prototypicality | The extent to which a leader is seen to be representative of a specific group that leaders and followers share — and perceive themselves to share — membership of (Steffens et al., 2020). |

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, leadership research has expanded rapidly (Wilson, 2016), and has explored the multiple levels and different sides leadership has to offer besides its classical top-down vertical form (Tabassum et al., 2023). A few examples are shared and participative leadership, which have received growing attention in the literature as horizontal leadership styles (Hanna et al., 2020). Among these different leadership approaches, emergent leadership – defined as the extent to which a person, despite lacking formal authority, is recognized by one or multiple team members as having leaderlike influence (Tabassum et al., 2023) – has been one of the most recent branches in leadership research, arising in both self-managing and work teams (Hanna et al., 2020). Given the widespread presence of this phenomenon and its relevant outcomes, research has made quite some effort to be able to build a greater understanding of the processes of leader emergence, including the factors involved (Gerpott et al., 2019; Hanna et al., 2020).

Emergent leadership can be researched through the lens of social identity theory of leadership (Hogg & Terry, 2014), which posits that leadership arises from social identity-based perceptions of the leader as a team member (Steffens et al., 2020). This theory pays close attention to leader group prototypicality, which is defined as the degree to which a leader is perceived as representing a particular group that both leaders and followers mutually identify with, and consider themselves, a member of (Steffens et al., 2020). Consequently, leaders are more likely to emerge when they are more prototypical as a group member (Hogg et al., 2012). Furthermore, high leader group prototypicality can lead to high trust and support (Barreto & Hogg, 2017), and the leaders are seen as fairer (De Cremer et al., 2010) and more charismatic (Zhao et al., 2021). Lastly, high leader group prototypicality inspires a higher performance (Van Knippenberg, 2000; Steffens et al., 2020). Surprisingly though, despite such positive outcomes, leadership processes in social groups and categories have been underemphasized in leadership research (Steffens et al., 2020). Adding up to that, research has come to the belief that emergent leadership has invariantly positive outcomes (Hanna et al., 2020), such as high team performance (Przybilla et al., 2019), team effectiveness (Druskat & Pescosolido, 2006) and positive team motivation (Sorrentino & Field, 1986).

However, even though these studies have made valid points and have contributed positively to this research field, the negative sides and outcomes of emergent leadership have been mostly neglected (Hanna et al., 2020). Given that exploring the dark sides of emergent leadership might offer a greater understanding of how negative individual and team outcomes unfold (Hanna et al., 2020), this might be very relevant to organizations and employees trying to improve their individual and team outcomes. Only a few studies, mostly of conceptual and theoretical nature, have proposed some possible negative effects. For instance, Przybilla et al. (2019) suggest that the emergence of only one leader in a self-managed team may have negative outcomes for performance, because this would form an obstacle for shared decision-making. On the other hand, Hanna et al. (2020) propose that if more than one leader emerges, there might be a power struggle within the team. This could lead to high levels of team conflict and interpersonal conflict, eventually having a potential

negative effect on team performance (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Furthermore, Lanaj and Hollenbeck (2015) introduced the terms leader over-emergence and leader under-emergence, referring to the fact that emergent leaders do not always have to be effective leaders, and that team members that do not emerge as leaders can be effective leaders respectively (Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015). Lastly, following research on charismatic leadership and psychological safety, a potential negative outcome of emergent leadership could be unethical pro-organizational behavior (Zhang et al., 2020), since unethical pro-organizational behavior results from a supportive and trusting relationship between the (prototypical) leader and the other team members (Steffens et al., 2020). Hence, given that empirically exploring such negative outcomes, or “dark sides”, of emergent leadership is scant but pivotal to better understand leadership and team dynamics (Hanna et al., 2020), this topic deserves further exploration.

Therefore, this study seeks to extend current knowledge on the negative consequences of emergent leadership at the individual and team level and how they may unfold in team settings, by finding an answer to the following research questions:

How can emergent leadership have a negative influence on individual and team outcomes in team settings?

Sub-RQ1: What are the potential negative consequences, or dark sides, of emergent leadership?

Sub-RQ2: What factors can lead to such negative consequences of emergent leadership?

By addressing these research questions through a qualitative investigation, this study extends and contributes to the literature on leadership and social identity theory of leadership by shedding light on the possible dark sides of emergent leadership, as well as the processes and mechanisms whereby this negative influence happens. Furthermore, this paper has some practical implications for employees, under which managers. Firstly, the negative influences of emergent leadership and corresponding team outcomes are a great source of knowledge for employees and managers. Workshops or training to increase awareness of these negative influences might decrease negative team outcomes related to emergent leadership in the future. Adding up to that, solutions to these negative influences might be thought of from a top-down approach, or within the teams, to minimize negative team outcomes.

In the remainder of this thesis, firstly, the existing theory is further explored in the theoretical background. Secondly, the methodology used to conduct the research is explained, which is followed by the findings and a discussion of the findings. Lastly, a conclusion can be found at the end of the thesis, followed by recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Emergent leadership

Emergent leadership has been given many definitions in the existing literature, mostly because it consists of many sides and components (Hanna et al., 2020). Tabassum et al. (2023) define emergent leadership as 'a type of horizontal leadership, where, in a flattening team structure, a team member based on some of his/her specific characteristics, gains an influence over the team members, or is perceived as a leader by team members, despite not having any formal authority over the team' (Tabassum et al., 2023, p. 1). This influence a team member can gain, refers to how the team member is able to change other team members' behaviors or functions, and how these in turn might influence perceptions of leader emergence (Hanna et al., 2020). Similarly, Acton et al. (2019) define emergent leadership as 'the multilevel interactional process driven by deep level cognitive and perceptual processes of group members that form a collective patterning of leader and follower interactions over time' (p. 146). These two definitions have captured most features related to emergent leadership (Hanna et al., 2020), which is why both need to be taken into account for this research. The definition of Acton et al. (2019) is a great addition to the definition of Tabassum et al. (2023), since it focusses much more on the process nature of emergent leadership in relation to time. Given that emergent leadership changes over time and is based on team member perceptions, an informal leadership position within a team can be experienced by one or more individuals at the same time, leading to emergence of multiple leaders (Tabassum et al., 2023; Hanna et al., 2020). Consequently, emergent leadership research looks at the phenomenon from an individual level of analysis (Hanna et al., 2020). Furthermore, emergent leadership can be seen in self-managing, but also in work teams where a formal leader is already present (Hanna et al., 2020). Based on the above definitions, this thesis relies on the most comprehensive conceptualizations proposed by Tabassum et al. (2023) and Acton et al. (2019) to define emergent leadership as the multilevel interactional processes where one or more team members, based on their specific characteristics, are perceived as a leader and gain influence over the other team members over time, without having any formal authority over the team.

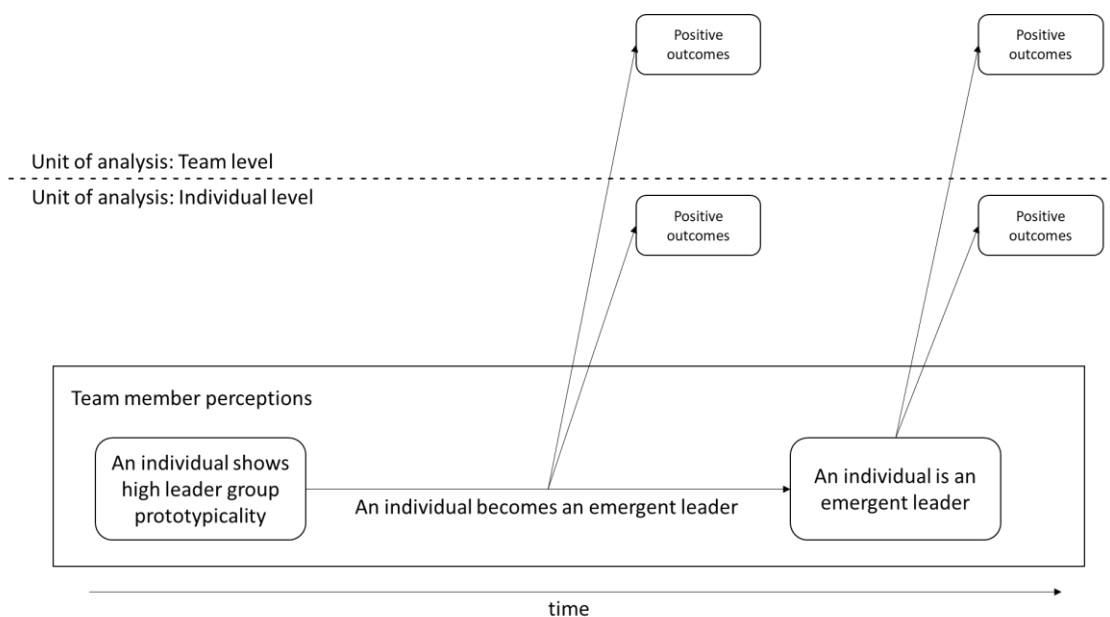
Definitions of emergent leadership also often describe certain behaviors linked to being or becoming an emergent leader. One of these behaviors is that the emergent leader is known to be the one to take initiative in the team (Druskat & Pescosolido, 2006). Furthermore, emergent leaders tend to show better responsiveness to the needs of followers, a higher interest in the task, and show more competence than formal leaders (Druskat & Pescosolido, 2006). These behaviors might also be related to the social identity theory of leadership, which is a theory that, among other phenomena, describes the emergence of leadership (Steffens et al., 2020). By examining emergent leadership through the lens of social identity theory of leadership, this gives more clarity on how the processes of (emergent) leadership unfold over time in a social group, and thus also in a team setting (Steffens et al., 2020).

2.2 Emergent leadership & Social identity theory of leadership

The emergence of leaders might be explained through the social identity theory of leadership (Hogg, 2001). This theory revolves around the notion that ‘leadership derives from social identity-based perceptions of the leader as a group member’ (Steffens et al., 2020, p. 36). Initially, this theory is a follow-up of the social identity theory (Hogg et al., 2012), which is built around the idea that individuals not only identify themselves with what their distinct and unique qualities are from an individual point of view, but they also identify themselves with how they are similar (or different) to other members of a social group they take part in (Steffens et al. 2020). Consequently, an individual’s social group represents a certain image, holding norms, values, aspirations, ambitions and goals brought in by the group members (Turner et al., 1989). The social identity theory of leadership suggests that when a group member represents this image, this person is likely to emerge as a leader (Steffens et al., 2020). This concept is known as leader group prototypicality, defined as ‘the extent to which a leader is seen to the representative of a specific group that leaders and followers share — and perceive themselves to share — membership of’ (Steffens et al., 2020, p. 36-37).

After revising the literature, one single emergent leadership process within a team setting can be summarized as depicted in Figure 1. Based on the definitions and components associated with emergent leadership discussed so far, this figure shows the process of how one team member emerges as a leader with its effects on the team level through the lens of social identity theory of leadership. This process can happen multiple times in a team, also simultaneously (Hannah et al., 2020). The existing literature mainly describes the positive outcomes associated with emergent leadership, which are also included in the figure.

Figure 1. Emergent leadership process according to social identity theory of leadership based on revision of the literature



2.3 Potential positive consequences of emergent leadership on individual & team outcomes

Research has come to the belief that emergent leadership, through the lens of social identity theory of leadership, has invariantly positive outcomes (Hanna et al., 2020). These positive outcomes come from different positions in time when looking at the emergent leadership process.

Firstly, when leader group prototypicality increases, leadership effectiveness can also increase (Barreto & Hogg, 2017). This is due to the proposition that high leader group prototypicality of a leader is associated with a highly trusting and supportive relationship between this leader and other team members (Barreto & Hogg, 2017). Also, when leader group prototypicality increases, the other team members tend to perceive the leader as fairer (De Cremer et al., 2010) and more charismatic (Zhao et al., 2021). Furthermore, high group identification can lead to high work motivation, task performance, and contextual performance (Van Knippenberg, 2000).

Besides the positive outcomes related to being a prototypical team member, there are also positive outcomes related to being an emergent leader. One of the positive outcomes is that research has seen a positive influence on team performance, because a higher quality of communication and community can be an outcome of emergent leadership (Przybilla et al., 2019). Furthermore, team effectiveness can also be positively influenced by emergent leadership (Druskat & Pescosolido, 2006). This positive influence on team effectiveness stems from the unique status of an emergent leader, which entails that because the leader has emerged based on the perceptions of the team members, the emergent leader has a more effective influence on the team members' emotions (Druskat & Pescosolido, 2006). Lastly, positive team motivation can result from emergent leadership (Sorrentino & Field, 1986). Although these positive outcomes and their relation to emergent leadership are known in the existing literature, the negative consequences remain underexplored. Yet, there have been some suggestions on how emergent leadership might have negative effects (Hanna et al., 2020).

2.4 Potential negative consequences of emergent leadership on individual & team outcomes

Even though not much is known about the "dark side" of emergent leadership (Hanna et al., 2020), a few conceptual and theoretical studies and one empirical study have proposed some potential negative consequences (see e.g. Przybilla et al., 2019; Hanna et al., 2020; Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2023). Through the lens of social identity theory of leadership, these negative effects are almost all possible outcomes in relation to emergent leadership.

