Team learning does not come naturally: A quantitative study about the relationship between Person-oriented Leadership Behaviour and Team Learning, and the mediating effect of Psychological Safety

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Team learning does not come naturally

A quantitative study about the relationship between Person-oriented Leadership Behaviour and Team Learning, and the mediating effect of Psychological Safety

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Dutch government had a number of expectations when introducing the decentralising Acts (Centraal Planbureau, 2013). Local authorities were supposed to be able to offer tailor-made solutions and work in a more integrated way than at the national level, leading towards more efficient and effective delivery of government services (Raad van State, 2013). Ultimately, resulting in more engagement and participation by citizens, a more caring society, and a clear and sustainable system of government aid. With the decentralisation of the Social Support Act and the Youth Care Act, together with the Participation Act, the social domain in its entirety has been placed on the municipalities' shoulders. The objective was to bring care and welfare closer to the citizen through engagement on the local level, which would provide tailor-made solutions (Lia Van Der Ham et al., 2018; Van Echtelt et al., 2019; Kromhout et al., 2020). Since 2015, municipalities have been responsible for carrying out tasks related to social support (Wmo 2015), youth care (Youth Act 2015), and labour participation (Participation Act 2015) due to the fact that the Dutch government had chosen to decentralise the aforementioned domains. Several reports indicate that for all of these domains, fundamental implementation problems occurred. On 16 November 2020, The Netherlands Institute for Social Research presented its report *'Social Domain on Track?'* which argues that the main objectives of the decentralisation have not been achieved (Kromhout et al., 2020). The Institute sums the findings of the reports up as follows *"The social domain is stagnating: Five years after decentralisation, the support of vulnerable citizens is still not in order"* (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport, 2020).

Dutch youth care has always been highly fragmented and consisted of a mishmash of organisations, regulations, and funding regimes. Municipalities, provinces, health insurers, care offices, and the national State were separately and collectively responsible for the support, assistance, and care of young people. Since the 2015 Youth Act, municipalities have been responsible for all care and support for young people (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport, 2014). The decentralisation of the youth care system has placed the entire administrative and financial responsibility for the youth field in the hands of the municipalities. This new system has one legal framework and one integrated financing system whereby financial partitions, different funding systems, and the involvement of different levels of government in youth care have disappeared. The aim of the Youth Act and the broader

decentralisation movement was to simplify the system on the one hand and reduce the distance between citizens and government organisations on the other.

Since the decentralisation of youth care, there have been repeated reports and signals indicating that there are serious problems within the Dutch youth care system. The report "Incident or pattern?" (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2018) concludes that very often errors are made when drawing up youth care files and that these errors are not rectified. As a result, far-reaching interventions, such as custodial placement and supervision, are carried out in dozens and perhaps even hundreds of families on the basis of incorrect information every year (Rengers & van der Kaaden, 2021). On 23 April 2021, the Healthcare and Youth Inspectorate (IGJ), the Children's Ombudsman, the National Ombudsman, the Dutch Healthcare Authority (NZa) and the Council for Public Health & Society (RVS) wrote a letter about the situation within the Dutch youth healthcare system, stating that "The system works against doing what is best for a child." (Van Gaalen, 2021). According to FNV's advisory report on youth care, municipalities have not succeeded in realising the goals of the Youth Act since they became responsible for youth care in 2015 (Van Essen, 2021). They also state that there are endless waiting lists, with the result that vulnerable youth do not receive proper care. All these problems surrounding youth care require more attention for uncovering possible causes within the implementation.

Also, the introduction of the Participation Act has hardly led to an increase in job opportunities, as intended by the Participation Act (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2020). For the largest group, the classic social assistance beneficiaries, there is hardly any difference. For people who lost their entitlement to social employment, the chances of employment decreased. For young disabled persons with work capacity, the job opportunities increased. However, their income position worsened, and they more often find temporary work. The Netherlands Institute for Social Research attributes these problems to the fact that, with the introduction of the Participation Act and the accompanying transferred tasks, municipalities had to get used to their new task and a new target group (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2020).

1.2. Problem statement

The problems mentioned above have taken place after the decentralisation of major welfare tasks. The welfare teams operate in a turbulent and complex environment, whilst dealing with vulnerable groups within society. Team learning behaviour facilitates team ability to adapt existing knowledge and create new knowledge, making it one of the most effective team processes for tackling challenges that may occur via the use of knowledge (Mathieu et al.,

2008). Within this thesis team learning is approached as a processed-based phenomenon, whereby teams undertake collective actions towards creating new insights when tackling problems (Edmondson et al., 2007). Team learning behaviours are described as contributors towards a team's ability of improving existing knowledge and developing new approaches or knowledge with high quality in a short time (Sessa & London, 2008). However, extensive research has shown that engagement in team learning behaviour does not occur naturally. Engaging in team learning behaviour is perceived as a risky business and therefore needs to be fostered through team leadership behaviour. For instance, team members can feel intimidated by their superiors and fear retribution when voicing concerns and criticism. Leadership behaviour is seen as a way for fostering team learning behaviour by eradicating the aforementioned riskiness (Koeslag-Kreunen et al., 2018). Much research has been carried out on how leadership behaviour enhances team learning behaviour, whereby behaviour that focuses on personal relationships seems to have a positive influence on the ability of learning. The vast majority of existing literature states that an open and safe working environment helps team members in overcoming their insecurities, thereby enabling them to engage in team learning behaviour (Koeslag-Kreunen et al., 2018). Therefore, psychological safety seems to play a major role in the relationship. Phycological safety refers to the presence of a shared belief among team members that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. Therefore, it seems that team psychological safety is paramount for creating an environment that feels free for expressing one's concerns and views

Therefore, the focus on leadership style, team learning, and psychological safety can provide valuable insights. Team Leadership behaviour is essential when understanding the way in which teams and their individuals act when difficulties arise. In order for the decentralisation to function as intended, team learning is essential. The decentralisation of three major welfare tasks is unprecedented in the Netherlands, therefore challenging social welfare workers with a formerly unfamiliar reality. It is essential that teams have the ability for executing behaviour that's necessary for learning from errors. Team Leadership behaviour can hinder or foster team learning through creating a certain working environment that either allows or prohibits open discourse between all members. Psychological safety makes it possible for team members to voice concerns and opinions, without fear of retaliation. Therefore, this thesis will try to understand the problems that have occurred within the decentralised domains by analysing social welfare teams through the concepts of team leadership behaviour, team learning behaviour, and team psychological safety.

1.3. Theory & Methods

This thesis will focus on the ability of Team Learning within Dutch youth care teams and focus on the relationship between Team Learning and Leadership. Therefore, the research question is as follows: *What is the relationship between Supportive Leadership Behaviour and Team Learning within Dutch youth care teams, and how does Team Psychological Safety moderate this relationship?'*

1.4. Relevance

Societal Relevance

Since the decentralisation of the domains of social support, youth care, and employment many reports have alarmed about several issues regarding the social domain's functioning since the decentralisation. All three domains together make up a large part of the Dutch social domain. The many alarming news items, reports, and other signals portray a worrying picture of the social domain's current state. Given the fact that one of the main research pillars of public administration is the functioning of the government, there is a societal responsibility to scrutinise what is of social importance.

