



Contribution ID: 220

Type: Vortrag im Symposium

The influence of vocational interests on the motivation to lead

Wednesday, 7 September 2022 10:00 (20 minutes)

One important issue within the field of leadership research is the question of who is actually motivated to take on leadership roles. Possessing a high motivation to lead (MtL) is seen as a strong predictor of leader emergence and effectiveness. But what are the antecedents of this motivation to lead and how can it be promoted? Within a longitudinal study incorporating 471 participants it could be shown that vocational interests (i.e. enterprising and conventional interests) affect the emergence of leadership motivation two years later. The relationship of vocational interests and MtL was mediated through the extent and success of leadership experiences. Thus, individuals with higher enterprising and social interests reported having more prior leading experience. This experience was linked to more self-perceived leadership success, which consequently enhanced MtL. These findings enrich theory on the antecedents and malleability of MtL which is why they will be discussed in the light of leadership development.

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Session Classification: Symposium: What it takes to be a leader: Insights into key questions of the leadership process