DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP IN CHILDREN WHO EXPERIENCE(D) DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: A SELF-EFFICACY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

There is a growing demand for new leaders. Academic interest in leadership and leadership development has surged in recent years. Most studies focus on leadership development in general, neglecting leadership development among children and/or leadership development among children growing up in specific contexts, such as domestic violence households. Existing research highlights a relationship between parental leadership and self-efficacy in children, as well as between levels of self-efficacy and successful leadership. Self-efficacy is an important factor in leadership development; however, domestic violence experience often leads to lower levels of self-efficacy in children. This review shows that further research is needed to understand the mediating role of self-efficacy in the leadership development process, especially about children growing up in domestic violence households.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, domestic violence, leadership development

Introduction

The background of this literature review is the observation that multiple studies focus on leadership development and the influence of parent leadership on the development of leadership in children, yet research regarding child leadership development is deficient. This is particularly the case when it comes to child leadership development in specific contexts, such as domestic violence households. This literature review aims to gain insight into the leadership development and the role that self-efficacy plays in the leadership development of children who experience(d) domestic violence.

Methodology

This literature review focuses on the development of leadership in children who are exposed to domestic violence. A wealth of research indicates that leadership development begins at an early age and that self-efficacy is closely related to the development of leadership abilities. However, experiences of domestic violence often result in lower levels of self-efficacy, suggesting that children exposed to such environments may develop fewer leadership abilities compared to those who are not exposed (Avolio et al., 20009, Ferguson et al., 2006, Hartman et al., 1992). Given the scarcity of research on leadership development in children within specific contexts, this article aims to explore the relationships among child leadership development, parental leadership influence, domestic violence exposure, and self-efficacy. To conduct this exploration, the researcher reviewed scientific journals accessed through the Google Scholar and WorldCat databases. Utilizing keywords related to these concepts, such as "child leadership development," "parent leadership," "self-efficacy," "social cognitive theory," and "social learning theory," the researcher selected journals that featured the most influential sources, the most recent publications, and fundamental works from the past century. Our analysis included examining over 100 sources, complemented by a quantitative analysis.

Problem Statement and Aim for this Review

Leadership remains a relevant yet complex concept to define. There is an increasing demand for new leaders due to globalization, advances in technology, intensified competition, the mass retirement of baby boomers, and declining birth rates, all of which contribute to the growing need for motivated individuals to assume leadership roles (London, 2002; Riggio, 2008). In recent years, interest in leadership has surged along with the volume of related publications (Dinh et al., 2014; Ford

et al., 2007; Gunter, 2015; Samul, 2020), yet the definition of leadership varies widely in academic literature (Bennis, 1995; Volckmann, 2012). Leadership is interpreted differently across various fields such as business, psychology, and pedagogy, encompassing roles in occupations, task projects, or self-leadership. Opinions also differ on when leadership development occurs, whether early in life or later. Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) suggests that leadership begins to develop at an early age and that parental leadership significantly influences children's leadership skills (Avolio et al., 2009; Ferguson et al., 2006; Hartman et al., 1992). Child leadership pertains to the process through which young children exhibit abilities that enhance problem-solving efficiency or elevate group thinking (Hailey, 2020). Hartman et al. highlight the impact of parental leadership on child leadership, noting that children often mirror their parents' leadership styles, even if they disagree with those styles. Other studies have linked specific parental leadership styles with the development of child leadership abilities (Avolio, 2005), with the authoritative style being positively associated with traits that foster advancement into leadership positions (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2006). Despite ongoing interest in leadership, research on child leadership, particularly in specific contexts such as domestic violence households, is notably scarce (Kudo et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2005; Morda et al., 2010; Murphy et al., 2011a). Therefore, the influence of parental leadership on child leadership development in these environments remains largely unexplored.

