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Resolving the individual helping and objective job performance dilemma: The moderating effect of team reflexivity

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ABSTRACT

Employees who are good organizational citizens help others to be more effective at work. However, the positive impact of helping is at odds with findings across studies suggesting those who help often experience worse performance. This study builds theory and helps to resolve the helping and performance dilemma by exploring the conditions under which individual job performance is enhanced for team members who frequently help others. A cross-level and time-lagged design was used to collect data from 227 consultants nested in 60 project teams. An objective job performance indicator was used. We find that team reflexivity, which refers to team members' collective reflection and communication regarding team objectives and tasks, is a key moderator in the helping and job performance relationship. Our findings indicate that the helping-performance relationship is positive when team reflexivity is high and negative with low reflexivity. This study offers several implications for future theory and practice.

1. Introduction

Helping co-workers resolve work problems is important in organizations such as professional service firms where most work is done by project teams delivering customized client services (Gardner, Gino, & Staats, 2012; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009). Helping others has been regarded as an act of kindness that can lead to high performance evaluations from team leaders (Podsakoff et al., 2009). Extensive research has investigated the consequences of helping behaviors at work (Burke, Weir, & Duncan, 1976; Grant, 2013; Lanaj, Johnson, & Wang, 2016; Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006; Organ, 1997; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). This research finds that helping is differentially related to various kinds of performance including subjective job performance (Podsakoff et al., 2009), organizational absorptive capacity (Hart, Gilstrap, & Bolino, 2016), and innovation (Gerke, Dickson, Desbordes, & Gates, 2017).

Though helping has shown to have a number of advantages for employees, the relationship between helping and objective task performance is less clear. Applying a resources-allocation framework, Bergeron (2007) explained the negative impact of helping on job performance in terms of constraints helpers face on their individual resources such as time and personal effort. Accordingly, time allocated to helping can reduce time available to perform one's own job. Empirically, Bergeron, Shipp, Rosen, and Furst (2013) find that employees in a professional service firm (PSF) who spend more time helping others experience slower career progress than their less helpful peers, resulting in lower salary increases and rates of advancement. In PSF contexts where billable hours are an important performance indicator, adverse effects from helping can be particularly problematic.

A key question is whether it is possible to help others without harming one's own objective job performance? The present study is predicated on the premise that helping others leads to high objective individual job performance when helping is visible to and recognized by others. Bergeron (2007) posits that visibility strengthens the link between helping and individual job performance by providing a basis for recognizing helpful individual contributions. Assisting colleagues is not always visible and can be overlooked in job performance ratings. We posit that an individual's objective job performance will be enhanced when teams use task strategies that aid those members who assist colleagues to provide help in particularly valued or effective ways.

In operationalizing the role of visibility and the use of effective task strategies in giving help, we use the construct of *team reflexivity*, the

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process whereby the team reflects upon, modifies its functioning, and adapts its way of working through conversation and discussion (Schippers, West, & Dawson, 2015; Schippers, Den Hartog, Koopman, & Van Knippenberg, 2008; West, 1996). This collective process provides team members with opportunities to review and analyse how best to solve team problems. Through reflection, members can better recognize and appreciate how best to provide effective help to their team. Following this logic, we expect that helping is more likely to link to high individual job performance when team reflexivity is high rather than low.

This study, situated in the PSF team context, tests the directionality of the relationship of helping with objective job performance by investigating a hypothesized moderating effect of team reflexivity on this relationship. In PSFs, most work is conducted by project teams who deliver customized services to clients (Gardner et al., 2012). To generate solutions for clients, team members interact at all stages of the project including diagnosis, vision generation and plan development. Effective interactions among team members promote knowledge sharing, exchange and combination along with new knowledge generation (Fu, 2015; Morris, 2001; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). These knowledge-related processes can make providing help within the team essential to member job performance as well as project success (Gardner, 2015).

This study makes three contributions to existing research on helping. First, it extends helping research by addressing the puzzle of how and when helping can increase objective individual job performance. We do so by investigating the moderating role of team reflexivity. Second, this study contributes to helping research by adopting a multi-level approach and using a time-lagged design to examine the moderating effect of team reflexivity at the team level on the helping - individual job performance relationship. Doing so provides insight into team context, which has attracted increasing attention due to the frequent use of teams to deliver complex forms of work (Goodman & Wilson, 2000). Lastly, this study extends the study by Bergeron et al. (2013) regarding the relationship between helping and job performance. In terms of helping, Bergeron et al. (2013) employed a simple index, subtracting billing hours from the total working hours, to create a measure of helping others. That helping measure is somewhat limited as consultants typically undertake many other tasks beyond helping others during those unbilled hours, such as personal development or socialization with clients or colleagues. The present study uses a well-established scale from Lee and Allen (2002) to measure team member's helping behavior in response to the call by Bergeron et al. (2013) for a more valid measure.