    The aim of this thesis is to showcase the internal functioning of the social welfare teams that are responsible for executing the tasks attributed to awards municipalities with the decentralisation. This will be done by looking into the concepts of leadership behaviour and the effect thereof on team learning behaviours. Social welfare teams are being confronted with executing tasks formerly unknown to them. These tasks can be challenging, and since these domains are vital for the Dutch social domain, being able to engage in learning behaviour within these teams is vital. Based on existing literature, person-oriented leadership behaviour should foster learning behaviour. However, in order to establish if this type of leadership behaviour is indeed present within social welfare teams, a closer look is necessary. By statistically testing this relationship, the presence or absence of person-oriented leadership behaviour will be assessed and if a relationship is indeed present, its significance will be tested. Also, based upon existing literature, the concept of team psychological safety is expected to have a mediating effect upon this relationship. By testing these two relationships, the aim is to test if assumptions from existing literature indeed work within social welfare teams. If so, these insights can be of value for fostering team learning behaviour within relatively new social welfare teams. This thesis wants to contribute towards eradicating the aforementioned problems that have arisen

since the decentralisation by identifying contributors towards team learning behaviour, so these teams can better their functioning.

Academic Relevance

Psychological safety has been identified as a mediator in relationships between antecedent conditions and outcomes. Several studies have focussed on the relationship between organisational characteristics, team learning, and team performance and how psychological safety mediates these relationships (Edmondson 1999; Edmondson 2002; Nembhard & Edmondson 2006; Bunderson & Boumgarden 2010). Also, according to Carmeli et al. (2012), a positive relationship is present between relational leadership styles and decision quality, which is mediated by safety and learning. Subsequently, Schaubroeck and Colleagues (2011) identified that leader behaviour influences trust, which results in psychological safety and team performance. However, the majority of research addressing the relationship between psychological safety and variables such as leadership behaviour and team learning has been conducted in English-speaking nations (Newman et al., 2017). Therefore, conducting this study within the Dutch context will contribute to the existing body of studies concerned with the mediating effect of team psychological safety on the relationship between leadership behaviour and team learning behaviour.

1.5. Reading guide

This thesis consists of six chapters. This introduction, being the first chapter, will be followed by the theory chapter. Within the theory chapters, the main variables of leadership behaviour, team learning behaviour, and team psychological safety will be discussed based upon the existing literature. Following this discussion, two hypotheses will be presented. The theory chapter is followed by the third chapter, which is concerned with the methodology. Within this chapter, attention will be given to the sample, data collection, measurement instrument, research design, operationalisation, analysis strategy, and validity and reliability. Chapter four will present the contents of the statistical test. Within this chapter, descriptive statistics will be presented, followed by a correlation matrix, and will conclude with testing the two hypotheses. These hypotheses are tested through regression analysis and the Barron and Kenny method for testing mediation. Chapter four will be followed by chapter five, which presents the conclusion of this thesis. The conclusion is a brief summary of the main findings of the thesis. Following chapter five, chapter six will be the discussion, which is concerned with reflecting upon the research, discussing practical implications of the findings, and discussing limitations and suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Theory

Leadership

Leadership styles are, not only within the field of management studies but also within the fields of psychology and public administration heavily discussed. Within early leadership behaviour literature, there is a distinction made between consideration and Initiating structure when assessing the effectiveness of leader behaviour (Kerr et al.,1974). Fleishman and Peters (1962) describe the leader-subordinate relationship as one of mutual trust when considerate behaviour is present. Also, these leaders showcase consideration towards employees' feelings and respect towards their ideas.

When assessing leadership function in teams, research mainly focuses on the behavioural perspective. This perspective is divided into two main leadership styles: person-focussed and task-focussed leadership behaviour (Burke et al., 2006). Person-focussed leadership behaviour, as described by Burke and colleagues, are acts that encourage team communication, support team self-management, and encourage team members in going beyond self-interest. Consideration can be seen as the act of creating a working environment wherein inter-team cooperation and communication is valued, with an emphasis on the well-being of and relationship between team members (Carmeli, Tishler, & Edmondson, 2012)

Within the fields of Public Administration and Public Management, scholars mainly use the distinction between transactional and transformational leadership when tackling Leadership behaviour (Jensen et al. 2019; Oberfield 2014). Transactional leadership refers to the act whereby leaders try to motivate subordinates via appealing to their self-interest (Burns 1978; Jensen et al. 2019). The relationship between transactional leaders and their subordinates has an instrumental nature, shaped through tangible rewards (Northouse 2018). Transformational leadership refers to the act whereby leaders motivate subordinates by altering their attitudes and values. Transformational leaders motivate their subjects by appealing to their higher (beyond the material) needs (Wright & Pandey 2010; Jensen et al. 2019; Rafferty & Griffin 2004; Shamir et al. 1993). Subsequently, the relationship between transformational leaders and their subordinates has a more social nature, characterised by a higher degree of relational investment from the leader (Northouse, 2018). Although Transformational Leadership is one of the most popular theories within the field of Public Management, one should not classify it as a real theory. Transformational Leadership is rather an umbrella term for various leadership behaviours aimed at motivating subordinates beyond the transactional (material) scope than a

well-established and clear-cut leadership theory (Keulemans & Groeneveld, 2019). Four dimensions of transformational leadership behaviours have been identified: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Bass, 1990). Idealised influence implies that leaders behave like role models by behaving in a way that enables them to be perceived as trustworthy and ethical by their subordinates (Northouse 2018; Wright & Pandey 2010). Inspirational motivation refers to the act of motivating subordinates as a leader through creating and communicating a tempting organisational vision paired with high-performance goals (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). The dimension of inspirational motivation involves the act of motivating subordinates by encouraging them to engage in innovative ways of dealing with organisational issues (Yukl, 2010). Individualised consideration describes the leader's effort of creating a supportive work environment for its subordinates. Within this supportive work environment, the subordinates' needs are prioritised, creating space for them to flourish (Northouse, 2018). Supporting has been described as a key component within the individualised consideration dimension (Bass & Avolio 1990; Podsakoff et al. 1990). Several authors have also identified supportive leadership as part of the individualised consideration dimension (Avolio & Bass 1995; Bass 1999; Keulemans & Groeneveld 2019). However, subdividing supportive leadership under the individualised consideration dimension can be somewhat problematic. Supportive leadership behaviour is not aimed at motivating subordinates to achieve higher levels of performance through transforming their attitudes, beliefs, and values (Yukl, 1999) as it is the case within transformational leadership (Burns, 1978). Yukl (2012) has described a 'Hierarchical Behaviour Taxonomy' which consists of four meta categories: Task-oriented (a) Relations-oriented (b) Change-oriented(c) External (d). Each of these meta categories have different primary objectives, however, all are aimed at achieving some form of performance. Task-oriented behaviour is aimed at carrying out work efficiently and reliably. Relations-oriented behaviour has increasing the quality of human capital (human resources and relations) as its goal. Change-oriented behaviour is aimed at increasing change, learning, innovation, and environmental adaption. External leadership behaviour is concerned with acquiring resources and representing the team or organisation's interests. The supportive leadership behaviour is part of the Relations-oriented category. According to Yukl (2012), supportive leadership behaviour is used by leaders in order to showcase affection and consideration towards employees and their wellbeing. Concrete behaviours are for example *"showing concern for the needs and feelings of individual team members, listening carefully when a member is worried or upset, providing support and encouragement when there is a difficult or stressful task, and expressing confidence that*

someone can perform a difficult task." (Yukl, 2012, p.71). Moreover, encouraging cooperation, building mutual trust, and mediating when conflicts between team members arise are examples of supporting leadership behaviours.