Most existing research on the matter of leadership and domestic violence concentrates on policing domestic abuse, by social workers or law enforcement agents, and little research has been done regarding leadership abilities of domestic violence victims. Existing leadership programs focus primarily on women, such as a peer leadership training intervention among immigrant Latina woman domestic violence survivors, a program that is found to be effective in improving the self empowerment process of participants (Serrata et al., 2016). However, research regarding the leadership abilities and development of children with domestic violence experience is lacking as less attention is given to children as victims of the destructive parenting behaviours of domestic households (Humphreys et. al., 2019). Research indicates that experiences of domestic violence can adversely affect children's cognitive skills, language development, and educational attainment (Lyod, 2018), while high verbal abilities and communicative skills are key traits of child leadership (Fu, 1979; Fu et al., 1982; Kemple, 1991; Perez et al., 1982). In these environments, parental leadership can shape child leadership development in various ways. Children often emulate their parents' leadership styles, and these early childhood experiences can influence their conceptions of successful leaders (Keller, 2003). Another factor affecting child leadership development in such settings is the reduced levels of self-efficacy stemming from exposure to domestic violence (Haj-Yadia, 2019). Research has shown a correlation between higher levels of self-efficacy and the development of child leadership (Anderson et al., 2008; Aviolo, 2005; Chemers et al., 2000). Self-efficacy, a term used by Bandura, refers to one's confidence in their ability to execute specific tasks. Higher self-efficacy increases the likelihood of success in completing tasks, as it encourages tackling more challenging tasks and exerting greater effort, thereby enhancing resilience to obstacles (Bandura, 1978, 1986, 1997; Gist et al., 1992). From this perspective, greater self-efficacy is associated with a higher probability of developing leadership abilities.

The focus of this paper is to explore the literature regarding parental leadership, child leadership, domestic violence, and self-efficacy in children. This study addresses the increasing recognition of how parental leadership impacts child leadership development. According to the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), learning is related to observing interactions between people, their behavior, and their environments (Bandura, 1986). As children are exposed to the leadership behaviors of their parents, parental leadership may influence the leadership development of children, as this is often the first experience of children with leadership. The leadership development of children who grow up in domestic violence households is likely influenced both by their direct experiences with domestic violence and by modeling their leadership on those of their parents. In this literature review, the researcheraim to highlight gaps in the literature and emphasize the need for new perspectives in the leadership debate. This effort seeks to aid those working with children in better understanding the effects of parental leadership on child leadership within the context of domestic violence households.

Literature on key concepts

The review of the literature is organized into two main sections: the first focuses on the key concepts of parent leadership and child leadership, and the second discusses domestic violence and self-efficacy in children.

Parent leadership and child leadership

The concepts of leadership and parenthood are closely linked in leadership and developmental studies. Typically, parents are the initial leaders for children (Anderson, 1943).

Family is the first place where children gain experience with a leader, learning about obedience and authority. A study from Keller (1999, p. 601) shows that people idealize leadership images that mirror perceived parental traits, “regardless of whether parents were characterized as dedicated or tyrannical”. The metaphor of the leader as a father was introduced by Freud in the 1930s, positing that the dyadic nature of leadership mirrors the parent-child relationship (Freud, 1939, p. 109–111). Although the connection between leadership and parenthood is recognized, debates continue over the precise meaning of parental leadership. In the literature on parental leadership, the terms 'parenting styles' and 'parenting practices' are often used interchangeably (Maccoby et al., 1983). Bellon et al. (2016, p. 2) define parental leadership as "the intentional intermingling effect of parental support, involvement, aspiration, and monitoring of their children". However, Hailey (2020) suggests that the influence of parental leadership on child leadership development, particularly in building leadership skills, is not always a deliberate act by parents. Whether intentional or not, parental leadership significantly impacts children's development and behavior in various ways. Childhood and adolescent experiences are directly related to adult leadership behavior (Schneider et al, 1999) and early life events play a crucial role in the developmental leadership experiences of children (Van Velsor, 2011) as children’s attitudes and behaviors are heavily influenced by their perceptions of their parents’ behaviors and attitudes (Zacharatos et al., 2020). Thus, the way parents act and lead greatly influences the leadership development of their children.

In previous studies, various leadership concepts have been linked to parental leadership. Drawing on the work of Baumrind (1967, 1971), Kaniusonyte et al. (2020), Lavric & Naterer (2020), Maccoby et al. (1983), and Vasiou et al. (2023), authoritative parenting has been identified as an effective parenting practice. There are notable similarities between the qualities of effective parenting and the developmental aspects of transformational leadership (Morton et al., 2010; Morton et al., 2011; Oliver et al., 2011; Popper et al., 2003). Transformational leadership theory emphasizes developmental processes, distinguishing it from other leadership forms (Burns, 1978). Although parental leadership styles have been studied and compared to existing leadership theories, child leadership remains relatively under-researched.