2.4.1 Team performance

Firstly, even though emergent leadership has been shown to positively affect team performance (Przybilla et al., 2019), some studies have proposed that emergent leadership might have negative influence on team performance (De Dreu & Weingart, 2006; Przybilla et al., 2019; Hanna et al., 2020). For instance, if only one leader emerges in a team, this might

be disadvantageous for shared decision-making (Przybilla et al., 2019). When shared decision-making is not used very often, this can lead to lower team performance (Bruccoleri et al., 2018). On the contrary, when multiple leaders emerge, this might also have negative influence on team performance (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). This is because when multiple emergent leadership processes as described in Figure 1 happen simultaneously within a work team, this results in multiple team members gaining influence over other team members. Consequently, according to the conflict management literature, such a scenario is prone to tensions, resulting in task, relationship, and process conflict (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Furthermore, multiple leaders emerging can lead to confusion among team members about what the social identity of the team is, and therefore who the most prototypical team member is (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Consequently, when acceptance of an emerging team leader is low, interpersonal conflict might also arise (Hanna et al., 2020). The conflict described so far can also happen when a team already has a formal leader, but other people emerge as an additional leader (McClellan et al., 2018).

2.4.2 Leader over-emergence and leader under-emergence

Secondly, the phenomenon of leader over-emergence and leader under-emergence has recently received some attention in the literature. Leader over-emergence is defined as 'cases when an individual's leadership emergence (expressed in descriptive terms), is actually higher than that individual's leadership effectiveness (expressed in normative terms)' (Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015, p. 1476 - 1477). When looking at the pillars of social identity theory of leadership, leaders should emerge when they have a higher leader group prototypicality. This prototypicality does not have to be linked to higher effectiveness, since high prototypicality can also be a result of shared norms and beliefs (Turner et al., 1989). This indicates that when an individual emerges as a leader, this leader can be ineffective (Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015). On the contrary, leader under-emergence happens when an individual does not have high leader group prototypicality, and is therefore not recognized as a possible leader, while having great potential when it comes to leadership effectiveness (Hanna et al., 2020). Similar to leader over-emergence, this may also have negative effects towards someone's long-term aspirations for becoming a leader, how much effort someone puts into the job, or on individual relationships within the team in general (Hanna et al., 2020).

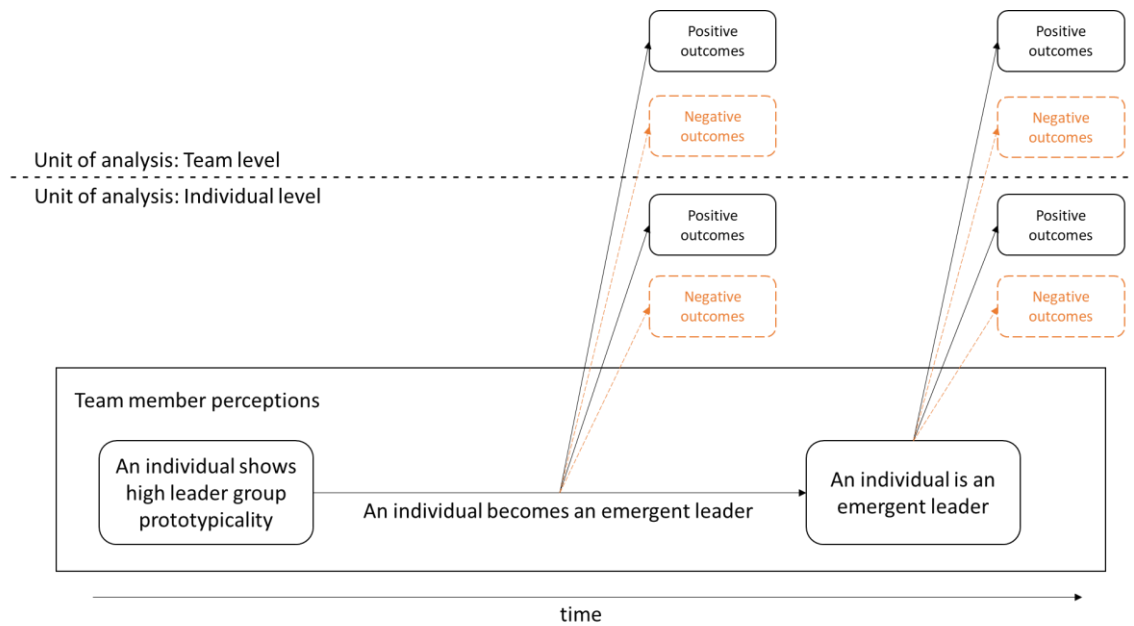
2.4.3 Unethical pro-organizational behavior

Moreover, as the social identity theory of leadership is strongly connected to research on charismatic leadership and psychological safety, potential negative team outcomes seen there might also be of interest to the emergent leadership field of research. For instance, unethical pro-organizational behavior is mentioned as a dark side of charismatic leadership and psychological safety, resulting from the trusting and supportive relationship between the leader and followers. Unethical pro-organizational behavior can be defined as 'activities conducted to potentially enhance the operation of the company, leaders, or members, yet breaches critical social values and damages the interests of external stakeholders' (Zhang et al., 2020, p. 1). The scenario of a trusting and supportive relationship between the leader and team members has also been established when studying the interactions between

prototypical emergent leaders and the other team members (Steffens et al., 2020; Qi et al., 2022). Therefore, a similar outcome may be expected considering emergent leadership.

Given these proposed negative effects and possibilities of conflict, this study not only seeks to explore whether these effects are indeed perceived by team members and what other effects are still unexplored in the literature, but also what processual factors may lead to such “dark side” outcomes (i.e. how negative outcomes come to exist). As a follow-up to Figure 1, the theoretical contribution of this thesis can be depicted as follows in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Potential theoretical contributions of this paper



3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

This exploratory study (Saunders et al., 2009) aims to fill research gaps by investigating what the possible negative consequences of emergent leadership are, through the lens of social identity theory of leadership, and how these influence individual and team outcomes. For this purpose, an inductive qualitative research design was implemented. Qualitative research designs typically have room for deviations and unexpected findings during the research process and have a flexible research setting (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Therefore, this offers a good foundation for exploring what negative effects of emergent leadership might not have been discussed yet in the literature, and whether the proposed effects can be found back in practice. Furthermore, an inductive approach is used since this can help develop a theory about the underlying framework of experiences or processes found in the collected data connected to emergent leadership (Thomas, 2006).

3.2 Data collection and sampling

3.2.1 Sampling technique and strategy

Since this research is exploratory, the most practical way to collect data is through non-probability sampling (Saunders et al., 2009). Non-probability sampling includes sampling techniques where the sample is chosen based on the researcher's subjective judgment and research goals (Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, the sample for this thesis is obtained by purposive sampling, whereby the researcher picks cases that are most suitable for addressing the research questions(s) and achieving the study's objectives (Saunders et al., 2009). The applied purposive sampling strategy is maximum variation sampling, since this strategy is suggested to be used when the goal is to 'describe and explain the key themes that can be observed' from the raw data (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 239). Because the research questions in this thesis are trying to find key themes regarding the negative influences of emergent leadership on individual and team outcomes, this seems to be the most appropriate sampling technique for this research.

3.2.2 Sample selection criteria and sample description

To be able to select a sample based on the maximum variation sampling strategy, it is suggested to identify the sample selection criteria beforehand (Patton, 2002). These criteria included that in order to effectively answer the research questions, each participant needed to be part of a different work team, to avoid overlap and therefore less variation. Furthermore, consequences of emergent leadership might be different during the earlier stages of a team in contrast to the later stages (Hanna et al., 2020), which is why each participant must have had experience in a minimum of one work team with at least one finished project. The work experience a participant has in a team should also not be less than 6 months. Moreover, to be able to gain insights at a level that is as broad as possible for this master thesis, the sample needed to include participants working across different industries.

Following these criteria, the sample selected consisted of 16 individuals. Even though this is a small sample with cases that might be very different due to the maximum variation sampling strategy, this can still be seen as a strength (Patton, 2002) as ‘any patterns that do emerge are likely to be of particular interest and value and represent the key themes’ (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 239). The 16 participants were contacted through mail, after being recruited from the researcher’s social network.

A summary of the participants’ demographics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample demographics

| <i>Participant</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>Gender</i> | <i>Role in the company</i> | <i>Nationality</i> | <i>Years of experience in work teams</i> | <i>Language of interview</i> |
|--------------------|------------|---------------|--|--------------------|--|------------------------------|
| p1 | 56 | F | Senior policy advisor in healthcare | Dutch | 38 | Dutch |
| p2 | 56 | M | Manager & IT architect | Dutch | 30+ | English |
| p3 | 70 | F | Board position in politics & Internal guidance at school | Dutch | 34 | Dutch |
| p4 | 56 | M | Account manager logistics | Dutch | 34 | English |
| p5 | 58 | M | Managing director FBNL/DACHEE engineering | Dutch | 20+ | English |
| p6 | 57 | F | Instructional designer and facilitator in talent and development team | Dutch | 25+ | English |
| p7 | 67 | M | Sales manager insurances | Dutch | 25 | Dutch |
| p8 | 56 | M | Director/Owner IT, asset management, financial services and automotive | Dutch | 36 | English |
| p9 | 45 | M | Director of corporate compliance and ethics | Dutch | 20+ | Dutch |
| p10 | 57 | M | External specialist, interpreter | Dutch | 30 | Dutch |
| p11 | 51 | M | Organizational development manager | Dutch | 25 | English |
| p12 | 55 | F | Manager working and learning, tax services | Dutch | 30 | Dutch |
| p13 | 24 | M | B-analyst Quality Control chemistry | Dutch | 3 | Dutch |
| p14 | 48 | M | Senior account manager ERP systems | Dutch | 20 | Dutch |
| p15 | 57 | M | Developer & CEO | Dutch | 25 | Dutch |
| p16 | 57 | F | Independent worker obstetrics in healthcare | Dutch | 37 | Dutch |

*Questionnaire can be found in Appendix A

Finally, the research conducted for this thesis has been ethically approved by the ethics committee of the BMS Faculty at the University of Twente.

3.3 Research instruments

Because of the process nature of emergent leadership, this research relies on semi-structured interviews with cross-sectional retrospective interview questions. Semi-structured interviews are conducted because they give the interviewer some structure and adherence to the research question, while still being able to follow-up on the interviewees' responses (Kallio et al., 2016). This gives room for possible deviations from what can be found in prior research about the negative effects of emergent leadership, while still staying on topic. Additionally, cross-sectional retrospective questions are chosen since they capture the negative effects at different points in time (Saunders et al., 2009) looking at the emergent leadership processes in a work team. The interview guide containing these cross-sectional retrospective questions can be seen in Appendix B. This interview guide has been tested by pilot interviewing two participants and has been changed according to the feedback given. Since only small changes have been made by adding a few definitions, it is decided to still use the two pilot interviews for the results.

In order to know that the raw data did not miss out on possible findings related to the research question, interviews were done until data saturation was reached. Data saturation can be defined as 'the point in data collection and analysis when new information produces little or no change to the codebook' (Guest et al., 2006, p. 65). According to Guest et al. (2006), data saturation is most likely achieved around 12 interviews. Therefore, 16 interviews were conducted to make sure that the raw data did not miss out on possible findings related to the research question. The 16 interviews conducted had a duration of 45 minutes to 1 hour, and were taken individually, so the participants were able to speak up freely about their experiences with emergent leadership. Before the start of each interview, the researcher gave each participant an information sheet, and asked for consent to record and use the data for research purposes. The information sheet and consent forms can be found in Appendix C and D.

Since the research took place in the Netherlands, part of the sample was more confident answering interview questions in Dutch, while others were more confident answering in English. Therefore, the interviews were conducted in English and Dutch. The quotations used for the findings from the interviews conducted in Dutch were later translated into English, since the researcher is a Dutch native speaker and proficient in English. This ensured that the findings could fully be presented in English. Additionally, because the interviewees were located across the whole country, online interviews were most convenient. Therefore, the interviews were done through Microsoft Teams. When a participant felt uncomfortable doing the interview online, an exception was made and the interview was done in person. Both in-person and online interviews were transcribed verbatim using the Microsoft Teams software. Later, this was reviewed and corrected manually by the researcher, to prevent errors in the data.