Based on the discussion of the aforementioned theories of leadership and the different classifications each presents, this thesis will use the term *person-oriented leadership*. Hereby, synthesizing the insights of the consideration dimension as described by Fleishman and Peters (1962), the person-focussed leadership styles as discussed by Burke and colleagues (2006), the individualised consideration dimension within transformational leadership styles as described by Bass (1990), and the relations-oriented category and supportive leadership behaviour as part of this category as described by Yukl (2012).

Team Learning behaviour

Within the literature, learning has been identified as a process and outcome (Edmondson & Moingeon 1998; Edmondson et al., 2007). When identified as a process, learning is mainly understood as certain behaviours such as communicating errors, asking for help, speaking up, sharing information, asking questions, seeking feedback, challenging assumptions, etc. (Gibson & Vermeulen 2003; Tamuz 2001). Edmondson identifies group learning as a process characterised by ongoing reflection and action through the acts of asking questions, feedback seeking, experimentation, discussing errors, etc. (Edmondson, 1999). In order to learn, a team needs the ability to discuss assumptions and opinions out in the open. Only by discussing these matters openly, a team will be able to discover cracks in its plans and make alterations to them when necessary. Edmondson (2002) argues that organisational learning takes place through interpersonal actions and interactions within smaller teams. Most work in organisations is carried out on the team level, making it the appropriate level for organisational learning through evaluation (Osterman, 1994). The process in which team members interact with one another, allowing them to be receptive to other perspectives and opinions, allows team members to adjust their own frames of reference (Kasl, Marsick, & Dechant, 1997). Edmondson (2007) introduces three categories of team learning: team learning as performance improvement, team learning as task mastery, and team learning as a process. The latter category will be utilised within the scope of this thesis. According to Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006) team learning processes take place when individual team members share, discuss and reflect knowledge at the team level. Acts of sharing, discussing, and reflecting knowledge on the team level builds shared cognitions, which enable the team's ability to collectively modify ideas, change protocols and develop new knowledge. Therefore, making these acts examples of team learning

behaviours (Van den Bossche et al., 2006). Team learning behaviours can be subdivided into six categories: sharing, co-construction, constructive conflict, reflexivity, activity, and boundary crossing (Decuyper et al., 2010). Sharing happens when team members exchange ideas, expertise, knowledge, and opinions with one another through mutual interaction and communication (Faraj & Sproull, 2000). Co-construction refers to the act of collective creation by building upon each other and manifests in the refinement of statements and modification of existing ideas (Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006). Constructive conflict takes place when discussions and conflicts that arise during sharing and co-construction are tackled by negotiation inter-team differences and transforming them into an agreement or by agreeing to disagree (Van den Bossche et al., 2006). Team reflexivity refers to the team's ability to reflect upon its own functioning. West defines reflexivity *as "the extent to which team members collectively reflect upon the team's objectives, strategies, and processes"* (West, 1996, p. 559). Team activity is simply the act of learning through executing certain tasks, such as trying out possible solutions when tackling problems; one could describe it as trial by error or experimentings (Kasl, Marsick, & Dechant, 1997). Boundary crossing refers to the act *of "seeking or giving information, views, and ideas through interaction with other individuals or units"* (Kasl et al., 1997, p. 230).

Within this thesis, team learning behaviours will be divided into four dimensions: reflecting, feedback seeking, experimenting, and error management. Each dimension is measured through four items within the questionnaire.

As mentioned earlier, team learning behaviour does not take place organically; team members view engaging in team learning behaviour as a risky enterprise. Team members often fear repercussions for voicing their views, ideas, and criticisms. Team leadership behaviour plays a major role in eradicating these threats and thereby can foster team learning behaviour. Person-oriented leadership behaviour consists of acts that encourage team communication, support team self-management, encourage team-members in going beyond self-interest, emphasize on the well-being of and relationship between team members, prioritise team member needs, show affection and consideration towards subordinates' needs and feelings, provide support and encouragement when difficulties arise, and expressing confidence in subordinates 'ability in tackling problems. Displaying acts of person-oriented leadership behaviour contributes towards an environment that is safe for taking part in team learning behaviour due to the fact that it lowers the perceived riskiness within the team.

Hypothesis I: Person-oriented leadership behaviour is positively associated with team learning behaviour

Psychological Safety

One could argue that, since it is achieved through open discussions and is understood through the behaviours of communicating errors, asking for help, speaking up, sharing information, asking questions, seeking feedback, and challenging assumptions, psychological safety is paramount for team learning. Within organisational research psychological safety has been identified as an important aspect in understanding how individuals co-operate in order to achieve a shared outcome (Edmondson 1999; Edmondson & Lei 2014). Edmondson (1999) defines Psychological Safety as a shared belief among team members that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. The existing literature concerning Psychological Safety can be further divided through the level of analysis.

Firstly, there is the analysis on the individual level, whereby individual experiences of the concept are studied. Two important concepts studied within this level are in-role behaviour (work-engagement) (Kahn 1990; Kark & Carmeli 2009; Gong et al. 2012). and employee voice (speaking up) (Premeaux & Bedeian 2003; Van Dyne & LePine 1998; Detert & Edmondson 2011; Miliken et al. 2003) Findings of several studies have shown that Psychological Safety mediates between the relationship of certain leadership styles and employee voice behaviour (Detert & Burris 2007; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck 2009). According to Liang et al. (2012), psychological safety is positively related to prohibitive voice. Prohibitive voice is the act of sharing one's concerns about practices, behaviours, and incidents that could be harmful for the organisation.

Secondly, there is the organisational level of analysis of Psychological Safety. Within the organisational focus, two main streams of research can be identified: Organisational performance and Organisational learning. Due to the nature of this thesis, the latter will be discussed in more detail. A study by Carmeli et al. (2009) has found that positive work relationships enable psychological safety and thereby contribute to organisational learning. Also, research has shown that psychological safety mediates the relationship between failure-based learning and high-quality relationships (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009). Carmeli (2007) has also demonstrated the positive association between social capital and psychological safety and its enabling effect on organisational learning through failure-based learning. Lastly, Cataldo et al. (2009) argue that psychological safety as perceived by employees and the maintenance of

its status during organisational change processes is paramount for effectively implementing organisational change.