Leadership is acknowledged to be connected to developmental phenomena from childhood through adulthood (e.g., Bass, 2008; Keller, 2003; Murphy, 2011; Popper & Mayless, 2007; Reichard & Paik, 2011; Schneider et al., 1999). However, there is a lack of a clear definition of child leadership, as early child leadership has received minimal attention in academic literature (e.g., Bisland, 2004; Hailey, 2020; Murphy, 2011; Popper & Amit, 2009; Popper & Mayseless, 2007; Stavans & Diesendruck, 2021; Woodrow & Busch, 2008). Child leadership can be subdivided in different age groups (Murphy & Johnson, 2011), with early childhood ranging from birth to age 8 (Nicholson et al., 2018). The Council for Exceptional Children (1990, p. 165) provides a broad definition of child leadership, namely: "the ability to influence individuals or groups toward a common decision or action." Hailey et al. (2020) define early child leadership in terms of the ability or process in which young children influence others towards a common goal or action. Both definitions do not encompass self-leadership. Children experience leadership daily in interactions with their families, peers, and community organizations (Bisland, 2004), and research indicates that children as young as five years old can identify leaders based on various cues, such as being imitated (Over et al., 2015), offering advice in a friendly tone, or having their opinions sought (Kajanus et al., 2020). More research into child leadership is necessary, as it can be beneficial for educators designing programs to develop leadership skills in children (Oakland et al., 1996). Understanding child leadership development is crucial as children are the leaders of the future, and insights into this area help us enhance the leadership abilities of upcoming generations.

In the field of child leadership development, there are two types of ranking hierarchies regarding leadership among social scientists, zero-sum interactions between individuals with conflicting goals or achieving a goal at the expense of others (Stavans & Diesendruck, 2021). This distinction connects with the findings of Parten (1933) in one of the earliest studies regarding child leadership in which Parten concludes that there are two types of classes of preschool leaders, those who control others by means of indirect suggestions, “diplomats”, and those who control others by enforcing brute force, “bullies”. Research suggests that bullying is an effective strategy during early adolescence to gain a powerful position in a group, as intense bullying is associated with higher levels of social dominance (Reijntjes et al., 2013). Each leadership style provides a lens through which to view positive or negative aspects of early child leadership (Sun Shin et al., 2004, p. 302). In attempts to identify child leadership, researchers defined traits or characteristics that link with child leadership, such as social and cognitive capabilities (Daly et al., 2015; Fu, 1979); high verbal skills (Chevaleva-Ianovskaia, 1929; Fu et al., 1982; Hensel,

1991; Leib, 1928; Mehrotra, 2022; Sun Shin, 2004; Terman, 1904) sensitivity to the needs and concerns of peers (Certo, 2011; Perez et al., 1982), age (Dhuey et al., 2006; French, 1984; Stright & French, 1988) and physical power (Sun Shin et al., 2004). Earlier research indicates that IQ is an important factor in child leadership development as well. Hollingworth (1942, p. 264 -265) found that among children with a mean lQ of 100, the lQ of the leader is likely to fall between 115 and 130 IQ. These traits and characteristics can be understood of indicators which attribute to successful child leadership.

Domestic violence and self-efficacy in children

Research on child leadership focuses on identifying specific traits and characteristics of children, often overlooking the contexts that shape their leadership development and self-perception. Domestic violence households represent one critical context where the nature of parental leadership plays a significant role. Domestic violence, known by various terms such as intimate partner abuse, family violence, wife beating, battering, marital abuse, and partner abuse (Horner, 2005), exposes children to traumatic experiences in multiple ways. These exposures can include witnessing violence, hearing it, being used as a tool by the perpetrator, and dealing with the aftermath of violent episodes (Edleson, 1999). The impact of parenting and parental leadership within the context of domestic violence significantly affects children's emotional and behavioral development. Numerous studies have documented the harmful effects of exposure to domestic violence on children, leading to emotional and behavioral problems (Davies et al., 1994; Edleson, 1999; Harrison, 2021; Holt et al., 2008; Katz et al., 2007; Onyskiw, 2003; Sousa et al., 2010). Age is also a critical factor; preschool-aged children are shown to have a higher risk of developing behavioral problems compared to older children due to such exposure (Hughes, 1988; Hughes et al., 1983). When both witnessing and experiencing physical abuse due to domestic violence, Sternberg et al. (2006) found that age moderated the effects on externalizing behavior problems of children, but not on internalizing behavior problems.