2. Literature and hypotheses

2.1. Helping and individual performance

Helping falls under the umbrella of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), a concept introduced by Organ and colleagues (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Organ, 1988; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). Given that our study focuses on the worker's discretionary behaviors that help other team members with job-related matters, we use the term *helping* to represent such behavior. Helping is not automatically rewarded formally but "in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization" (Organ et al., 2006: 3). In their *meta*-analysis, Podsakoff et al. (2009) find that helping is related to a number of individual-level outcomes, including employee performance ratings and reward allocations. Helping has been found to be positively linked to individual positive affect, job satisfaction and affective commitment (Koopman, Lanaj, & Scott, 2016) and negatively linked to individual turnover intensions (Regts & Molleman, 2013).

In contrast, researchers have found the relationship between helping and individual job performance can be weak or even negative. For example, in a study of 116 insurance agencies, Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994) report that sales agent helping behavior decreased agency effectiveness as measured by a composite sales index. In a lab study, Wright, George, Farnsworth, and McMahan (1993) found that a difficult goal to complete in a fixed time led participants not to help others in order to increase their own task performance. Helping can have other dysfunctional consequences such as increased role overload, stress, and work-family conflicts when employees struggle to keep up with their work as a result of helping others (Bolino & Turnley, 2005). Similarly, Koopman et al. (2016) find that helping can decrease individuals' perceived work goal progress.

In explaining such negative impacts of helping on individual outcomes, we adopt the resources-allocation framework (Becker, 1965), which argues that individuals need to make decisions on how to best allocate their resources among their tasks/activities. When apportioning such resources as time and personal energy to different activities, individuals make decisions upon which a combination of activities can help them maximize economic value (Becker, 1965). Bergeron (2007) applies this framework to argue that helping and task performance constitute two ends of a time continuum: Any increase in time allocated to helping comes at the cost of time available for task performance. Since task performance is usually given greater weight in individual job performance metrics, resource constraints create a disincentive to undertake helping. Along these lines, in a subsequent study of PSF staff, Bergeron et al. (2013) found that those who spend more time interacting with and helping others had slower career development (i.e.., lower salary increases and advancement) than their less helpful counterparts.

Drawing upon the resources-allocation framework (Becker, 1965), we argue that helping team members with job-related issues costs time and other resources that individuals could devote to their own work-related tasks, thereby reducing their own objective job performance. Time is regarded as a valuable but limited resource for workers. When workers spend more time on one activity, they will spend less time on another. If they allocate time to their coworkers through helping, they will have less time available to actually do their own job[1]. In the context of PSFs where billable hours are a key performance metric for professional staff and teams, when team members spend more time helping others, they are likely to spend less time on their core tasks, leading to poorer performance on billable hour metrics. Thus, we hypothesize:

3. Hypothesis 1. Helping is negatively related to objective individual job performance

3.1. Team reflexivity as a moderator

On the other hand, helping is likely to foster high individual job performance under certain facilitating conditions. The time and resources contributed to others need to be recognized in some fashion by team managers and members, and be applied in ways that enhance the individual's own job performance. First, this link between helping and high objective individual job performance is reinforced when helping is visible to others (Bergeron, 2007). One example of visibility given by Bergeron is that "*some individuals may make suggestions on how to make work processes in their department more effective. If these suggestions are implemented, it may bring the individuals recognition and increase their task performance*" (2007: 1092). Second, individuals need insight regarding their team's objectives, task strategies and processes (e.g., problem solving, decision making) in order for individuals to help in ways that actually enhance their own job performance as well as that of the team. This visibility and insight can be facilitated by collective activity referred to as *team reflexivity* (West, 2000). This study uses team reflexivity to operationalize the visibility and effectiveness of helping, allowing us to explore a boundary condition that can facilitate the link between helping and objective individual job performance.

West (1996) defines team reflexivity as the "*extent to which team members collectively reflect upon the team's objectives, strategies and*

[1] We would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting these points.

processes as well as their wider organizations and environments, and adapt them accordingly" (p. 559). Team reflexivity involves team members and leaders, calling attention to preferred work methods and modifying them when necessary to adapt to task demands. Through reflexivity, a team questions, reviews, evaluates and debates its project issues and adjusts member approaches to tasks in response. Teams with high reflexivity are characterized by greater attention to detail, wider inclusiveness in discussion of potential problems, critical debate, and both long and short-term planning and adaptation (West, 2002). We theorize that team reflexivity increases the visibility of individual helping behaviors and awareness of effective ways to help, through team meetings, discussion and other forms of communication.