Thirdly, there is the analysis of psychological safety at the Group-level. Research into the phenomenon of Psychological safety at the group level commenced with Edmondson's studies (Edmondson 1996; Edmondson 1999). Studies conducted within the group level illustrate that psychologically safe working environments facilitate the act of expressing ('deviant') opinions and ideas, leading towards more creativity, experimenting, risk-taking coming to new insights. Ultimately, all of the above enables organisational learning (Tucker et al., 2007)

Psychological safety has been identified as a mediator in relationships between antecedent conditions and outcomes. Several studies have focussed on the relationship between organisational characteristics, team learning, and team performance and how psychological safety mediates these relationships (Edmondson 1999; Edmondson 2002; Nembhard & Edmondson 2006; Bunderson & Boumgarden 2010). More interesting for this thesis is the available research on how leadership affects organisational learning and psychological safety. According to Carmeli et al. (2012), a positive relationship is present between relational leadership styles and decision quality, which is mediated by safety and learning. Moreover, Schaubroeck and Colleagues (2011) demonstrated how leader behaviour influences trust, which results in psychological safety and team performance. In particular, servant leadership leads to affect-based trust and thus increases psychological safety, which in turn enhances performance.

A high level of Psychological Safety within a team ensures mutual trust and respect between members, allowing them to feel comfortable and safe in expressing their opinions. Having Psychological Safety in place provides a sense that the working environment is safe for voicing criticism as well as admitting to errors. In teams with a low level of Psychological Safety, employees feel restricted in expressing their opinions, criticism, and admitting mistakes. This is due to a lack of confidence that the other party will accept their views and one might fear repercussions or humiliation for voicing these matters. Psychological Safety facilitates Team Learning because it lessens one's concerns regarding how others might view them whilst performing certain actions, such as challenging existing norms, admitting personal failures, and experimenting with new methods. Research has shown that a lack of Psychological Safety within teams can undermine team learning because it constrains experimenting, voicing concerns, questioning the status quo, and admitting mistakes (Edmondson, 1999).

As mentioned before, team learning behaviour does not take place naturally. Engaging in team learning behaviour can be perceived by team members as a risk for their position within

the group. Therefore, an environment that is open for voicing opinions, concerns, and ideas is important. Research has shown that person-oriented leadership behaviours have a positive effect on team learning behaviour. However, the relationship between the two seems to take place through the concept of team psychological safety. Person-oriented leadership behaviours, such as consideration, understanding, support, and showing support all contribute towards the emergence of team psychological safety. Therefore, creating an environment that is safe for voicing one's opinions, concerns, and ideas without fear of retribution or face loss. It is expected that person-oriented team leadership behaviours positively influence team learning behaviours through enabling team psychological safety.

Hypothesis II: Team psychological safety mediates the relationship between person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviour
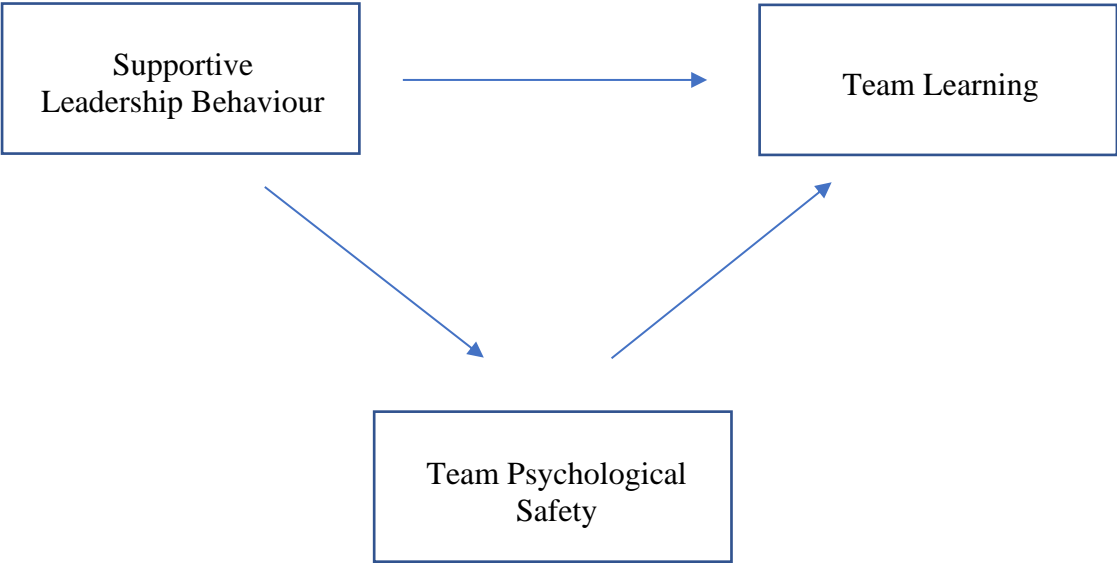

Figure 1: conceptual model

3. Methodology

In this chapter, first, a brief outline of the setting in which the data was collected will follow. Secondly, the measurement instrument will be discussed. Thirdly, the overall research design is presented. Finally, the validity and reliability of the research will be discussed.

3.1 Sample

The sample used for this thesis consisted of 87 social welfare teams from five different organisations in five different municipalities. The survey has been designed around five main themes: teamwork, team learning, leadership, bureaucracy, and individual experience.

Within this thesis, three central concepts are used. These are person-oriented leadership behaviour, team learning behaviour, and team psychological safety. These concepts are measured through items, which have been measured through a five-point Likert scale. The respondents have had the ability of answering the proposed statements with one of the following options: totally disagree (1), partially disagree (2), neutral (3), partially agree (4), totally agree (5). The sample data has been aggregated to the team level in this thesis, because of the fact that team psychological safety and team learning behaviour are concepts concerned with the team level. Therefore, aggregating the data on the team level was needed in order to be able to carry out analysis on the appropriate level. Furthermore, only the data for teams with a response rate of 30% or higher has been used. This was deemed necessary in order to create an accurate picture of the team; the chances of distorting the findings are high with few respondents in a team. As a result, 17 (19.5%) teams have dropped out of the analyses, leaving 70 (81.5%) teams for the actual analysis. In order to create a central concept, the aggregated data of each item relevant for the central concept is added up and divided by the number of variables that the concept is measured by. These central concepts will be used when conducting the correlation, regression, and mediation analysis.

3.2 Data Collection

The data utilised within this thesis is collected through a survey distributed amongst members of 87 social welfare teams between October and December 2020. With this survey, the purpose was to collect data for the population of social welfare team members, therefore a non-probability sample was used. The survey kicks off with some general questions about the respondent, in order to collect possible relevant information when conducting statistical analyses such as gender, age, and other possible confounding variables.