3.4 Data analysis

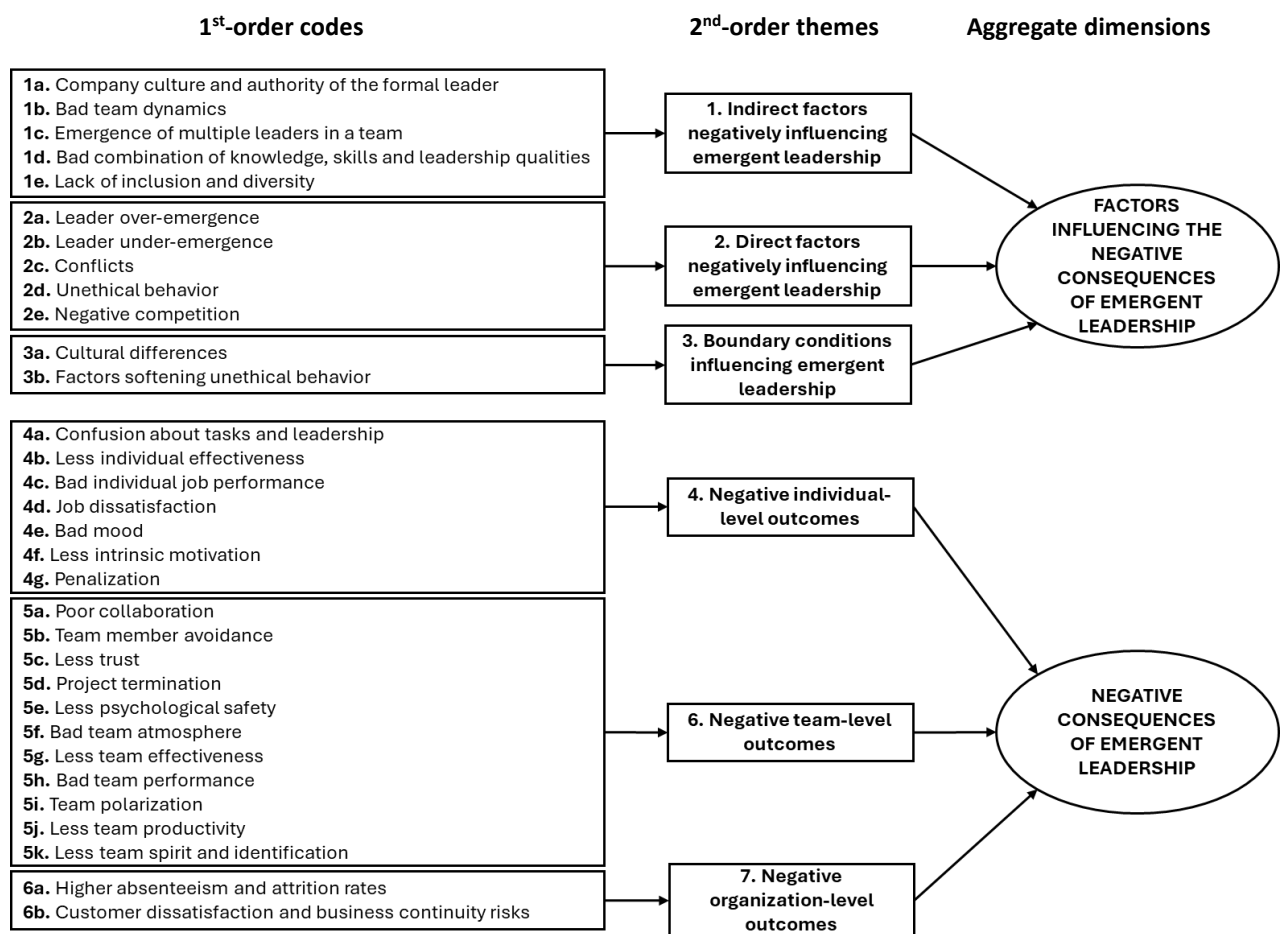
After the data was collected, the raw data was analyzed using thematic analysis in combination with the Gioia method (Gioia et al., 2012). Thematic analysis can be defined as 'a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). This analysis can be considered a process of six steps in which the researcher can go back and forth (Braun & Clarke, 2006), from which the first step is 'familiarizing yourself with the data'. This phase consisted mostly of transcribing and re-reading the raw data multiple times, already looking for possible explanations or patterns. Braun and Clarke (2006) named the second step 'generating initial codes'. Since this thesis used thematic analysis in combination with the Gioia method, this step is where the Gioia method came in. The Gioia method is a qualitative data analysis technique, describing a coding process and how to transfer these codes into a process model (Gioia et al., 2012). When combining this method with thematic analysis, the remainder of the six steps were based on the Gioia method. Therefore, the second step of thematic analysis consisted of generating first-order concepts, which implies that the interviewees' quotes found in the raw data were grouped into initial codes. The third step of thematic analysis, in combination with the Gioia method, was to group the first-order concepts into second-order themes. Then, the fourth step was to try to group these second-order themes into aggregate dimensions and review them. These aggregate dimensions were later given a name and definition in step five. Lastly, the sixth step refers to that the findings are presented in this thesis. This was done through making a process model including the second order themes and aggregate dimensions. Accordingly, this process model depicts the possible dark sides of emergent leadership, as well as the processes and mechanisms whereby this negative influence happens.

To summarize, in this thesis, firstly, semi-structured cross-sectional retrospective interviews were conducted to be able to collect data on the negative sides and team outcomes during the processes of emergent leadership in a work team. After that, a thematic analysis was performed to be able to connect the data into themes using the Gioia method (Gioia et al., 2012). From this data structure, a model of the negative effects of emergent leadership has been made, connecting the themes to depict the process nature of these negative sides and team outcomes from the data.

4. Findings

This thesis aims to find the negative influences emergent leadership has on individual and team outcomes, as well as the processes and mechanisms whereby this negative influence happens. Using the inductive Gioia method (Gioia et al., 2012), the data analysis revealed that a distinction can be made between the negative consequences emergent leadership has in team settings, and the factors that led to these negative outcomes. Therefore, the findings can be divided into two parts, which are presented as the aggregate dimensions in Figure 3. These aggregate dimensions are explained by elaborating on the first-order codes and second-order themes presented in the data structure.

Figure 3. Data structure



4.1 Factors influencing the negative consequences of emergent leadership

The data analysis revealed that there are 12 factors influencing the negative consequences of emergent leadership, which can be seen in the first-order codes. All 12 factors led to negative individual-, team-, and organization-level consequences, which is why no distinction is made in level of analysis for the factors. These factors can be divided into three second-order themes: indirect factors, direct factors, and boundary conditions influencing the negative consequences of emergent leadership.

4.1.1 Indirect factors negatively influencing emergent leadership

The first group of factors that lead to negative consequences of emergent leadership can be identified as the indirect factors. These factors can be seen as the independent variables that had influence on other factors, before negatively influencing emergent leadership. The first indirect factor identified was **company culture and authority of the formal leader (1a)**. As this research focused on interviewees having experiences in work teams with a formal leader, the participants named this factor as one of the possible reasons why leader over-emergence and leader under-emergence was experienced in a team. For instance, company culture can be seen as part of this factor, as interviewee 5 pointed out that *'If you go into the army. You can understand that if informal leaders in the team say, if the generals say we're going to fight the neighbors, and they say no, no, no, no, no, I have thought about it and I have a much better idea. That doesn't work.'* (p5) However, the most prominent reason why an emergent leader was not perceived as effective in the data due to this factor, was because the formal leader did not give room for autonomy to the informal leader, which is why for example processes of decision-making were still going in a top-down approach. Company culture and authority of the formal leader can also be found back in these three exemplary quotes:

So it's important that you connect the culture of a company and match, because not every culture will be able to host the possibility for emergent leadership. (p5)

No well, if my director decides my order goes first, then I [as the informal leader] have to say, well, you are the director. I have to follow you. I understand, but I, if I agree or not, it's his [call]. (p4)

Because in the end the one, the formal leader so to speak, had insufficient leadership skills, so to speak, while the person who was there and was not the formal leader, but the informal leader, was not given the opportunity to determine the direction due to the authority of the other person [the formal leader]. (p1)

Secondly, **bad team dynamics (1b)** could be seen as an indirect factor many participants indicated. In the data, the interviewees refer to the term "team dynamics" itself, and mention a changing team composition to be an indirect factor that negatively influences emergent leadership outcomes. These two are grouped together as a first order code. To be more precise, due to a change in team composition, the interviewees mentioned that especially roles, relationships, and personalities within the team changed. Often, this change resulted in a restructuring of the informal hierarchy. The data analysis revealed that whenever the roles, relationships or personalities clashed or did not contribute to positive outcomes, referred to as bad team dynamics in this thesis, this could influence leader over-emergence and leader under-emergence:

Yes, so the first one [question about whether someone else might have been a better leader than the one that had emerged], that is possible when you don't know someone well enough yet, you can perceive that someone as an informal leader [after a change in team composition], so that could be someone else [that is more effective]. (p1)

Yes, it is often temporary that the progress of the project is not at its maximum, because the hierarchy within the group has to be rearranged again [and not immediately there is an effective emergent leader]. (p14)

Thirdly, interviewees mentioned that the **emergence of multiple leaders in a team (1c)** can be an indirect factor that can negatively influence emergent leadership outcomes. The interviewees saw this indirect factor as the start of conflicts, negative competition between the multiple emerging leaders, and bad team dynamics. Hence, the emergence of multiple leaders was seen as an indirect factor influencing a lot of different elements in the emergent leadership process. Examples of quotes that highlight these relationships, are from these two interviewees:

Otherwise you end up with a conflict because you have two informal leaders and then typically they follow different routes to the exit. (p2)

And the other thing, what I sometimes see happen is if you have two informal leaders that have the ambition to become the formal leader, that they start a little bit of competition on how can I get the formal leader and then it's not always healthy anymore. (p11)

So if you have multiple in the team, I see that is, yeah, negative for the team dynamic and then yeah, sometimes you need to intervene to say, okay, we move somebody to another team where he or she becomes the informal leader often and then it's better for the team dynamic. (p11)

Despite these negative influences, some interviewees also referred to the emergence of multiple leaders as a positive concept, because when making sure that *'informal leaders are positioned right'*, they can *'work in their own safe topic and strengthen each other when collaborating'* (p2).

Furthermore, a **bad combination of knowledge, skills, and leadership qualities (1d)** was an indirect factor that was mentioned by almost all interviewees. They believed that a bad combination of these three characteristics can make an emergent leader ineffective. This took various directions in the data, but to summarize, most of the times a leader emerged in a team due to having one or two of these characteristics, while a second or third characteristic was not present. The most common combination that led to leader over-emergence according to the interviewees was that someone did not have the leadership qualities, but was viewed as the emergent leader due to the knowledge and/or skills. This also had an effect on leader under-emergence, since most interviewees at the same time indicated that someone else in this case, having the qualities of *'managing a team'* (p12), might have been a better leader than the leader that had emerged. Additionally, multiple interviewees had the feeling that the strongest emergent leaders *'both have the best content ideas and also characteristic wise basically, in their nature it is to influence people and get people along'* (p11). A few additional example quotes strengthening the relationships just mentioned can be seen from interviewees 5 and 11:

And so in my opinion, and it's very, it's, the opposite might be even true. If you think that the best specialist is the best leader, in most of the cases, you're wrong. (p5)

If the person does have the content, but by nature they're a little bit more holding back, then typically their reach is less. So they reach a certain group of people since they have great content ideas, but because of their limitations in, let's say, connecting with a lot of people or getting people along, they are less effective than it could be. (p11)

The last indirect factor referred to by the interviewees is **lack of inclusion and diversity (1e)**. Perhaps surprising, this indirect factor had a bidirectional relationship with leader under-emergence in the data. As interviewee 9 indicated that an organization should encourage inclusion and diversity when also encouraging emergent leadership, as there are cases where *'only the people who are the first to raise their hand'* (p9) are often becoming the emergent leader in a team. As a result, other people, often individuals who are part of a minority group, more introverted, or disabled, are likely to under-emerge as a leader. This shows one direction of the bidirectional relationship: lack of inclusion and diversity in a team can be positively related with leader under-emergence. On the other hand, interviewees have also indicated that leader under-emergence can have an effect on the level of inclusion and diversity as well. Especially since a leader with a certain background might have emerged, some team members might be left out because of this informal leader. An example of a quote that supports this relationship is from interviewee 11:

And then people with a different, for example culture, are just put aside because they follow one leader that has a different background. So diversity and inclusion is then, uh, sometimes not the best. (p11)

Therefore, the relationship between lack of inclusion and diversity and leader under- and over-emergence can be drawn both directions.

4.1.2 Direct factors negatively influencing emergent leadership

Besides the indirect factors, the data analysis revealed that there are also five direct factors that can negatively influence the outcomes of emergent leadership. The first two direct factors identified, which can also be found in the theoretical background of this thesis, are **leader over-emergence (2a)** and **leader under-emergence (2b)**. In the data, these two factors mostly went hand in hand, since when a leader emerged and this leader was ineffective (over-emergence), there was almost always an example of another team member that could have been more effective but did not emerge as a leader (under-emergence). The experiences of interviewees connected to leader over- and under-emergence could be due to four indirect factors explained in the in the previous part, which were company culture & authority of formal leader (1a), bad team dynamics (1b), a bad combination of knowledge, skills, and leadership qualities (1d) and a lack of inclusion and diversity (1e). A few exemplary quotes supporting these two direct factors are taken from interviewees 2 and 6:

so someone is stepping up as an informal leader. But uhm, yeah, that's not always with the right uh reasons or with the yeah. Correct justification. (p2)

where there are instances where somebody else could have... Yes, I think so. When it was, when it goes, when it had to do with this specific topic. You can have expertise in a certain area, but if you realize that somebody else might have expertise in an area that you don't have, yeah, enough or not yet, or I think that. Yeah. Then somebody else could have stepped

up, but often people don't do that. As soon as you have an informal leader there, chances are that that person remains that leader. (p6)

Secondly, a direct factor that can negatively influence emergent leadership outcomes seen in the data is **conflicts (2c)**. Conflicts can be seen as a very central direct factor, since the data revealed that all other direct factors can also lead to conflicts. Even though some interviewees have indicated that emergent leaders can also 'resolve conflicts' (p2), most interviewees mentioned that conflicts due to emergent leadership can negatively influence emergent leadership outcomes. Conflicts mostly occurred due to the emergence of multiple leaders in a team (1c), leader over-emergence (2a) and leader under-emergence (2b), negative competition (2d), and unethical behavior (2e). A few exemplary quotes can be taken from interviewee 9 and 2:

I have also had a number of conflicts between people who actually acted because of a kind of insecurity, out of fear for their own position or their own ambition to get promoted or something like that [that others saw as a threat and then created or sought out conflict]. (p9)

So people, they, they get furious sometimes, right, then they escalate. Then there's yeah, you end up in a verbal fight, whatever [when unethical behavior is performed by the emergent leader]. (p2)

Thirdly, the data analysis revealed that **unethical behavior (2d)** can be seen as a direct factor influencing negative consequences of emergent leadership. An emergent leader performing unethical behavior was a theme that could range from lying to others or bullying, to much bigger examples. The more serious the unethical behavior was, the more negative consequences it caused. A common bigger example of unethical behavior performed by emergent leaders that was more towards the serious side, was degrading behavior towards women. Most of the unethical behavior performed was due to emergent leaders that felt that they had the authority to do so:

And his position in the team he [the informal leader] was in, actually in the entire organization, but certainly also in the team he was in. Yes he abused that position. And that was, yes, I have seen everything that you have now seen with John de Mol, for example, or with the unsafe work situations [refers to undesirable behavior against women]. Yes, I have unfortunately experienced it, and that is, yes, the consequences reach very far. (p15)

They act out of a kind of. Well, how do you say that, sense of authority, like, I can do this because of my position. (p9)

Despite unethical behavior performed by the informal leader was a common theme, it also needs to be noted that quite a few interviewees also indicated that they found that other team members, or the formal leader, were just as likely to perform unethical behavior as the informal leader.