Despite the age of children who witness domestic violence, research consistently shows that exposure to violence during childhood contributes to negative self-efficacy beliefs (Haj-Jahia et al., 2019; Sachs-Ericsson et al., 2006; Sachs-Ericsson et al., 2011). Self-efficacy beliefs are shaped by experiences, and parents and caregivers play a crucial role in providing experiences that influence these beliefs in children (Bandura, 1997; Meece, 1997). Self-efficacy is considered a protective factor that can mitigate the negative impacts of exposure to domestic violence. Although having higher levels of self-efficacy can mitigate the adverse effects, the experience of violence in childhood inherently diminishes self-efficacy. Research focusing on self-efficacy and children's exposure to family violence remains limited (Sachs-Ericsson et al., 2011). Self-efficacy beliefs are found to influence leadership development. Leadership requires learning and facing challenges, which influences the self-efficacy levels of leaders.

Machida et. al. state that it is common for leader self-efficacy to deteriorate in the short term when challenges are not met successfully, and therefore it is "critical for their continued development for these leaders to possess high learning self-efficacy that is resilient to the challenges leaders face during their development" (2011, p. 463). When examining self-efficacy, the social cognitive theory posits it as a key cognitive variable, suggesting that human achievement depends on interactions among behaviors, personal factors (e.g., thoughts, beliefs), and environmental conditions (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Self-efficacy is defined in several ways: as a person's belief in their capability to successfully perform a particular task (Bandura, 1977; Heslin et al., 2006; McCormick, 2001), as personal judgments of one's ability to organize and implement behaviors in specific situations (Schunk & Miller, 2002; Schunk & Pajares, 2009), or as orchestrating performance by successfully executing behaviors and mobilizing resources like motivation and cognitive resources necessary for desired outcomes (Bandura, 1977; Gist et al., 1992; Wood & Bandura., 1989). According to Bandura (1981, 1982, 1986), efficacy beliefs are derived from four major types of experiences: self-performance accomplishments (achieving success in challenging activities), vicarious experiences (improving task capabilities through exposure to models, increasing skills, and observing similar others succeed, which boosts efficacy beliefs), verbal persuasion or positive feedback (from a credible source such as a coach, teacher, or parent), and psychological conditions and mood states (reflecting one's emotional and physical state). Parents, often viewed as credible figures by their children, play a crucial role; verbal persuasion or positive feedback from a parent during the developmental stages of early childhood, or the absence thereof, can significantly influence a child's self-efficacy. Parent self-efficacy and parent competence are linked as well, "parents who feel efficacious use more positive parenting practices, which in turn increase their efficacy" (Glatz et al., 2023, P89). Past performance accomplishments in relevant tasks are considered the most potent determinants of self-efficacy and can be a strong

predictor of future self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; Bandura, 2012; Sitzmann & Yeo, 2013).

A high level of self-efficacy contributes to various factors such as motivation and persistence. Academic research indicates that individuals with strong self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to be motivated, exert more effort towards their actions, and persist through difficulties (Bandura, 1991, 1997; Gist et al., 1992; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Conversely, a low level of self-efficacy can lead to motivational issues; if individuals believe they cannot succeed at a specific task, they are likely to not attempt it or only make a superficial effort (Margolis & Mccabe, 2006). Bandura (1973, 1977) notes that efficacy expectations determine the amount of effort people will expend and their persistence, as stronger perceived self-efficacy correlates with greater effort. Additionally, the higher the perceived efficacy, the longer individuals will persist on insoluble tasks (Bandura, 1978; Lunenburg, 2011). A higher perceived efficacy enhances performance as it leads people to set difficult goals, work hard to attain them, and persist (Bandura 2012; Bandura et al., 2003; Heslin et al., 2017).