3.3 Measurement Instrument

As stated before, the survey was designed around five central themes. Within this thesis, three of these central themes are touched upon. These are teamwork, team learning, and leadership. Within these themes, the concepts of psychological safety (teamwork, team learning behaviours (team learning), and person-oriented leadership behaviour (leadership) are utilised for the purpose of this thesis. The concept of psychological safety is measured through items that are based upon the work of Edmondson (1999), the concept of team learning is measured through items based upon the work by Savelsbergh and colleagues (2009), and the concept of person-oriented leadership is measured through items based upon the work of Yukl (2012)

Team learning behaviour is conceptualised as being a process characterised through acts of ongoing reflection, feedback seeking, experimenting, and discussing errors (Edmondson 1999; Gibson & Vermeulen 2003; Tamuz 2001). Team learning behaviour is divided into four dimensions, each measured through three items. Team psychological safety has been conceptualised as a shared belief among team members that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking (Edmondson, 1999). The concept of team psychological safety has been measured through four items.

Items:

Person-oriented leadership behaviour has been measured through three items using a five-point rating scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

1. My leader shows consideration for the needs of individual team members
2. My leader is engaging with team members
3. My leader supports team members with a difficult task when necessary

Team learning behaviours have been measured with twelve items through four dimensions. Each of these items is measured using a five-point rating scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

Reflecting:

1. In our team, we regularly discuss how effective our cooperation is.
2. In our team, we often rethink the way we approach our work.
3. In our team, we regularly take time to reflect on our way of working.

Feedback seeking:

1. In our team, we collect feedback on the manner in which we approach the job.
2. In our team, we analyse our own functioning in comparison with other teams.

3. In our team, we ask parties we cooperate with for feedback on our work.

Experimenting:

1. In our team, we experiment with various alternative ways of doing things.

2. In our team, we test newly developed methods.

3. In our team we make joint plans to try something new.

Error management:

1. In our team, we jointly try to find the cause of a mistake.

2. In our team, we take time to think about why something has failed.

3. In our team, we carefully study our errors.

Team psychological safety has been measured with four items through a five-point rating scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

1. In our team, you can bring up problems or difficult issues.

2. In our team, it is easy to ask others for help.

3. In our team making a mistake is permitted.

4. In our team, everyone's unique skills and talents are valued.

3.4. Research Design

This study will be of a quantitative nature, whereby data collected with a survey will be analysed through statistical means by using SPSS. The data collected amongst members of 87 social welfare teams will be used for conducting the analysis and hypotheses testing. Using a survey for data collection is one of the most used methods within quantitative research and has several benefits. Two main benefits are the high representativeness of the population in question and the low cost when compared to other methods. Using surveys allows researchers to gather large amounts of information within a short span of time with little effort. However, the reliability of the data obtained through surveys depends on the survey structure and the quality of the respondents' answers.

In order to execute this research and test the hypotheses, the survey data will be analysed by using SPSS. First, descriptive statistics will be presented and discussed. Following the descriptive statistics, a correlation matrix will be presented and discussed. Correlation is an exploratory technique that shows whether a relationship between two or more variables is present (Queirós et al., 2017). Since no variables are manipulated within correlation, only relational statements can be derived from it. The correlation coefficient makes quantifying the observed data easy. However, as stated before, correlation only has an explanatory value and

will not be able to prove causation (Queirós et al., 2017). In order to test hypothesis one, two regressions will be presented: one with the control variables of age and team size and one without. This will be done in order to test the internal validity by limiting the influence of confounding variables. Regression analysis is suitable for trying to explain causation and test hypotheses (Castellan, 2010). For testing the second hypothesis, the Barron and Kenny method for mediation will be utilised. After executing the Barron and Kenny method for mediation, a Sobel test will follow in order to assess the significance of the mediation. This test will be followed by calculating the indirect effect caused by the mediator. The Barron and Kenny method consists of four steps and uses three simple regressions and one multiple regression.

I.   The independent variable predicting the dependent variable

II.   The independent variable predicting the mediating variable

III.   The independent and mediating variable predicting the dependent variable

IV.   The independent variable's effect on the dependent variable that controls the mediator

Figure 2 visualises the abovementioned steps.

Figure 2: The Barron and Kenny mediation method (Newsom, 2020, p.1)
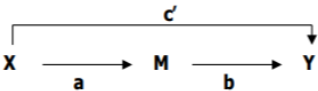
	Analysis	Visual Depiction
Step 1	Conduct a simple regression analysis with X predicting Y to test for path *c* alone, $Y = B_0 + B_1 X + e$	
Step 2	Conduct a simple regression analysis with X predicting M to test for path *a*, $M = B_0 + B_1 X + e$.	
Step 3	Conduct a simple regression analysis with M predicting Y to test the significance of path *b* alone, $Y = B_0 + B_1 M + e$.	
Step 4	Conduct a multiple regression analysis with X and M predicting Y, $Y = B_0 + B_1 X + B_2 M + e$	

3.5. Validity and Reliability

Determining the validity and reliability of a study is essential for assessing the validity and reliability of its findings. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the reliability and validity of this research to reflect on possible strengths and weaknesses of the survey method and statistical approach applied within this thesis.

Validity

Validity is concerned with the measurement's accuracy within a study: *"An experiment is deemed to be valid, inasmuch as valid cause-effect relationships are established, if results obtained are due only to the manipulated independent variable (i.e., possess internal validity) and are generalizable to groups, environments, and contexts outside of the experimental settings (i.e., possess external validity)"* (Onwuegbuzie, 2000, p.3). Validity is, as stated by the citation above, often divided into internal and external validity. The former category focusses on the level of accuracy of the used measurements; does the concept truly measure the subject one wants to make a statement about(Onwuegbuzie, 2000). The latter category is concerned with the level of generalisability of the conducted research; would the results be the same in a different setting (Patino & Carvalho Ferreira, 2018).

Within this study, validated measurement instruments are used. The concept of psychological safety is measured through items that are based upon the work of Edmondson (1999), the concept of team learning is measured through items based upon the work by Savelsbergh and colleagues (2009), and the concept of person-oriented leadership is measured through items based upon the work of Yukl (2012). The internal validity is ensured by using the same validated measurements for every respondent. The external validity is ensured through the use of a representative sample. The target population within this study is that of Dutch welfare teams across all municipalities and by selecting 70 teams across five different municipalities, a representative sample has been created. Moreover, the use of a five-point Likert scale will contribute to the external validity, since reproducing the study with clearly defined statements and answering opportunities makes it easier to reproduce. However, external validity can be threatened due to the fact that the data has not been collected through a longitudinal design.

Reliability

Reliability is concerned with measurement accuracy and consistency (Heale & Twycross, 2015), in other words; would reproducing the study in the exact same way present similar results?

Reliability can be divided into three categories: stability reliability, representative reliability, and equivalence reliability (Neuman, 2014). Stability reliability refers to reliability obtained through the act of conducting the study at different times, which in turn would result in similar findings. Representative reliability is ensured through the act of conducting the study within different sub-groups, which in turn should have to present similar findings. Lastly, equibalance reliability is ensured through the act of assessing the consistency of the measurements used in the study. Since the data for this study was obtained through a cross-sectional design, the stability reliability cannot be ensured. also, the lack of another subgroup for performing the same analysis makes ensuring the representative reliability difficult. Lastly, the equivalence reliability is ensured through computing a Cronbach's Alpha for each measurement instrument. The Cronbach alpha for team learning behaviour (0.934) and person-oriented leadership behaviour (0.947) outstanding and the Cronbach alpha for team psychological safety (0.837) is good. These high results of Cronbach alpha show that the equivalence reliability of the study is high.