Lastly, a direct factor that was not found in the literature review conducted for the theoretical background of this thesis, is **negative competition (2e)**. Two forms of competition could be found in the data. The first one was that interviewees have experienced that when multiple leaders were trying to emerge in a team, these two felt the need to compete with each other who had the most followers in the team. Consequently, a

relationship can be drawn between the emergence of multiple leaders in a team (1c) and negative competition. The second form of negative competition was when one informal leader of the team was too competitive towards a set objective, while the other team members were not as competitive as the informal leader. These two forms of negative competition often led to conflicts (2c) and often influenced the negative consequences of emergent leadership directly. Therefore, negative competition can also be seen as a direct factor influencing negative outcomes of emergent leadership:

but there you had two informal leaders. Then the competition was between two informal leaders. And then yes, they will try to make sure their idea is the best. (p15)

What can be negative is competition. The element of competition. (...) if an informal leader is very competitive and the rest of the team doesn't follow. (p6)

4.1.3 Boundary conditions influencing emergent leadership

The last group of factors seen in the data are the boundary conditions. These boundary conditions act as moderators of two relationships. In this case, these boundary conditions meant that when these are present in a team, these factors led to an even more positive or more negative relationship between the first factor and second factor. The first boundary condition that was identified is **cultural differences (3a)**. This moderated the relationship between bad team dynamics (1b) and leader over-emergence and leader under-emergence (2a & 2b). Consequently, when there were cultural differences in a team with bad team dynamics, this could even lead to more leader over-emergence and leader under-emergence. This had two interesting causes, since some interviewees saw that some cultures were a little more submissive, and that one culture in a team sometimes felt that another culture had more authority. As interviewee 9 quoted:

So if one person stands up as an informal leader, then such a group may simply want to accept it [because of a culture that listens very much to authority], that's it. But if the person who acts as an informal leader does not actually have the capabilities to fulfill that role properly, then you do not have a self-cleaning mechanism in the group. (...) Yes, certainly, yes, certainly, that really has [from a team with multiple cultures, some cultures would label another culture as having more authority than us]. (p9)

Furthermore, some interviewees indicated that different cultures also influenced 'the differences in perception' (p5) of emergent leadership, which led to people having different opinions on when an emergent leader was found to be effective and when not.

The second, and last boundary condition that could be seen in the data was **factors softening unethical behavior (3b)**. When these factors were present, these had a negative moderating effect on the negative consequences related to unethical behavior. These factors can be divided into two categories. The first one is that interviewees saw that a good amount of group pressure was able to mitigate the unethical behavior performed by the emergent leader. When the team did not comply with the behavior of the emergent leader, this could lead to the emergent leader being scared of losing their position in the group, which could lead to less serious unethical behavior. The other category is that when light

forms of unethical behavior were seen, this led to personal development trainings which also mitigated the seriousness of unethical behavior performed in the future:

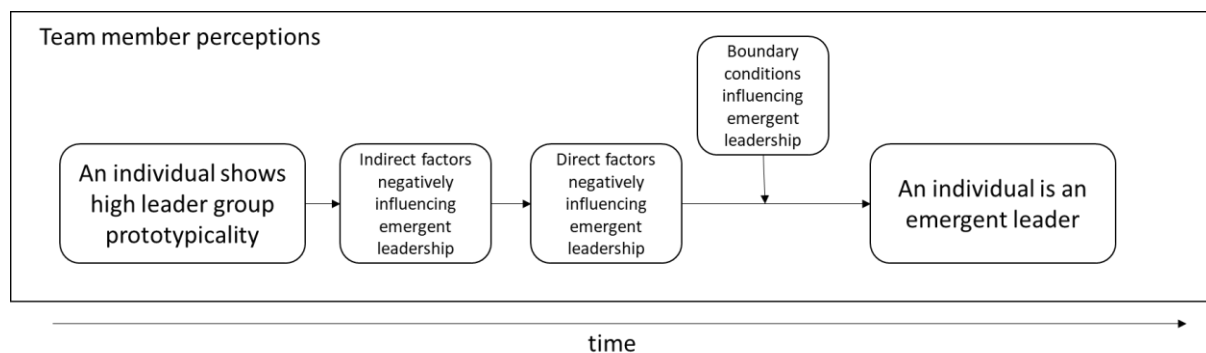
So it's a bit like the group pressure basically to do the right thing is stronger than not do the right thing [unethical behavior]. So that's why it's also an exception that it's really going into something that is completely wrong. (p11)

The lightly unethical cases of the informal leader who simply lacks self-knowledge and therefore does not do well. Those are often conversations, right. As a consequence. Conversations, some guidance, some coaching, so yes, with a view to improving, or actually developing, the informal leader or the person him or herself actually. (p9)

4.1.4 Overview of all factors influencing the negative consequences of emergent leadership

Given the indirect factors, direct factors, and boundary conditions, half of the final model could be constructed, as can be seen in Figure 4. This part of the final model shows how all factors discussed can be part of the process of emergent leadership in a team, as it was portrayed in the theoretical background. Adding up to that, a model of how the first-order codes of the aggregate dimension “factors influencing the negative consequences of emergent leadership” can be related to each other can be found in Appendix E.

Figure 4. A model of factors influencing the negative consequences of emergent leadership



4.2 Negative consequences of emergent leadership

As can be seen in the model in Appendix E, there are five direct factors influencing the negative consequences of emergent leadership; leader over-emergence, leader under-emergence, conflicts, unethical behavior, and negative competition. In total, 20 different negative outcomes have been seen in the data caused by these five factors, but not all outcomes can be linked to all direct factors. Therefore, in this section, the negative consequences of emergent leadership are explained in relation to the direct factors. A summary of the negative consequences connected to each direct factor can be seen in Appendix F. Since the indirect factors all lead to the negative consequences of emergent leadership through a direct factor, and therefore overlap with the negative consequences caused by the direct factors, the negative consequences in relation to the indirect factors are not discussed. The 20 different negative consequences of emergent leadership can be grouped in individual-level, team-level, and organization-level outcomes.

4.2.1 Negative individual-level outcomes of emergent leadership

The first individual-level outcome identified from the emergent leadership process is **confusion about tasks and leadership (4a)**. Because someone emerged as a leader and was not as effective as another team member might have been, team members were confused on which team member to follow and who is going to do what tasks. Confusion about tasks and leadership was also a consequence when team members were not aligned and this caused a conflict. In this situation, it was often not clear what direction to follow in decision-making processes, especially when not the whole team was following the same emergent leader. These two relationships become evident in these quotations:

yes, in a short period of time it has led to some commotion, because who is the leader, who is going to decide and say and do what [with an ineffective informal leader]? (p9)

It's more about okay, what direction are we taking? And sometimes it's also confusion [conflict]. (p11)

Secondly, **less individual effectiveness (4b)** was mentioned by participants as a consequence of the emergent leadership process. This code includes participants saying that team members were not able to do their tasks properly anymore, or because of a bad division of roles due to ineffective leaders, were not given the individual tasks that they were most talented in. Adding up to that, when conflicts arose because of disagreements between the emergent leader and the other team members, this often led to team members especially putting their energy into the conflict itself. Consequently, this led to less focus and therefore less individual effectiveness. Less individual effectiveness could also be a consequence of when an emergent leader behaved unethically, because this often affected someone emotionally. A few examples of unethical behavior that could lead to less individual effectiveness was bullying or degrading behavior (towards women). Lastly, less individual effectiveness could be caused by two informal leaders competing with each other within a team, criticizing each other's ideas to try to earn most followers. Therefore, tasks were done less well. Exemplary quotations of less individual effectiveness being a negative consequence are taken from participants 15, 1, and 7:

(...) , cannot do their job properly [with an ineffective informal leader]. (p15)

then you are still less effective [in a conflict]. (p1)

because that keeps you awake at night, and it also makes you less effective [when unethical behavior is performed by the emergent leader]. (p7)

Yes, yes. Yes. [as an answer to the question whether effectiveness is influenced by competition]. (p15)

Thirdly, the participants concluded that **bad individual job performance (4c)** can be a negative consequence of emergent leadership. This outcome can be seen separately from less individual effectiveness (4b), since when team members were less effective, this was often corrected after a while and did not always influence the final performance. Bad individual job performance was often a result of ineffective emergent leaders. Additionally, when team members were feeling less appreciated because of a conflict between an

emergent leader and other team members, team members were not able to perform as they were used to. It was even evident that when there was a conflict between an emergent leader and a team member, another team member in the team could also be performing less well. Additionally, bad individual job performance could be a consequence of an emergent leader behaving unethically, because this could negatively affect other team members on an emotional level. Lastly, because of for example an emergent leader that was too competitive towards objectives for a team to follow, this would influence the individual performance negatively of the emergent leader him or herself, but also of the team members. A few quotations where bad individual job performance was mentioned as a negative consequence can be seen below:

then [if an informal leader is less effective] you will not achieve what you would like to achieve. (p1)

If it hadn't been resolved, it certainly would have had a negative impact on that boy's performance. (p3)

And then an unpleasant experience from the past [referring to experiencing that the emergent leader performed unethical behavior], (...). Well, that certainly affects our performance together. (p14)

People will not perform [when an informal leader is very competitive and the rest of the team does not follow] (p6)

The fourth negative individual outcome most participants mentioned was **job dissatisfaction (4d)**. There were multiple factors in the emergent leadership process that could have serious consequences for how employees enjoyed their job positions or roles in a team setting. This could be due to team members not feeling appreciated, or because the informal leader devalued the input team members gave. To illustrate, when interviewee 15 and participant 1 were asked what negative consequences they had experienced resulting from ineffective leaders and conflict due to emergent leadership, they answered the following:

the formal or informal leader [when he is less effective], is perhaps one of the most important factors for the well-being and satisfaction of an employee, so that has a major impact. (p15)

So the [conflict] has a lot of consequences for your job satisfaction. (p1)

Adding up to that, **bad mood (4e)** was the fifth negative individual consequence most interviewees mentioned in the interviews. This could include emotions such as frustration, anger, sadness, or disappointment. The data showed that these emotions could be expressed by a leader that had over-emerged, by team members that had under-emerged, but also by the team members that followed an ineffective leader. Additionally, a bad mood could result from conflicts arising in the emergent leadership process. Even though a conflict might happen between only the informal leader and one other team member, it was still evident that conflicts influenced more team members when it came to these emotions than only the ones that were in conflict. The mood could also be ruined by factors such as unethical behavior performed by the emergent leader and negative competition engaged in by an emergent leader:

there was a bit of frustration in, for some, within some of the team members, in the sense of you know, why is, yeah, how is this happening? What is happening [when the informal leader was ineffective]. (p6)

you say that emotions go high up in discussions or interpersonal contacts [in a conflict]. (p5)

I got really upset once [due to unethical behavior]. (p3)

You will get frustrations [when an emergent leader is very competitive and the rest of the team does not follow]. (p6)

Furthermore, **less intrinsic motivation (4f)** was identified as a negative consequence of the emergent leadership process. Participants felt like they were sometimes less motivated because they for example felt unappreciated by the emergent leader. Also, when discussions between emergent leaders and/or other team members sometimes lasted a longer time, this could lead to team members feeling like they were not listened to, or taken seriously, resulting in less intrinsic motivation for the tasks assigned. Less intrinsic motivation towards tasks was also mentioned as a negative consequence caused by emergent leaders behaving unethically, as when team members found out, this was often perceived as not fair. A few exemplary quotes mentioning less intrinsic motivation can be taken from participants 10, 2, and 13:

And at one point I even received reproaches from the other employees saying, hey, you're going to deal with him, or it ultimately demotivates us too, saying, why do we have to take responsibility and go for it, while he's just cutting corners. (p10)

So some people, they, they get demotivated, right [due to a conflict]. (p2)

I would tell you that it [unethical behavior] was somewhat demotivating. (p13)

Lastly, **penalization (4g)** was a negative consequence resulting from the emergent leadership process. Whenever an emergent leader behaved unethically on a very serious level, breaching the law or code of conducts, this led to penalization. This could include withdrawal of salary or bonuses, but also reporting the police, or starting legal procedures against the emergent leaders. Participant 9 summarizes these findings very well:

Then you often have (...) disciplinary measures that counteract this [for unethical behavior]. These range from withdrawal of salary, withdrawal of bonuses. (...) Or even worse, yes, report it to the police, and yes, perform other legal actions, and then there are also actions in between. (p9)

4.2.2 Negative team-level outcomes of emergent leadership

According to the data, emergent leadership can also lead to negative team-level outcomes. The first team-level outcome identified is **poor collaboration (5a)**. Often, ineffective emergent leaders had the tendency to make decisions themselves, without taking into account much input from the whole team. For instance, emergent leaders started *'giving preference to certain colleagues'* (p10), and only listened to those team members that followed them. Another way this unfolds is that less effective informal leaders did not give the space to shape an end product together with the whole team. Additionally, participants

mentioned that team members sometimes did not want to work together anymore when being in conflict. This could also be seen when two informal leaders were competing whose ideas were best. Since this created different arguments within a team, this could lead to people working less well together.