Bandura's self-efficacy theory has also been extended to leadership studies. Different conceptualizations of leadership self-efficacy exist, with McCormick (2001) defining it as a self-perceived capability to perform cognitive and behavioral functions necessary for regulating group processes toward goal achievement. Paglis and Green (2002) describe leadership self-efficacy as one's judgment regarding their effectiveness in exerting leadership by setting a direction for a group, building relationships with followers to gain commitment, and fostering collaboration. Research shows a positive relationship between the level of self-efficacy and successful leadership, suggesting that high leadership self-efficacy, while not the sole factor, is necessary for effective leadership performance (Bandura, 1986). Studies indicate that leaders with high leadership self-efficacy set higher goals and employ better task strategies, leading to improved group performance (Kane et al., 2002). Self-efficacy also affects leaders' decision-making abilities (McCormack et al., 2002), and leaders with high leadership self-efficacy are more likely to undertake leadership actions. However, Chemers(2002) found that leaderswith low leaership self-efficacy struggle with challenging tasks and problem-solving. Given that parent leadership influences child leadership development, and that self-efficacy is related to successful leadership development, the question arises: how do children exposed to domestic violent environments develop leadership abilities?

Discussion

Previous research highlights a relationship between parental leadership and self-efficacy in children, as well as between levels of self-efficacy and successful leadership. Additionally, experiences of domestic violence have been shown to impact children's self-efficacy. While there is a substantial amount of research on self-efficacy in leadership, studies specifically focusing on self-efficacy in the context of parental or child leadership are limited. Self-efficacy beliefs are shaped by experiences, and parents and caregivers play a significant role in providing experiences that influence these beliefs in children. Experiences, particularly those involving domestic violence, can impact children's self-efficacy levels. Although self-efficacy can act as a protective factor in managing adverse circumstances (Haj-Jadia et al., 2019), there is a broad consensus among researchers that exposure to domestic violence leads to lower levels of self-efficacy in children.

When considering the influence of parental leadership on the development of children who have experienced domestic violence, it appears that these children's self-efficacy levels decrease (Sachs-Ericsson et al., 2011). Higher self-efficacy levels are associated with better chances of successful leadership development, while experiences of domestic violence typically result in lower self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is found to influence motivation and persistence. Individuals with higher self-efficacy beliefs typically set more difficult goals and work hard to attain them, in contrast to individuals with lower perceived self-efficacy. Past accomplishments in relevant tasks are an important determinant of self-efficacy and a predictor of future self-efficacy. It seems likely that lower self-efficacy may lead to fewer attempts and fewer successful experiences in undertaking and succeeding in matters relevant to leadership development. Research regarding influencing factors of leadership development during childhood is scarce. Our review found no specific scientific research focusing on the dynamics of parental leadership and child leadership development within the context of domestic violence households. However, it seems likely that the reduced self-efficacy levels observed in children exposed to domestic violence could negatively impact their leadership development.

Given the growing need for individuals motivated to lead (London, 2002; Riggio, 2008), it is crucial not to overlook the potential for early leadership development in children who have been exposed to domestic violence. Further research is needed to explore how parental leadership affects child leadership development in these settings, and to determine how

developmental programs can support the leadership development of children who have experienced or are exposed to domestic violence.

Conclusions

The conclusion of this literature review is that studies concerned with child leadership development are scarce, in particular when it comes to leadership development among children in specific contexts, such as domestic violence households. Children's experiences of domestic violence are likely to hinder their leadership development. One primary reason is that exposure to domestic violence typically results in lower levels of self-efficacy, which is crucial for successful leadership development. Additionally, children often model their leadership styles on those of their parents, which can be problematic in violent households. Our review found no specific studies on the impact of parental leadership on child leadership development within domestic violence contexts, highlighting a significant gap in the literature.

A wealth of research indicates that leadership development begins at an early age. Self-efficacy, a key indicator of successful leadership, tends to be lower in children who experience domestic violence during a critical developmental period. Consequently, the leadership development of these children is likely to differ from that of those who do not experience such trauma. Specific leadership development programs exist for survivors of domestic violence, however, such programs are not available for children who have experienced domestic violence.

There is a growing concern and a recognized need for more empirical evidence regarding the leadership development of children exposed to domestic violence. Given the increasing demand for leaders and individuals willing to lead due to various socio-demographic changes (Oakland et al., 1996), it is essential to explore how domestic violence impacts child leadership development and the mediating role of self-efficacy in this process. Enhancing our understanding of child leadership development can assist pedagogical professionals in including all children in leadership development programs, ensuring that those affected by domestic violence are not overlooked.

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