4. Results

Within this chapter, the results of the statistical analysis will be discussed. Starting with the descriptive statistics, followed by a correlation matrix, and hypothesis testing via linear regression analysis and mediation analysis using the Barron and Kenny method followed by the Sobel test.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the independent variable of person-oriented leadership behaviour, the four dimensions of the dependent variable team learning behaviours, and the mediating variable of psychological safety. Person-oriented leadership, with a minimum of 3.46 and a mean of 4.32, has a relatively high overall score among teams. Thereby, person-oriented leadership seems to be widespread in social welfare teams as perceived by team members. The four dimensions of team learning behaviours have a similar minimum, maximum, and, mean value. The only dimension that scores slightly lower, with a minimum of 2.26, a maximum of 4.3, and a mean of 3.23, is feedback seeking. However, the overall differences between the four dimensions are relatively small. Also, team members overall seem to experience relatively high degrees of team psychological safety with the variable having a minimum of 3.67, a maximum of 5, and a mean of 4.32.

Table 1:

Minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of the independent, dependent, and mediating variables.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Person-oriented leadership behaviour	70	3.46	5.00	4.32	0.40
Team learning behaviours: Central concept	70	2.73	4.35	3.51	0.33
Team learning behaviours: Reflecting	70	2.94	4.78	3.77	0.37
Team learning behaviours: Feedback seeking	70	2.26	4.30	3.23	0.40
Team learning behaviours: Experimenting	70	2.61	4.78	3.52	0.38
Team learning behaviours: Error management	70	2.67	4.53	3.52	0.39
Team psychological safety	70	3.67	5.00	4.32	0.27

Table 2 shows the correlations between the independent variable of person-oriented leadership behaviour, the four dimensions of the dependent variable team learning behaviours, and the mediating variable of psychological safety. What is interesting is the fact that all variables seem to correlate, and that all of these correlations are significant.

4.2. Correlation matrix

Table 2 shows the correlations between the independent variable of person-oriented leadership behaviour, the four dimensions of the dependent variable of team learning behaviours, and the mediation variable of team psychological safety. There is a moderate correlation of 0.418 between Person-oriented leadership behaviour and the central concept of team learning behaviours. The correlation between person-oriented leadership behaviour and three of the four dimensions of team learning behaviours is moderately weak. More surprisingly, the fourth dimension of error management has a very weak correlation of 0.269 with person-oriented leadership behaviour. However, all of the mentioned correlations are statistically significant. The correlations between the mediating variable of team psychological safety and the four dimensions of team learning behaviour are stronger: 0.670 for the central concept of team learning behaviours, 0.630 for the dimension of reflecting, 0.547 for the dimension of feedback seeking, 0.486 for the dimension of experimenting and 0.627 for the dimension of error management. The correlations are the highest regarding reflecting and error management, and of a moderate level for feedback seeking and moderately low for experimenting. Again, all of the correlations mentioned are statistically significant. Lastly, the correlation between the independent variable of person-oriented leadership behaviour and the mediating variable of team psychological safety is moderately weak. This relationship is also statistically significant.

The correlations between team psychological safety and the four dimensions of team learning behaviour stand out in the fact that all of the correlations are higher when compared to those between person-oriented leadership behaviour and the four dimensions. Also, the correlations between team psychological safety and the dimension of reflecting (0.630) and error management (0.627) are relatively high.

This correlation matrix shows that there are statistically significant positive relationships between person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviours. Also, there are

statistically significant relationships between team psychological safety and team learning behaviours with higher levels of correlation than between person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviours. Also, the relationship between the independent and mediating variables is statistically significant.

Table 2:

Correlation between independent, dependent, and mediating variables.

	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Person-oriented leadership behaviour	70		0.418**	0.387**	0.395**	0.377**	0.269*	0.310**
2. Team learning behaviours: Central concept	70							
3. Team learning behaviours: Reflecting	70							
4. Team learning behaviours: Feedback seeking	70							
5. Team learning behaviours: Experimenting	70							
6. Team learning behaviours: Error management	70							
7. Team psychological safety	70	0.310**	0.670**	0.630**	0.547**	0.486**	0.627**	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

4.3. Hypotheses testing

In table 3, the four dimensions of team learning behaviours are individually analysed through univariate regression analyses with the independent variable of person-oriented leadership behaviour. The dimensions of reflection (0.356), feedback seeking(0.396), and experimenting (0.352) have relatively high and fairly similar scores. However, the dimension of error management (0.257) scores relatively low when compared to the other dimensions. Also, the dimensions of reflection (0.150), feedback seeking (0.156), and experimenting (0.142) have R-squares that are relatively similar. Thereby, person-oriented leadership behaviour explains 15% of the variance in the dimension of reflection, 15,6% of the variance in the dimension of feedback seeking, and 14,2% of the variance in the dimension of experimenting. The variance

in the dimension of error management is only explained by 7,2% by person-oriented leadership behaviour.

Table 3: Regression models for the dimensions of team learning behaviours.

	Dimension: Reflection	Dimension: Feedback seeking	Dimension: Experimenting	Dimension: Error management
Person-oriented leadership behaviour	0.356**	0.396**	0.352**	0.257*
	(0.103)	(0.112)	(0.105)	(0.112)
Constant	2.232***	1.521**	2.002***	2.412***
	(0.445)	(0.485)	(0.455)	(0.485)
R-square	0.150	0.156	0.142	0.072

* p<0.05, ** p<0.010, *** p<0.001

Table 4 shows the two regression models used for testing the first hypothesis: "*Person-oriented leadership behaviour is positively associated with learning behaviour".* In the first model, only the independent variable of person-oriented leadership behaviour and the dependent variable of team learning behaviours are tested. Model 1 shows that person-oriented leadership behaviour is statistically significant with team learning behaviours as a dependent variable (*p= 0.000)*. This model shows that team learning behaviours increases by 0.340 when person-oriented leadership is present. The R-square of 0.163 indicates that 16.3% of the variance in team learning behaviours is explained by person-oriented leadership behaviour. Also, this model is significant with a P-value lower than 0.001. In the second model, in addition to the independent variable of person-oriented leadership behaviour and the dependent variable of team learning behaviour, the control variables of age (*p= 0.101)* and team size (*p= 0.991)* are tested. This model shows that the control variables have almost no predicting value for the dependent value of team learning behaviours. Also, the control variables' predictability values are non-significant. Surprisingly, the second model does have a higher R-square, predicting 18.1% of the variance in team learning behaviours. However, since the control variables have a non-significant relationship with team learning behaviours, this increase should be regarded as a result of randomness. Based upon the two models, the first hypothesis can be confirmed; person-oriented leadership behaviour is positively associated with team learning behaviour*s.*

Table 4: Regression models for team learning behaviours

	Model 1	Model 2
Person-oriented leadership behaviour	0.340***	0.330**
	(0.090)	(0.092)
Control variables		
Age		-0.015
		(0.009)
Team size		0.00009
		(0.008)
Constant	2.042***	2.685***
	(0.389)	(0.515)
R² Adjusted	0.163	0.181

* p<0.05, ** p<0.010, *** p<0.001

In order to test the second hypothesis, the Barron and Kenny Method for mediation is used. Table 5 shows the four steps within this model, resulting in four linear regressions. Model 1 shows that the first condition for mediation is met: the independent variable of person-oriented leadership behaviour statistically significantly predicts the dependent variable of team learning behaviour. Model 2 shows that the second condition for mediation is also met: the independent variable of person-oriented leadership behaviour statistically significantly predicts the mediating variable of psychological safety. Model 3 shows that the third condition for mediation is met: the mediator statistically significantly predicts the dependent variable while controlling for the effect of the independent variable. Model 4 shows that the fourth condition for mediation is met: the effect of the mediator on the relationship between the independent or dependent variable is a full or partial mediation.