I think that a good structure has been set, but not enough room for input. So in itself he (ineffective informal leader] had a good pioneering role. But did not give enough space to shape this together. (p16)

(...) Resistance to collaboration [in a conflict]. (p9)

but if there is competition, because of the competition and only on the competition, uh then it completely breaks down the collaboration in the team. (p6)

Secondly, **team member avoidance (5b)** many participants pointed out as a consequence of the emergent leadership process. For instance, team members did not talk to each other anymore, or did not show up in certain meetings. One of the reasons was because an ineffective leader tended to find the input from certain team members less valuable or showed less appreciation towards team members that did not follow him or her. Additionally, due to not being able to resolve a conflict quickly, this could lead to team members and emergent leaders avoiding contact with each other. And lastly, when team members found out that the emergent leader took part in unethical behavior, this led to team members avoiding this emergent leader. This could happen physically, but also avoiding the emergent leader's opinion in decision-making processes. Team member avoidance was mentioned by for example participant 2 and participant 4:

you may end up that people don't talk to each other anymore [when informal leaders are ineffective]. (p2)

I thought it was really bad that she avoided any contact [in the event of a conflict]. (p16)

That you think, well, we're definitely not going to discuss this with you next time [in case of unethical behavior]. (p16)

Thirdly, according to the data, a negative team-level outcome of the emergent leadership process was **less trust (5c)**. Less trust was especially seen by the team members that were not in favor of following the leader that had emerged, due to the actions and behavior that informal leader performed. Another way less trust was a negative consequence, was when followers were in favor of the leader that had emerged, but they found out that this emergent leader performed unethical behavior. Consequently, this breached the trust the team members had in this emergent leader.

So that's all about trust, and you might be able to trust him again after a while, but that has a long-lasting consequence if you cannot trust him [ineffective informal leader]. (p15)

I don't trust that. Yes absolutely your [trust is affected by unethical behavior]. (p16)

Furthermore, **project termination (5d)** was mentioned by the participants as a negative consequence of the emergent leadership process. Sometimes the effects of an ineffective emergent leader were so intense that the project the team worked for was terminated. Also,

when a serious form of unethical behavior was performed by the emergent leader, and the factors softening unethical behavior were not present, this could lead to a project that has stopped. For instance, participant 9 and participant 2 named this negative consequence:

What then happens is that such a project terminates [when having an ineffective informal leader]. (p9)

Yeah, well, sometimes it even, in my experience, it has ended up in a project which has stopped, right? So it just ends up with a negative result. Only money spent, but no return on investment [when emergent leader behaves unethically]. (p2)

Adding up to that, the participants experienced that **less psychological safety (5e)** within the team could be a negative consequence of the emergent leadership process. For instance, when a team member under-emerged in the emergent leadership process, he or she often did not want to share their ideas anymore. A reason for this was that this team member felt that no one listened to him or her anymore. Often, this also led to other team members not speaking up, since the team member they wanted to follow as a leader did not emerge as the leader in the whole team. Additionally, because a conflict in the emergent leadership process sometimes ended up in a verbal fight, interviewees indicated that team members did not feel safe sharing their arguments anymore. This was also seen for team members that were not part of the conflict. And finally, when an emergent leader behaved unethically in the form of bullying, or degrading behavior, often team members did not feel safe to express their opinion towards the unethically behaving emergent leader. However, sometimes, after the unethical behavior was repeated for a certain amount of times, this did lead to someone speaking up. A few examples of participants mentioning less psychological safety as a negative consequence are taken from participants 11, 1, and 3.

You see that often the content leader switches off at a certain stage and says okay, they are listening to that person, basically, I don't know why because the ideas are just not good. And that person decides to basically not speak up anymore. So there's less psychological safety in that case. (p11)

That [conflict] affects your communication, you no longer feel safe. You're not likely to say anything in a team anymore. (p1)

Yes, [psychological safety decreases], because you actually don't say anything, only after it happens four times. (p3)

Moreover, a **bad team atmosphere (5f)** was identified as a negative team consequence. This is often directly referred to by the interviewees, and has a strong relationship with everyone's individual mood (4e). The participants described moments that the atmosphere was pertaining to tension, where frustrations could arise, or uncomfortable. This bad team atmosphere could be related to leader over- and under-emergence, conflicts because of emergent leaders, and emergent leaders performing unethical behavior:

Then it is of course not effective and it can completely ruin the entire atmosphere in the team. (p10)

This [conflict] really did something to the mutual atmosphere. (p12)

but you sometimes see that it [unethical behavior] creates an uncomfortable setting. (p14)

The seventh negative team-level outcome identified is **less team effectiveness (5g)**. When an emergent leader was seen as less effective, participants indicated that the roles needed to finish a project were not well divided among the team members. Because not everyone obtained the role in which they were most talented, this could lead to less team effectiveness. Another example in the data is that when a less effective emergent leader did not make the right decisions for the team, this could also lead to less team effectiveness. Adding up to that, when there was a conflict because of the emergent leadership process, the energy of the team members went to the conflict itself happening within the team. Consequently, team members started to engage in actions not contributing to resolving the conflict, but also not contributing to how to do their tasks related to the job as well as possible. Examples of these actions were talking behind each other's back, or excluding team members in decision-making processes. Additionally, less team effectiveness could be seen as a consequence of unethical behavior performed by the emergent leader. Often, the emergent leader was seen as the person taking final decisions or setting out a direction for the project to go to. When team members found out that the emergent leader behaved unethically, this could lead to team members not following the decisions of the emergent leader anymore for a short period of time, which could make the team less effective. The last example found in the data was when multiple emergent leaders competed with each other within a team to gain the most followers, this could also lead to less team effectiveness. For instance, participants 1, 12, 3, and 15 mentioned less team effectiveness as a negative consequence resulting from the emergent leadership process within a team:

Yes, sometimes it just makes you go in the wrong direction. And then it is very difficult to adjust it again. Or you have to go back all the way, less effectiveness. (p1)

It also affected the effectiveness [in a conflict], because way too much time was spent talking about, rather than talking with. Which only led to chatter, and it only made me think yes, now stop and now get to work. (p12)

Well, it wasn't effective, absolutely not, this nonsense [when unethical behavior was performed]. (p3)

Yes, yes. Yes. [as an answer to the question whether effectiveness is influenced by competition]. (p15)

Furthermore, **bad team performance (5h)** was mentioned by the participants. Bad team performance could be connected to all direct factors in the emergent leadership process discussed. For instance, due to an ineffective emergent leader in a team, the team was not able to deliver. Also, when a conflict arose because of emergent leadership, this could affect team members emotionally. Because these conflicts were sometimes not resolved in an early stage, this could lead to a team not meeting the objectives set for a project. Another example of why a team performed badly was when an emergent leader did not make morally right decisions. And lastly, according to the data, team performance was negatively affected by competition between two emergent leaders, because the team then did not achieve what it would have liked to achieve. Examples of mentioning bad team performance as a negative consequence are found in quotations of participants 6, 2, 1, and 15:

And if we continue like this [informal leader was ineffective], we are not, you know, delivering because there was of course there is output needed. (p6)

in the end then [when in conflict] I think you will not meet the deadlines and all that and also the technical solution will be at stake. (p2)

That [unethical behavior] affects a team's performance because you get a bad policy. (p1)

You don't achieve what you would like to achieve [when two emergent leaders compete negatively]. (p15)

The ninth negative team consequence found is **team polarization (5i)**. For instance, when an emergent leader was ineffective, this often led to team members preferring someone else being the informal leader, while others still followed the existing emergent leader. This led to a team that could make decisions into contradicting directions, or choosing sides when a discussion came up. Additionally, the informal leader could have preferences for team members who followed him or her, which could also lead to team polarization. Also, due to the finding that conflicts in the emergent leadership process often resulted due to a disagreement between two or more parties, this could lead to team members choosing sides. As picking sides sometimes also led to parts of the team going into an opposite direction in decision-making than other parts of the team, this could disrupt the team in their work. To illustrate this, two quotations are taken from participant 9 and participant 11:

What you see with ineffective leaders is that they start to have preferences. They pay attention to the people who listen to them, to the people who put them on a pedestal, so to speak, right? (p9)

That you get a little bit of two-folds in one team, so one part is going this direction, the other part is going that direction. And then often parts of the teams are choosing basically a sort of camp and then you get really the camp thinking where you see almost a split between two parts of the team. Sometimes it's three parts, or there is one or two that are staying away from it, and a couple get involved. (p11)

Furthermore, the participants experienced **less team productivity (5j)** as a consequence that could be connected to emergent leadership. Often interviewees referred to delays, or the term productivity itself as a negative consequence. For instance, because of an ineffective emergent leader, and therefore a switch of emergent leaders was starting to unfold, participants indicated that less tasks were fulfilled in the same amount of time. Also, as conflicts arose because of emergent leadership, and this required time to resolve, this could lead to delays or lower production rates. Two quotations are taken to illustrate this. For instance, participant 2 mentioned the term itself, when being asked what his experiences were with negative consequences of conflicts due to emergent leadership:

What then happens is that such a project (...) is delayed [with an ineffective informal leader] (p9)

And that [a conflict] has a high impact on the productivity of the team. (p2)

The last negative team-level outcome seen in the data is **less team spirit and identification (5k)**. When disagreements between an emergent leader and other team members were

resulting into a longer lasting conflict, some team members did not feel the team spirit anymore and did not feel like they identified to being part of the group anymore. This was also seen for when an emergent leader was too competitive towards certain objectives for the team to follow, team members did not identify as much with the emergent leader anymore, which also led to a feeling of less team spirit and identification. Two exemplary quotations are taken from the interviews of participant 1 and participant 6. To put into context, the quotation of participant 1 was an answer to the question whether in her experiences there were negative consequences of conflicts caused by emergent leadership:

So the [conflict] has a lot of consequences (...) for the team spirit. (p1)

There is no team spirit anymore [when an informal leader is very competitive and the rest of the team does not follow]. (p6)

4.2.3 Negative organization-level outcomes of emergent leadership

Besides individual- and team-level consequences, the data also revealed that emergent leadership processes within teams could negatively affect organization-level outcomes as well. Two negative outcomes on the organization level were identified. **Higher absenteeism and attrition rates (6a)** were the first organizational-level consequence identified that could be caused by the emergent leadership process. Higher absenteeism rates most often referred to team members saying they were ill and did not go to work. This could be due to an ineffective leader, and consequently under-emerged team members within the team. Higher absenteeism rates were also seen when conflict arose due to the emergent leadership process, that had much impact on the emotional level of team members. Moreover, when an emergent leader took part in degrading behavior, bullying or talking behind team members' backs, this could also lead to higher absenteeism rates. Furthermore, when looking at higher attrition rates in the data, this often happened when emergent leaders were very ineffective, and were therefore fired or put into another job position. Also, when an emergent leader was at the center of a conflict, and did not do anything to try to resolve it, the data revealed that these leaders could be fired in the end as well. And finally, when an emergent leader engaged in unethical behavior, and the emergent leader did not change his or her behavior, or the seriousness of the unethical behavior was already at a very high level, this also led to job termination. A few exemplary quotations are:

[ineffective informal leaders] that leads to people call themselves ill. (p5)

With some team members I have also seen increased absenteeism [conflict]. (p9)

People call that they are ill [when unethical behavior is performed by the emergent leader]. (p15)

or people say, listen, there is no place for you here anymore [when an informal leader only thinks about himself]. (p7)

I decided to fire the guy [the emergent leader, after a conflict]. (p8)

And that ended very shortly, I can tell that this person is not working for the company we may, so it happens. (p5)

The second and last negative organization-level consequence participants pointed out was **customer dissatisfaction and business continuity risks (6b)**. Most often, this was due to the emergent leader being not effective in his or her tasks, while another team member could have done the tasks better. Here, the most prominent task that was not carried out effectively was decision-making. For instance, participant 16 and participant 11 have mentioned these negative organization-level outcomes:

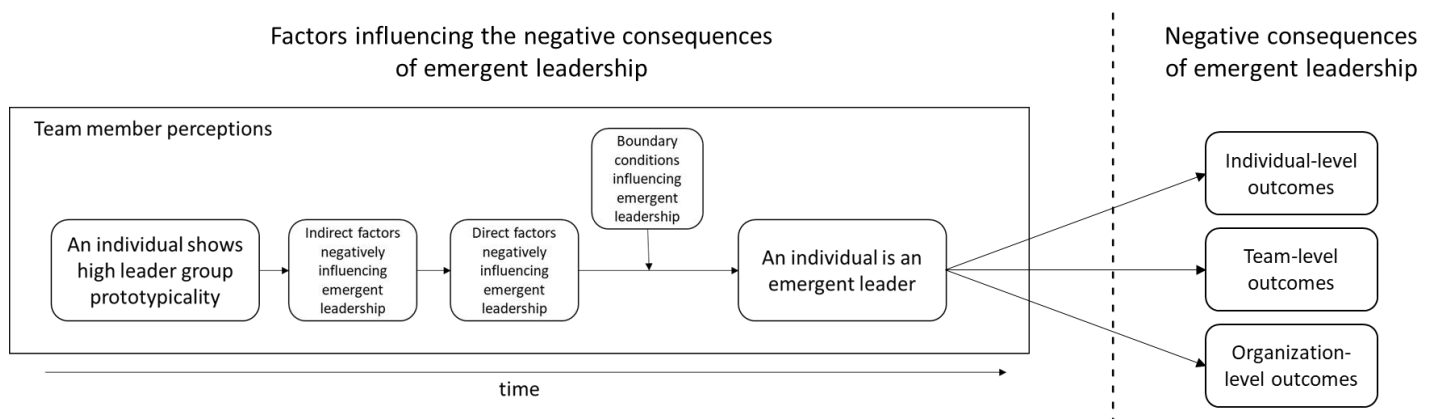
Yes, negative results are when it is not completely clear to the client, that she thinks, why do I have to wait so long and you are stuck there, and you say I don't know either, right? And then it can be very negative in that sense that she thinks that she is not being heard in her care needs. (p16)

business continuity risks because the solutions chosen are just not the best for the for the business outcome [ineffective leader]. (p11)

4.3 Final model and additional findings

Now that all first-order codes, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions are explained, the relationships can be portrayed in a final model. Figure 5 extending Figure 4, shows the negative consequences related to the factor model. Therefore, the model is divided into a left side and a right side, each side offering an answer to the sub-questions of this thesis's research question. As there were so many negative consequences seen in the data, these are summarized in the model as the three levels of analysis they were explained: individual-level, team-level and organization-level outcomes.

Figure 5. A model of factors influencing emergent leadership and its negative consequences



Apart from the findings contributing to the answer to the research question, also some additional findings could be found in the data. The interview mostly focused on the negative side of emergent leadership, but at a certain point in the interview, interviewees were able to share their general view on the topic. This led to almost every interviewee answering that they experience emergent leadership as a positive concept. After the researcher asked a few more questions about why these interviewees view emergent leadership as a positive

concept, it can be concluded that the answers all aligned with the existing literature as presented in the theoretical background of this thesis. Therefore, there were no novel insights found on the positive side of emergent leadership during the data analysis.

5. Discussion

After identifying multiple calls from important studies in the field of emergent leadership through the lens of Social Identity Theory of Leadership, this thesis aimed to investigate how emergent leadership can have a negative influence on individual and team outcomes in team settings. The findings in this thesis provide answers to these calls, addressing research gaps and offering a foundation for more research about the negative consequences of emergent leadership. In this chapter, the theoretical and practical implications are discussed of the multiple factors influencing the negative consequences of emergent leadership, and the negative consequences on their own.

5.1 Theoretical implications

The findings revealed that there are five indirect factors, five direct factors, and two boundary conditions that can influence negative consequences of emergent leadership. By developing a model of the possible dark sides of emergent leadership and its underlying processes and mechanisms whereby this negative influence happens, this thesis makes two important theoretical contributions.

5.1.1 *Factors influencing the negative consequences of emergent leadership*

Firstly, five indirect factors could be connected with the “dark sides” of emergent leadership, through influencing other factors in the emergent leadership process. These factors assist in understanding why and when the direct factors in the emergent leadership process cause the negative consequences of emergent leadership. By identifying these indirect factors, this thesis extends current literature as many previous papers primarily focused on individual traits as indirect factors influencing emergent leadership (Hanna et al., 2020). As this thesis did not only limit its attention to finding a certain type of indirect factor, this led to more novel indirect factors contributing to the emergent leadership framework than previous literature was able to outline. For instance, company culture and authority of the formal leader, and inclusion and diversity can be seen as novel indirect factors in the emergent leadership framework, as the presence of both indirect factors can be explained by the Social Identity Theory of Leadership. Firstly, company culture and authority of the formal leader was an indirect factor influencing leader over-emergence and leader under-emergence within a team. Often, a team member that showed high leader-group prototypicality has been given a formal leadership role, giving him or her authority over the group. However, this often made it impossible to switch leaders when another team member grew to be more prototypical in a different context. Especially when the formal leader kept his or her authority, while adopting to a top-down leadership style, this could explain leader over-emergence and leader under-emergence within a team. Secondly, a lack of inclusion and diversity was an indirect factor influencing leader over-emergence and leader under-emergence within a team. Because the Social Identity Theory of Leadership suggests that ‘leadership derives from social identity-based perceptions of the leader as a group member’ (Steffens et al., 2020, p. 36), the team members that are not promoting inclusion and diversity, might not identify with and perceive someone in an underrepresented group as their leader. As a result, people in underrepresented groups

might be very effective leaders, but do not become the leader, and therefore under-emerge. On the other hand, when someone that is not in an underrepresented group becomes the leader because of this reason, and is therefore less effective, this can negatively influence the lack of inclusion and diversity the other way around. This less effective emergent leader does not give room to people in underrepresented groups for input in team discussions, and therefore does not participate in inclusive leadership (Houston et al., 2023).

Secondly, five direct factors have been identified that can lead to negative consequences of emergent leadership. These direct factors can be seen as mediators, therefore offering a greater understanding of the mechanisms describing the negative consequences of emergent leadership (Hanna et al., 2020). Although some mediating mechanisms can be found in previous literature, given the cross-sectional qualitative nature of the findings in this thesis, previous research has not been able to capture all mechanisms influencing the negative consequences of emergent leadership found in this thesis yet. For instance, the addition of the direct factors unethical behavior and negative competition to the emergent leadership framework are contributing to novel insights. Firstly, unethical behavior has been experienced as a factor that was part of the emergent leadership process, as emergent leaders were prone to be involved in unethical behavior. On the one hand, this was expected, since the literature review conducted for the theoretical background of this thesis included literature that suggests unethical pro-organizational behavior can be a negative consequence of charismatic leadership and psychological safety. On the other hand, it was surprising to see that the unethical behavior found in the data was not only pro-organizational, but could take other very serious forms because of self-interest. Thus, according to the data, emergent leaders can engage in unethical leadership behavior (Chandler, 2009), even though they do not have a formal leader position. This might be explained by emergent leaders experiencing performance pressure (Zhang et al., 2020), or a fear of losing power (Wisse et al., 2019). Secondly, negative competition was an example of a direct factor leading to negative outcomes of emergent leadership. Existing literature already suggested that when multiple leaders emerge, this might result into a power struggle (Hanna et al., 2020). However, the concept of emergent leaders that are too competitive towards certain objectives while the team struggles to follow (e.g., in sales teams) is not discussed in this paper (Hanna et al., 2020). This behavior of an emergent leader might be explained by contextual influences, such as a work environment characterized by competition (Fousiani & Wisse, 2022).

Lastly, two boundary conditions have been identified influencing the relationships seen between some factors in the emergent leadership process. These boundary conditions are important because they assist in explaining how certain relationships in the factor model of emergent leadership can strengthen or reduce emergent leadership effects (Hanna et al., 2020). Yet, previous research has not been able to map these boundary conditions influencing relationships of variables that affect the “dark sides” of emergent leadership (Hanna et al., 2020). For instance, according to the data of this thesis, there can be a moderating effect between bad team dynamics and leader over- and under-emergence. This moderating effect can happen when a team has cultural diversity, and team members therefore experience cultural differences in the team. Cultural differences can lead to more

leader over- and under-emergence within a team when the team already has bad team dynamics. This was portrayed in that some cultures behaved more submissive to other cultures, where a leader emerged in the more dominant culture. Here, Social Identity Theory of Leadership suggests that the more submissive culture might perceive a team member from the dominant culture to be more prototypical. This can be due to the suggestion that individualist cultures might be more competitive to emergent leaders, while collectivist cultures possibly find more comfort with team members organically assuming leadership (Hanna et al., 2020; Hofstede, 1980). Adding up to that, factors softening unethical behavior could have a diminishing effect on the relationship between unethical behavior and its direct negative consequences in the emergent leadership process. These softening factors can also be aligned with results from existing literature when considering unethical leadership behavior (Kidwell & Martin, 2005; Inam et al., 2021). Yet, considering this boundary condition as part of the emergent leadership framework discussed in this thesis, this can be considered a novel insight.

5.1.2 Negative consequences of emergent leadership

Furthermore, the findings of this thesis include multiple negative consequences of emergent leadership on individual, team, and organizational levels resulting from emergent leadership. By identifying these negative consequences, this thesis extends current knowledge on the “dark sides” emergent leadership can have. Given the multi-level nature of these consequences, the “dark sides” of emergent leadership can be visible and experienced throughout the whole organization. An overview can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Negative consequences of emergent leadership, grouped per level of analysis

| Individual level | Team level | Organization level |
|--|--|--|
| 4a. Confusion about tasks and leadership 4b. Less individual effectiveness 4c. Bad individual job performance 4d. Job dissatisfaction 4e. Bad mood 4f. Less intrinsic motivation 4g. Penalization | 5a. Poor collaboration 5b. Team member avoidance 5c. Less trust 5d. Project termination 5e. Less psychological safety 5f. Bad team atmosphere 5g. Less team effectiveness 5h. Bad team performance 5i. Team polarization 5j. Less team productivity 5k. Less team spirit and identification | 6a. Higher absenteeism and attrition rates 6b. Customer dissatisfaction and business continuity risks |

By grouping the negative consequences of emergent leadership into multiple levels, this contributes to the literature by offering a more integrated understanding of the outcomes that unfold across every level in the organization (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000). Therefore, these findings can be seen as theoretically more rich and more application-relevant (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000). Firstly, the emergent leadership process resulted in negative individual-level outcomes. As emergent leadership occurs at the individual level of analysis (Hanna et

al., 2020), the connection of emergent leadership to individual outcomes is not surprising. The negative individual outcomes of emergent leadership are very important, since these can offer a clearer picture on why processes, projects, or well-being might be influenced in a negative way looking at each team member individually. Previous studies have often focused on effectiveness-based individual outcomes of emergent leadership (Hanna et al., 2020), therefore overlooking other outcomes that might be organizationally relevant. Besides effectiveness-based outcomes, this thesis also found affect-based individual outcomes, which have not been found in the existing literature (Hanna et al., 2020). For instance, job dissatisfaction is one of the novel insights in the individual outcomes of emergent leadership. This is an affect-based outcome that has much negative impact on the employee, and can potentially lead to employees leaving the company (Vangel, 2011).

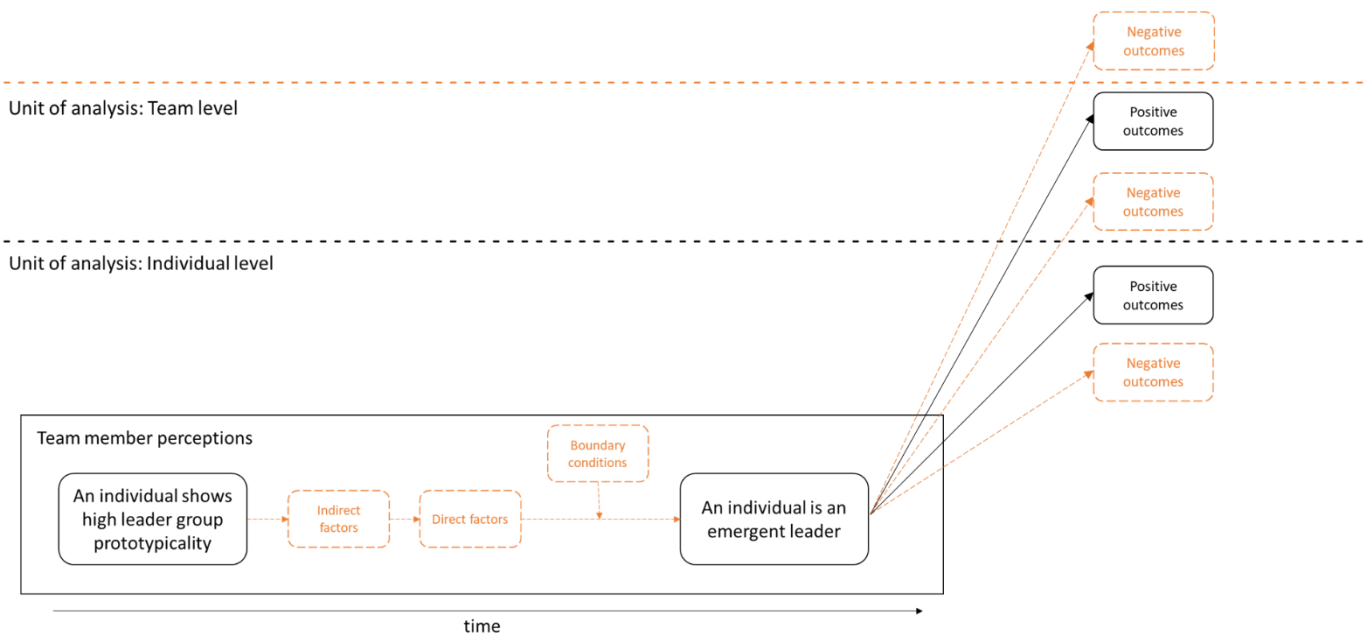
Secondly, the emergent leadership process resulted in negative team-level outcomes. This is not surprising, as emergent leadership is often researched on a team level through the lens of Social Identity Theory of Leadership. That is due to the fact that the Social Identity Theory of Leadership focusses on the representativeness of an individual within a specific group (Steffens et al., 2020). Negative team-level outcomes of emergent leadership is the second important group of outcomes identified, since these offer a clearer picture on why processes or projects might be influenced in a negative way looking at the team as a whole and the relationships between team members. Previous research has indicated that team-level outcomes of emergent leadership can be grouped in effectiveness-based outcomes and affect-based outcomes, but in total not many outcomes of emergent leadership have been identified (Hanna et al., 2020). Both these types of outcomes are also found in the data of this thesis. For instance, team polarization is a team-level affect-based outcome identified. The Social Identity Theory might help to explain why this is a negative outcome. As having multiple leaders within a team, the presence of conflicts, and ineffective informal leaders were often linked to team polarization, this implies that polarization happened due to not having the team members' perceptions, norms, and/or values aligned. Creating groups within the team creates alignment again between the team members in those groups (Steffens et al., 2020), however, this is not beneficial as this disrupts the team and their work.

Lastly, negative organization-level outcomes have been identified in this thesis. This is surprising, since previous research has only focused on team-level and individual-level consequences (Hanna et al., 2020). This indicates that the organizational level of outcomes are very important, as this shows that the whole organization, as a collective of individuals and teams, can also be affected by the emergent leadership processes seen within teams. With this being said, only capturing the individual-level and team-level consequences does not give the full picture of what emergent leadership processes can affect. This might partially be explained by how individual and team level outcomes can propagate towards organizational outcomes, and therefore making these levels of outcomes interconnected (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000). For instance, the increased absenteeism and attrition rates seen in the data can be influenced by the individual-level outcome *job dissatisfaction* (Vangel, 2011; Smokrović et al., 2019), or by the team-level outcome *bad team atmosphere* (Sriram et al., 2019).

In sum, the theoretical contributions can be added to Figure 2, the model of theoretical contributions to the existing literature:

Figure 6. A model of the theoretical contributions of this thesis in light of the existing literature

Unit of analysis: Organization level



5.2 Practical implications

Together with the theoretical implications, the results of this thesis also have implications for practice. Indeed, the findings of this thesis can offer a full picture of the factors and negative consequences identified from a sample of participants operating in many sectors. It brings additional insights into the “dark sides” of emergent leadership, with a collection of many new factors that have not been found before in the emergent leadership literature, to the researcher’s knowledge. Organizations can use these findings to better understand the negative consequences of emergent leadership. Consequently, it can offer ways to avoid or reduce these potential negative consequences from happening in their own company, and raise awareness for potential future outcomes. Therefore, this thesis also offers some practical implications.

Firstly, when organizations would like to encourage emergent leadership, formal leaders should engage in empowering leadership, supporting and allowing emergent leaders to make decisions (Huettermann et al., 2024). Furthermore, organizations can also actively look at team compositions, creating the right environment for good team dynamics to arise. The other factors can serve as a source of knowledge, since these are difficult to actively change or reduce. When an organization already sees some of the negative consequences discussed in this thesis, but was not sure how to come to a solution, this thesis can offer new insights on the nature of negative consequences in a company. When connecting the negative consequences to one of the factors discussed of emergent leadership, organizations might

find that the nature of these negative consequences can be related to emergent leadership, and can act accordingly with external options.

Secondly, organizations can use the findings of this thesis to create awareness. Since the emergence of leaders is an organic process, it is hard to work against this phenomenon. Therefore, when factors that can lead to negative consequences begin to show, organizations can raise awareness of the consequences that might happen, to mitigate the effects. This can be done through workshops and trainings, or simply pointing it out in meetings.

6. Limitations and future research

While this research can make valuable theoretical and practical contributions, it also has some limitations. Firstly, the sample used for this study contained 16 individuals. This is a small sample with participants that might have very different experiences due to the maximum variation sampling strategy. However, this sampling strategy combined with a small sample can still be seen as a strength (Patton, 2002), as 'any patterns that do emerge are likely to be of particular interest and value and represent the key themes' (Saunders et al., 2009). Though to be able to reach full data saturation, future research might want to consider using a larger sample. Additionally, since maximum variation sampling is used, the sample included participants working in teams of many different industries. When looking at the data, there might have been some trends in specific industries in contrast to other industries when researching emergent leadership. Therefore, a future research opportunity might be to research whether there are differences in how emergent leadership unfolds in different industries.

Secondly, this research was conducted with only Dutch participants. As could already be seen in the data, different cultures might perceive emergent leadership differently, as well as certain outcomes, such as effectiveness. Even though many participants in this sample have been working in multicultural teams, and have also shared their experiences with other cultures in team settings, future research might want to consider a sample including multiple cultures, or specifically focus on the relationship between cultural differences and emergent leadership.

Thirdly, even though the coding done for this thesis has been reviewed by the supervisors, the coding process was conducted solely by one researcher. Therefore, intercoder reliability could not be guaranteed. Future research might therefore want to make sure that the data is at least coded by two professionals, to ensure that the data is reliable.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, this study shed light on the possible dark sides of emergent leadership, as well as the processes and mechanisms whereby this negative influence happens.

Correspondingly, it opens up a novel processual model illustrating how multiple factors can influence the multi-level negative consequences that can result from the emergent leadership processes in team settings. Indeed, negative consequences of emergent leadership can be seen on the individual-level, the team-level and the organization-level of analysis. By understanding what factors related to emergent leadership influence these negative outcomes, organizations can reduce or avoid the related negative outcomes. In that way, the positive concept of emergent leadership can be encouraged and benefited from even more.

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9. Appendix

Appendix A.

Demographics questionnaire

Dear interviewee, thank you for taking the time to participate in this research. To be able to obtain a clear picture of my sample, I would like to ask you about some demographics.

Beste geïnterviewde, bedankt dat u de tijd wilt nemen om deel te nemen aan dit onderzoek. Om een duidelijk beeld te krijgen van mijn sample, zou ik graag een paar demografische gegevens van u willen vragen.

1. *What is your age?*

Wat is uw leeftijd?

2. *What is your gender?*

Wat is uw geslacht? (Vrouw, Man, Vertel ik liever niet)

Female Male Prefer not to say

3. *What role/position do you have in the company you currently work in?*

Wat voor positie vervult u momenteel in het bedrijf waar u werkt?

4. *What is your nationality?*

Wat is uw nationaliteit?

5. *How many years of experience do you have working in work teams?*

Hoeveel jaar werkervaring heeft u als het gaat om werken in teams?

6. *Do you prefer the interview to be in English or in Dutch?*

Zou u het interview liever in het Engels of in het Nederlands willen doen? (Engels, Nederlands)

English Dutch

Appendix B.

Interview guide (English)

Hi! Thank you for taking the time to do this interview with me. This interview is about your experiences of leadership and followership dynamics in team settings. Before I start, I want to let you know there are no right or wrong answers to the questions, so please feel free to share whatever comes up.

| Themes | Main questions | Follow-up questions | Probing questions |
|---------------------|---|---|---|
| <i>Introduction</i> | Why did you decide to join this company? What is your role in the team you are in? | What did you find challenging in this role? Why? | Oh, this is interesting, can you elaborate a bit more? |
| | In what kinds of projects have you experienced leadership and/or followership in work teams? | | Thank you for sharing, do you mind if I have further questions on this? |
| | To what extent did you feel that sometimes in your team there was an informal leader <u>(i.e. someone that you perceived to be a leader without this person being formally assigned to a leadership role)</u> ? | Why? Can you provide an example of what happened? | |
| <i>Conflict</i> | Have you experienced any conflict within a team? Why did the conflict start in your opinion? <u>Conflict = disagreement, not aligned</u> | Can you provide examples? | Oh, this is interesting, can you elaborate a bit more? |
| | To what extent was it due to conflicting roles/authorities within the team? | Can you provide examples? | Thank you for sharing, do you mind if I have further questions on this? |
| | How did this (what the participant mentioned) influence each member's performance/mood/effectiveness? How did this influence the team performance/mood/effectiveness? <u>("I'm going to provide an example, but feel free to think of other examples")</u> | And why? | |
| | In your experiences with informal leaders, to what extent do you feel | And why? | Oh, this is interesting, can |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <i>Over- & under-emergence</i> | the informal leader(s) was/were effective? (<u>i.e. doing the right things in the best way</u>) | | you elaborate a bit more? |
| | To what extent do you feel like there were instances where someone else might have been a better leader than the leader that had emerged? | Can you provide examples? And why? | Thank you for sharing, do you mind if I have further questions on this? |
| | How did this (what the participant mentioned) influence each member's performance/mood/effectiveness? How did this influence the team performance/mood/effectiveness? <u>("I'm going to provide an example, but feel free to think of other examples")</u> | And why? | |

| | | | |
|------------|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <i>UPB</i> | In your experiences with teams with informal leaders, to what extent have you experienced that someone behaved unethical? Why? <u>Unethical = morally wrong /acting towards you own interests, while another party is negatively influenced by your actions.</u> | Do you mind sharing what happened? | Oh, this is interesting, can you elaborate a bit more? Thank you for sharing, do you mind if I have further questions on this? |
| | How did this (what the participant mentioned) influence each member's performance/mood/effectiveness? How did this influence the team performance/mood/effectiveness? <u>("I'm going to provide an example, but feel free to think of other examples")</u> | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------|--|
| <i>Other (Take the time for these questions!)</i> | We have now talked about situations of conflict, how effective an informal leader is, and about unethical behavior. However, to what extent have you experienced other influences of (an) informal leader(s) that are not yet discussed in this interview? To | Do you have examples? | Oh, this is interesting, can you elaborate a bit more? Thank you for sharing, do you mind if I have |
|---|---|-----------------------|--|

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|--|--|----------|----------------------------|
| | what extent did you experience them as negative? | | further questions on this? |
| | How did this (what the participant mentioned) influence each member's performance/mood/effectiveness? How did this influence the team performance/mood/effectiveness? <u>("I'm going to provide an example, but feel free to think of other examples")</u> | And why? | |

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|
| <i>Conclusion</i> | Overall, how did you experience emergent leadership? | Can you provide examples? How did this influence individual/team outcomes? | Oh, this is interesting, can you elaborate a bit more? Thank you for sharing, do you mind if I have further questions on this? |
| | Did I forget to ask something important that you would like to tell me about the topic? | | |

Thank you for your answers. We have now reached the end of this interview.

Appendix C.

Participant Information Sheet for Master Thesis about Emergent Leadership

Dear participants,

My name is Mette in 't Anker, and I am in my last year of the Master in Business Administration at the University of Twente. I am inviting you to take part in my Master Thesis study. Before accepting my invitation, it is important to understand why the research is being done and what it involves for you to take part in it. Please take a moment to go through the information below, and feel free to reach out to ask questions for further clarifications, or if you would like more information about the study.

What is this study about and can I participate?

This study is set up to investigate leadership and followership dynamics in teams. For this study, anyone who has experience in working in team settings, ideally for more than 6 months, and with at least one finished project, is welcome to participate.

What does my participation involve?

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. If you wish to participate, this involves signing a consent form and filling out a very short questionnaire about your demographics. Additionally, you will be interviewed for roughly 45 minutes about your personal experiences of leadership and followership in team. Your answers during the interview will be kept strictly confidential, anonymized and concealing any personal information. Your answers will only be used as quotations for my Master Thesis project. When my Master Thesis is completed, the video recordings will be deleted whilst the completely anonymized interview transcripts will be stored on the safe and encrypted Cloud of the University of Twente. If at any point you wish to withdraw, you can do so with no repercussion by contacting the research. In this case, data collected will be deleted and not used in the research.

Benefits and risk of participating

The research project has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioral, Management and Social Sciences (BMS). No risks or benefits have been anticipated for this study.

Contact details researcher:

Mette in 't Anker

(email address researcher)

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Secretary of the Ethics Committee/domain Humanities & Social Sciences of the Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences at the University of Twente by ethicscommittee-hss@utwente.nl

Appendix D.

**Consent Form for Master Thesis about Emergent Leadership
YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

Please tick the appropriate boxes

Yes No

Taking part in the study

I have read and understood the study information dated [12/02/2024], or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.

I understand that taking part in the study involves answering a short demographics questionnaire and participating in a video-recorded interview (e.g. through Microsoft Teams). The interviews will be transcribed as text, concealing any personal data and the video file will be destroyed once the master thesis is completed.

Use of the information in the study

I understand that the information I provide will be used for Mette in 't Anker's master thesis in Business Administration at the University of Twente.

I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as [e.g. my name or where I live], will not be shared beyond the study team.

I agree that what I share in the interviews (excluding personal information) can be quoted in research outputs.

Consent to be Audio/video Recorded

I agree to be video recorded.

Future use and reuse of the information by others

I give permission for the anonymized transcripts that I provide to be archived in the UT protected Cloud, so it can be used for future research and learning.