Table 5: Multiple Linear Regressions

Model		Unstandardized Coefficient B
1	Person-oriented leadership behaviour	0.340***
	Dependent variable: Team learning behaviour	
2	Person-oriented leadership behaviour	0.207**
	Dependent variable: Psychological safety	
3	Psychological safety	0.816***
	Dependent variable: Team learning behaviour	
4	Person-oriented leadership behaviour	0.189*
	Psychological safety	0.728***
	Dependent variable: Team learning behaviour	

Figure 3 shows the Barron and Kenny method for the relationship of person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviours controlled with team psychological safety. Based on the value of C' being 0.189, it can be concluded that there is no full mediation. For psychological safety to be fully mediating the relationship between person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviour, path C' should be zero; this is not the case. However, when controlling this relationship for the mediating variable, the value for C being 0.340 does diminish. Since the three conditions for mediation are met, full mediation is absent, and the value of path C does diminish, partial mediation seems to take place.

In order to establish the significance of the partial mediation, a Sobel test needs to be executed. If the result of the test is above 1.96 or below -1.96, the mediation is significant. The Sobel test value is 2.491, thereby showing that the mediating relationship is indeed significant. Also, the p-value of the Sobel test was below 0.05 (0.01). Based upon the four-step approach of Barron and Kenny and the Sobel test, partial mediation is established. This means that the second hypothesis can also be confirmed.

Figure 3: Baron and Kenny Method with psychological safety controlled

25
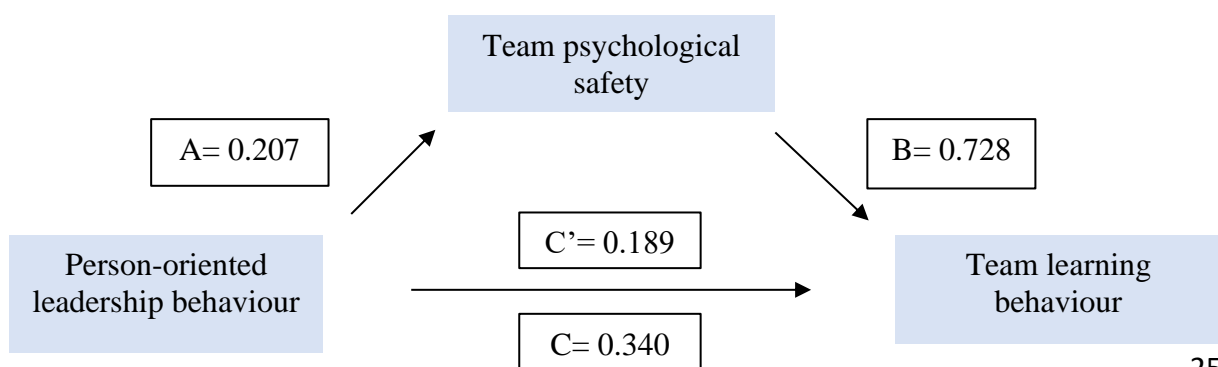
In order to calculate the indirect effect of the mediation variable, different approaches exist (Field, 2013).

To determine the indirect effect in an unstandardised regression coefficient:
- Indirect effect = ab
- Indirect effect = 0.207*0.728 = 0.150696

To determine the indirect effect in a partially standardised regression coefficient:
- Indirect effect = ab/sOutcome
- Indirect effect = 0.207*0.728/0.32855=0.45866991

To determine the indirect effect in a fully standardised regression cooefficient, also called the index of mediation:
- Indirect effect = ab/Soutcome*sPredictor
- Indirect effect = 0.207*0.728/0.32855*0.27= 0.12384088

Another approach of estimating the size of the indirect effect is through looking at the relative size of the indirect effect to either the total effect of the predictor or to the direct effect of the predictor.
- Pm=ab/c
- Pm=0.207*0.728/0.340=0.44322353
- Rm=ab/c'
- Rm=0.207*0.728/0.189=0.79733333

However, these ratio-based measures are not suitable for assessing our indirect effect, because it only describes our original indirect effect (Field, 2013). Also, both ratio-based measures are unstable in small samples. Therefore, Mackinnon (2008) states that using these measures in samples smaller than 500 and 5000 should be avoided.

In conclusion, both the control variables of team age and team size were insignificant. The relationship between Person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviours was significant, thereby leading towards the confirmation of the first hypothesis. The Barron and Kenny method for mediation has shown that the three conditions for mediation were met. The relationship between person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviours, due to path C' not being 0, is partially mediated by team psychological safety. Moreover, the mediation relationship has been proven to be significant by conducting a Sobel test. Therefore, the second hypothesis is also confirmed. Also, for estimating the indirect effect size of the mediator, several approaches have been presented and executed. However, the index of

mediation has been deemed as the most appropriate way of doing so (Field, 2013). Thereby, the indirect effect of the mediator has been established on being 0.124.

5. Conclusion

In order to answer the research question *'What is the relationship between person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviours within Dutch youth care teams and how does team psychological safety moderate this relationship?'* two hypotheses have been formulated. In order to answer the research question and test the hypotheses, data from a survey distributed amongst social welfare teams within five different municipalities have been used. The findings from the regression analysis testing the first hypothesis '*Person-oriented leadership behaviour is positively associated with team learning behaviour* 'show that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between the concepts of person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviours. The Barron and Kenny method for assessing mediation was used to formulate an answer on the second hypothesis '*Team psychological safety mediates the relationship between person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviour'*. Following this method, partial mediation has been established. Thus, team psychological safety partially mediates the positive relationship between person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviour. In order to test the significance of the mediation, a Sobel test was executed. This test showed that the mediating effect of team psychological safety is indeed statistically significant. Moreover, the index of mediation was used in order to determine the size of the indirect effect and was established at 0.124.

In sum, both the first and second hypotheses have been confirmed. Therefore, both of the theoretical assumptions based upon existing literature have been proven to be consistent within the context of Dutch welfare teams. Lastly, the answer to the research question is: the relationship between person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviour is a positive one and this relationship is partially mediated by team psychological safety.

6. Discussion

6.1. Theory

As discussed before, the relationship between person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviours was positive and statistically significant. Therefore, the first hypothesis was confirmed. Multiple theories indicated that showing consideration towards team members as a leader will create a working environment wherein inter-team cooperation and communication are valued, with an emphasis on the wellbeing of and relationship between team members (Carmeli, Tishler, & Edmondson, 2012). Within this supportive work environment, the subordinates' needs are prioritised, creating space for them to flourish (Northouse, 2018). According to Yukl (2012), supportive leadership behaviour is used by leaders in order to showcase affection and consideration towards employees and their wellbeing. Within this thesis the term *person-oriented leadership* has been used, thereby synthesising the insights of the consideration dimension as described by Fleishman and Peters (1962), the person-focussed leadership styles as discussed by Burke and colleagues (2006), the individualised consideration dimension within transformational leadership styles as described by Bass (1990), and the relations-oriented category and supportive leadership behaviour as part of this category as described by Yukl (2012). Person-oriented leadership behaviour consists of acts that encourage team communication, support team self-management, encourage team-members in going beyond self-interest, emphasize on the well-being of and relationship between team members, prioritise team member needs, show affection and consideration towards subordinates' needs and feelings, provide support and encouragement when difficulties arise, and expressing confidence in subordinates 'ability in tackling problems.

According to Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006) team learning processes take place when individual team members share, discuss and reflect knowledge at the team level. Acts of sharing, discussing, and reflecting knowledge on the team level builds shared cognitions, which enable the team's ability to collectively modify ideas, change protocols and develop new knowledge. Therefore, making these acts examples of team learning behaviours (Van den Bossche et al., 2006). As mentioned earlier, team learning behaviour does not take place organically; team members view engaging in team learning behaviour as a risky enterprise. Team members often fear repercussions for voicing their views, ideas, and criticisms. Displaying acts of person-oriented leadership behaviour contributes towards an environment that is safe for taking part in team learning behaviour due to the fact that it lowers the perceived riskiness within the team. Therefore, the expectation was that person-oriented leadership

behaviour would enhance team learning behaviours. The findings from this thesis support the assumption that team learning processes can be positively influenced through person-oriented leadership behaviour, through displaying acts that encourage team communication, support team self-management, encourage team-members in going beyond self-interest, emphasise on the well-being of and relationship between team members, prioritise team member needs, show affection and consideration towards subordinates' needs and feelings, provide support and encouragement when difficulties arise, and expressing confidence in subordinates 'ability in tackling problems.

Within this thesis, it was assumed that team psychological safety is paramount for team learning behaviour. This assumption was based upon the fact that team learning behaviours are achieved through open discussions and is understood through the behaviours of communicating errors, asking for help, speaking up, sharing information, asking questions, seeking feedback, and challenging assumptions, Team psychological safety would enable members to engage in learning through creating an open and safe environment (Edmondson 1999; Edmondson & Lei 2014). Therefore, the assumption within this thesis was that team psychological safety would mediate the relationship between person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviour since person-oriented leadership behaviour is expected to enhance team learning because of the fact that it would create an environment that is safer for learning. The assumption formulated based upon existing literature has also been confirmed through the Barron and Kenny mediation model and its significance established through executing a Sobel test.

6.2. Practical implications

This study established the presence of a relationship between person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviour. Also, team psychological safety seems to have a mediating effect on this relationship. These findings have serious implications for the field of work within the civil service. Employees in public administration, both with low and high levels of education, are increasingly faced with carrying out work in an increasingly complex environment. Given the fact that much work is done in teams, being able to demonstrate team learning is of great importance. The statistically significant relationships between person-oriented leadership behaviour, team learning behaviour, and team psychological safety make that the findings of this study can contribute to improving team learning in practice within the civil service. Person-oriented leadership behaviour seems to positively influence a team's ability in engaging in learning behaviour. Also, the mediating effect shows that psychological

safety within a team has a positive influence on team learning behaviour as well. The exact effect of leadership behaviour and psychological safety can change due to differences within teams. However, it would be of value for every team leader within the civil service in general, and for team leaders within Dutch welfare teams in particular, to take these effects into account when trying to better the collective way of dealing with the complexity of issues they face.

6.3. Limitations and future research

This study has some limitations that need addressing. Even though the validity of this study, in general, is quite strong due to the fact that validated measurement instruments were used. The internal validity was ensured by using the same validated measurements for every respondent and the external validity was ensured by using a representative sample for the population in question. However, external validity can be threatened due to the fact that the data has not been collected through a longitudinal design. When assessing the reliability of this study, two major limitations arise. Firstly, the stability reliability is not ensured because the data for this study was obtained through a cross-sectional design. Secondly, the lack of another subgroup for performing the same analysis makes ensuring the representative reliability difficult. However, the equivalence reliability is ensured through computing a Cronbach's Alpha for each measurement instrument.

Future research could benefit from a longitudinal approach since this would enhance the reliability of the research. Having a longitudinal design would help in providing a definitive causal mechanism within the described relationships. Also, by having a longitudinal design possible subtle changes in attitude over time could be identified, thereby generating new insights. Expanding the study with more municipalities would also be beneficial for strengthening the findings. Especially, the inclusion of smaller municipalities and municipalities outside the urban agglomeration would enrich the data and therefore could bring up interesting insight. Moreover, the statistical analysis showed that the error management dimension of team learning behaviour had a lower correlation with person-oriented leadership behaviour when compared to the dimensions of reflecting, feedback seeking, and experimenting. It would be interesting to look into the mechanisms that could possibly explain this difference. Conducting in-depth interviews with respondents would create valuable complementary information about how these relationships work and how they manifest in the daily routines of members within social welfare teams.

Executing a mixed methods study about the relationship between person-oriented leadership behaviour and team learning behaviours with team psychological safety as a mediator, whereby quantitative and qualitative research methods are combined, would be of value. Enriching the quantitative analysis by holding in-depth interviews with members of Dutch welfare teams, could help in understanding the complex relationship and its underlying mechanisms. The aim of these interviews would be to look into the mechanisms that may contribute towards the statistically tested relationships. The goal thereof is to create a better understanding of the complex phenomena described and tested through quantitative research methods. Supplementing the statistical test with qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews will create a better understanding of the mechanisms that form the basis of the relationships between the key concepts of this study.

Due to the fact that a mixed-methods design requires more time and effort, applying this design within this study was not possible (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). One of the major values of a mixed-methods approach is that it increases the validity of the findings (Hurmerinta-Peltomaki & Numela, 2006). Moreover, the use of a mixed-methods approach is valuable due to the integration of multiple insights, which increases readers' confidence in the study's results and conclusions (O'Cathain, Murphy & Nicholl, 2010). The multiple insights obtained through the use of mixed-methods provide more in-depth knowledge when compared with single method approaches (McKim, 2015), thereby contributing towards better understanding of complex phenomena. The weaknesses attributed to qualitative research are, among others, the lack of objectivity and generalisability (Gelo, Braakman & Benetka, 2008). Quantitative research methods have been criticised for their lack of participants' voice and in-depth interpretations (Toomela, 2008). By combining both methods through a mixed-method design the strength of both approaches are combined, thereby partly diminishing their individual weaknesses.

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