Signatures

Name of participant

Signature

Date

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

Mette in 't Anker
Researcher name

Signature

Date

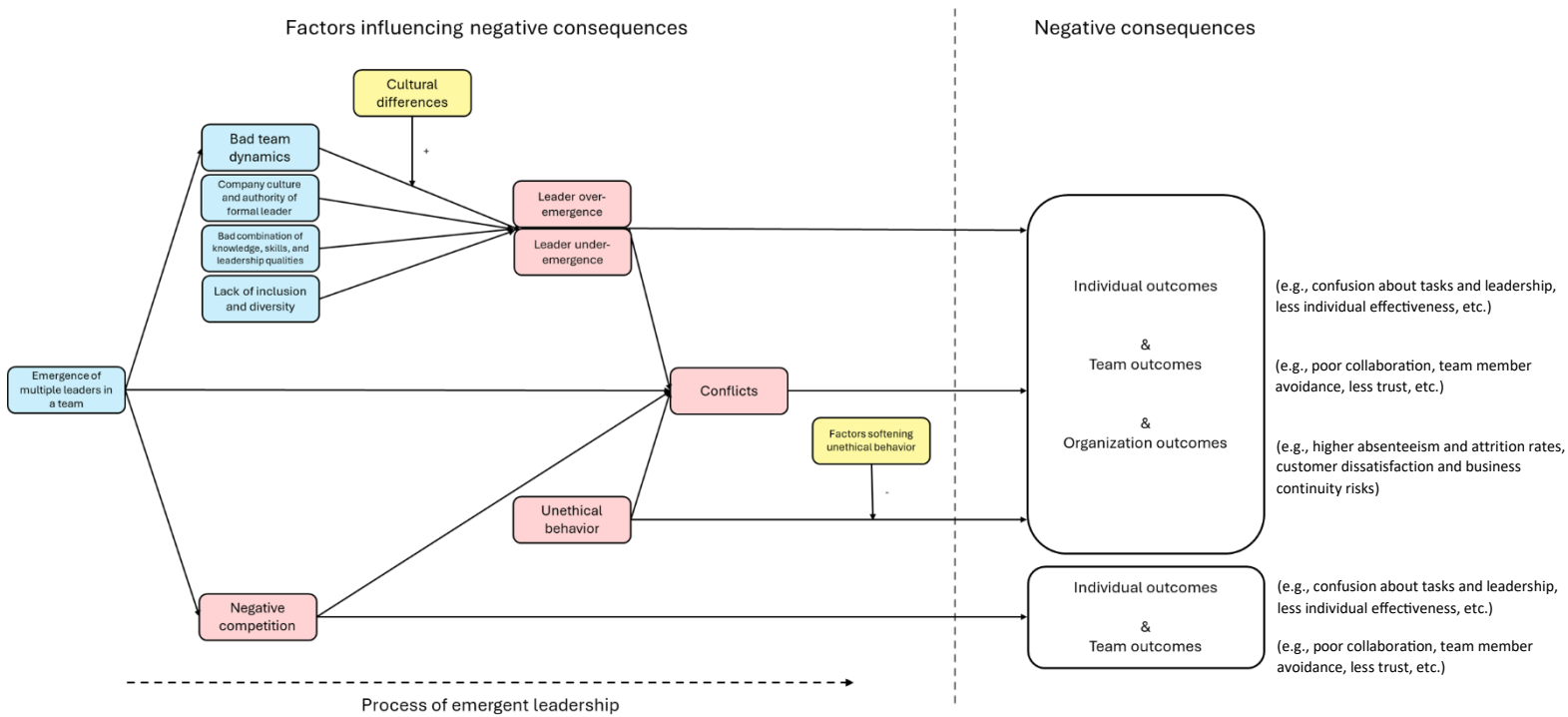
**Study contact details for further information:
Mette in 't Anker (email address researcher)**

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Secretary of the Ethics Committee/domain Humanities & Social Sciences of the Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences at the University of Twente by ethicscommittee-hss@utwente.nl

Appendix E.

Model of the factors influencing negative consequences in the emergent leadership process



2nd order themes:

- Indirect factors negatively influencing emergent leadership
- Direct factors negatively influencing emergent leadership
- Boundary conditions influencing emergent leadership

Note: Since leader over-emergence and leader under-emergence are two concepts that often happen at the same time, and therefore both have the same negative consequences in the data, these two are put together in the model.

Appendix F.

The negative consequences of leader over-emergence and under-emergence supported by quotations

| Exemplary quotations | 1 st -order codes | 2 nd -order themes |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>the formal or informal leader [when he is less effective], is perhaps one of the most important factors for the well-being and satisfaction of an employee, so that has a major impact. (p15)</i> | Job dissatisfaction | Negative individual-level outcomes |
| <i>yes, in a short period of time it has led to some commotion, because who is the leader, who is going to decide and say and do what [with an ineffective informal leader]? (p9)</i> | Confusion about tasks and leadership | |
| <i>And at one point I even received reproaches from the other employees saying, hey, you're going to deal with him, or it ultimately demotivates us too, saying, why do we have to take responsibility and go for it, while he's just cutting corners. (p10)</i> | Less intrinsic motivation | |
| <i>cannot do their job properly [with an ineffective informal leader] (p15)</i> | Less individual effectiveness | |
| <i>then [if an informal leader is less effective] you will not achieve what you would like to achieve. (p1)</i> | Bad individual performance | |
| <i>there was a bit of frustration in, for some, within some of the team members, in the sense of you know, why is, yeah, how is this happening? What is happening [when the informal leader was ineffective] (p6)</i> | Bad mood | |
| <i>you may end up that people don't talk to each other anymore [when informal leaders are ineffective]. (p2)</i> | Team member avoidance | Negative team-level outcomes |
| <i>So that's all about trust, and you might be able to trust him again after a while, but that has a long-lasting consequence if you cannot trust him [ineffective informal leader]. (p15)</i> | Less trust | |
| <i>I think that a good structure has been set, but not enough room for input. So in itself he (ineffective informal leader) had a good pioneering role. But did not give enough space to shape this together. (p16)</i> | Poor collaboration | |
| <i>What you see with ineffective leaders is that they start to have preferences. They pay attention to the people who listen to them, to</i> | Team polarization | |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <i>the people who put them on a pedestal, so to speak, right? (p9)</i> | | |
| <i>What then happens is that such a project (...) is delayed [with an ineffective informal leader] (p9)</i> | Less team productivity | |
| <i>You see that often the content leader switches off at a certain stage and says okay, they are listening to that person, basically, I don't know why because the ideas are just not good. And that person decides to basically not speak up anymore. So there's less psychological safety in that case. (p11)</i> | Less psychological safety | |
| <i>Then it is of course not effective and it can completely ruin the entire atmosphere in the team. (p10)</i> | Bad team atmosphere | |
| <i>What then happens is that such a project terminates [when having an ineffective informal leader]. (p9)</i> | Project termination | |
| <i>Yes, sometimes it just makes you go in the wrong direction. And then it is very difficult to adjust it again. Or you have to go back all the way, less effectiveness. (p1)</i> | Less team effectiveness | |
| <i>And if we continue like this [informal leader was ineffective], we are not, you know, delivering because there was of course there is output needed. (p6)</i> | Bad team performance | |
| <i>Yes, negative results are when it is not completely clear to the client, that she thinks, why do I have to wait so long and you are stuck there, and you say I don't know either, right? And then it can be very negative in that sense that she thinks that she is not being heard in her care needs. (p16) business continuity risks because the solutions chosen are just not the best for the for the business outcome [ineffective leader]. (p11)</i> | Customer dissatisfaction and business continuity risks | Negative organization-level outcomes |
| <i>[ineffective informal leaders] that leads to people call themselves ill. (p5) or people say, listen, there is no place for you here anymore [when an informal leader only thinks about himself]. (p7)</i> | Higher absenteeism and attrition rates | |

The negative consequences of conflicts supported by quotations

| Exemplary quotations | 1 st -order codes | 2 nd -order themes |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>So the [conflict] has a lot of consequences for your job satisfaction. (p1)</i> | Job dissatisfaction | Negative individual-level outcomes |
| <i>It's more about okay, what direction are we taking? And sometimes it's also confusion [conflict]. (p11)</i> | Confusion about tasks and leadership | |
| <i>So some people, they, they get demotivated, right [due to a conflict]. (p2)</i> | Less intrinsic motivation | |
| <i>then you are still less effective [in a conflict]. (p1)</i> | Less individual effectiveness | |
| <i>If it hadn't been resolved, it certainly would have had a negative impact on that boy's performance. (p3)</i> | Bad individual performance | |
| <i>you say that emotions go high up in discussions or interpersonal contacts [in a conflict]. (p5)</i> | Bad mood | |
| <i>I thought it was really bad that she avoided any contact [in the event of a conflict]. (p16)</i> | Team member avoidance | Negative team-level outcomes |
| <i>Resistance to collaboration [in a conflict]. (p9)</i> | Poor collaboration | |
| <i>That you get a little bit of two-folds in one team, so one part is going this direction, the other part is going that direction. And then often parts of the teams are choosing basically a sort of camp and then you get really the camp thinking where you see almost a split between two parts of the team. Sometimes it's three parts, or there is one or two that are staying away from it, and a couple get involved. (p11)</i> | Team polarization | |
| <i>And that [a conflict] has a high impact on the productivity of the team. (p2)</i> | Less team productivity | |
| <i>That [conflict] affects your communication, you no longer feel safe. You're not likely to say anything in a team anymore. (p1)</i> | Less psychological safety | |
| <i>This [conflict] really did something to the mutual atmosphere. (p12)</i> | Bad team atmosphere | |
| <i>So the [conflict] has a lot of consequences (...) for the team spirit. (p1)</i> | Less team spirit and identification | |
| <i>It also affected the effectiveness [in a conflict], because way too much time was spent talking about, rather than talking with. Which only led</i> | Less team effectiveness | |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <i>to chatter, and it only made me think yes, now stop and now get to work. (p12)</i> | | |
| <i>in the end then [when in conflict] I think you will not meet the deadlines and all that and also the technical solution will be at stake. (p2)</i> | Bad team performance | |
| <i>With some team members I have also seen increased absenteeism [conflict]. (p9) I decided to fire the guy [the emergent leader, after a conflict]. (p8)</i> | Higher absenteeism and attrition rates | Negative organization-level outcomes |

The negative consequences of unethical behavior performed by the emergent leader supported by quotations

| Exemplary quotations | 1st-order codes | 2nd-order themes |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>I would tell you that it [unethical behavior] was somewhat demotivating. (p13)</i> | Less intrinsic motivation | Negative individual-level outcomes |
| <i>Then you often have (...) disciplinary measures that counteract this [for unethical behavior]. These range from withdrawal of salary, withdrawal of bonuses. (...) Or even worse, yes, report it to the police, and yes, perform other legal actions, and then there are also actions in between. (p9)</i> | Penalization | |
| <i>because that keeps you awake at night, and it also makes you less effective [when unethical behavior is performed by the emergent leader]. (p7)</i> | Less individual effectiveness | |
| <i>And then an unpleasant experience from the past, (...). Well, that certainly affects our performance together. (p14)</i> | Bad individual performance | |
| <i>That you think, well, we're definitely not going to discuss this with you next time [in case of unethical behavior]. (p16)</i> | Team member avoidance | Negative team-level outcomes |
| <i>I don't trust that. Yes absolutely your [trust is affected by unethical behavior]. (p16)</i> | Less trust | |
| <i>Yes, [psychological safety decreases], because you actually don't say anything, only after it happens four times. (p3)</i> | Less psychological safety | |
| <i>but you sometimes see that it [unethical behavior] creates an uncomfortable setting. (p14)</i> | Bad team atmosphere | |
| <i>Yeah, well, sometimes it even, in my experience, it has ended up in a project which has stopped, right? So it just ends up with a negative result. Only money spent, but no</i> | Project termination | |

| | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| <i>return on investment [when emergent leader behaves unethically]. (p2)</i> | | |
| <i>Well, it wasn't effective, absolutely not this nonsense. (p3)</i> | Less team effectiveness | |
| <i>That [unethical behavior] affects a team's performance because you get a bad policy. (p1)</i> | Bad team performance | |
| <i>People call that they are ill [when unethical behavior]. (p15) And that ended very shortly, I can tell that this person is not working for the company we may, so it happens. (p5)</i> | Higher absenteeism and attrition rates | Negative organization outcomes |

The negative consequences of negative competition supported by quotations

| Exemplary quotations | 1st-order codes | 2nd-order themes |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Yes, yes. Yes. [as an answer to the question whether effectiveness is influenced by competition]. (p15)</i> | Less individual effectiveness | Negative individual-level outcomes |
| <i>People will not perform [when an informal leader is very competitive and the rest of the team does not follow] (p6)</i> | Bad individual performance | |
| <i>You will get frustrations [when an emergent leader is very competitive and the rest of the team does not follow]. (p6)</i> | Bad mood | |
| <i>but if there is competition, because of the competition and only on the competition, uh then it completely breaks down the collaboration in the team. (p6)</i> | Poor collaboration | Negative team-level outcomes |
| <i>There is no team spirit anymore [when an informal leader is very competitive and the rest of the team does not follow]. (p6)</i> | Less team spirit and identification | |
| <i>Yes, yes. Yes. [as an answer to the question whether effectiveness is influenced by competition]. (p15)</i> | Less team effectiveness | |
| <i>You don't achieve what you would like to achieve [when two emergent leaders compete negatively]. (p15)</i> | Bad team performance | |