PSFs use project teams on client assignments. A project team consists of a partner, team manager, and team members often differing in seniority. The partner is responsible for winning client business, monitoring the project and ensuring that the client is satisfied with the service, all important for project success. Team managers and members are professional staff drawn from different levels each having project-related expertise. They work closely together on assigned tasks using group meetings to share their knowledge and create solutions for their client. During the collective reflection process, team members take time to understand the goals of the team and develop joint task strategies and ways of solving problems (Sankowska & Söderlund, 2015; Schippers et al., 2008).

We theorize that insights from team reflexivity have a two-fold effect with regard to helping. First, high reflexivity is expected to promote broader understanding regarding how best to help the team and contribute in ways that enhance both the team's and the individual's job performance. In contrast, when team reflexivity is low, members who help others are less able to effectively perform their own duties, having failed to apply effective task strategies in either their own work or the help given to others. Under conditions of low team reflexivity, other things being equal, we expect that helping others on the team will have an adverse effect on individual performance.

Second, high team reflexivity is expected to lead members to become aware of and share information regarding member contributions, as well as the opportunities and needs for help. Team reflexivity creates greater visibility and awareness of helping behavior among team members. By increasing the visibility and awareness of helping within the team, members can shift some of their individual resources to help those needing assistance and ease the burden on any one team member. Team reflexivity thus allows the team to evaluate and assess the situation and make decisions on how team members allocate their resources to others[2]. There are two underlying processes of team reflexivity enhancing the performance impact of helping: (1) the identification of effective task strategies including more effective helping; and (2) the increased visibility of helping needs and the help provided. These two process provide a facilitating account for the role that team reflexivity plays in linking helping and objective individual job performance. Thus, we propose that team reflexivity moderates the link between helping behavior and individual job performance and this link is expected to be stronger and more positive when teams have higher reflexivity.

4. Hypothesis 2. Team reflexivity will moderate the link between helping behavior and individual performance such that the link is stronger when team reflexivity is higher

Fig. 1 presents our theoretical model.

[2] We would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting these points.

5. Method

5.1. Research context

This study focuses on the helping and objective job performance in a PSF context. The majority of work is conducted in project teams (Gardner et al., 2012) and the typical team consists of professionals with various levels of seniority and experience. In our sample, team members include consultant analysts at junior levels, principal consultants at middle levels, usually team leaders, and partners at a senior level - the classic 'grinder', 'minder' and 'finder' categorization that characterises PSFs. Once a team is formed, the team lead takes charge of the project plan, assigning work, organising meetings and coordinating work between team members as well as allocating resources. To propose and deliver customized solutions, both team leader and members need to share and combine their knowledge to generate new ideas or to adapt existing solutions via formal and informal channels (Haas & Hansen, 2005; Morris & Empson, 1998). Individual professionals have a reason to demonstrate helping behaviors in order to make the team work well.

This study collected data from PremierConsult (a pseudonym), a global consulting firm employing 2500 people throughout North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia Pacific. It serves diverse industries including energy, financial services, healthcare, manufacturing, government, telecommunications, and logistics. We secured access to 240 consultants including 60 project leaders in 60 consulting teams. Using an invitation letter and four reminders, a web-survey assessed their experiences of working in teams. The firm provided individual performance data two months after the survey was completed.

5.2. Sample profile

We received a total of 233 responses including 59 team leaders and 174 members for an overall response rate of 97%. After deleting incomplete responses, our sample size was 227 (95%) of which 74% were team members, and the remainder managers. Respondents were predominantly male (78%) and with permanent positions (97%). They were evenly distributed across junior (34%), middle (34%) and senior positions (32%) with an average of 6.35 years tenure in the organization (S.D. = 6.48).

5.3. Measures

Objective individual job performance. Our dependent variable is the firm's objective individual job performance measure. We note organizations differ in the objective measures of individual performance they use. Billable hours are used in many PSFs (e.g., Landers, Rebitzer, & Taylor, 1996; Smets, Morris, & Greenwood, 2012). However, over-reliance on total billable hours as a performance criterion can lead employees to focus only on their own billable hours and completing their assigned tasks. Such firms create a highly competitive, low trust and less collaborative work climate. To overcome this limitation, the organization we studied used as its key individual job performance metric an individual's utilization score, that is, the hours of work charged to a client, divided by the pre-agreed target billable hours (equation (1)).

$$Individual\ \ utilisation\ \ score = \frac{Billable\ \ hours}{Target\ \ billablehours} \times 100\% \quad (1)$$

The individual utilization score is a measure of the contribution the professional employee makes to the organization's bottom line. The denominator in Equation (1) for calculating the individual utilization score is the target billable hours, typically agreed in advance by the team's manager and the client. It considers the individual's capability and can reflect career planning and development. For example, if an employee is a star performer and needs to be prepared for the promotion

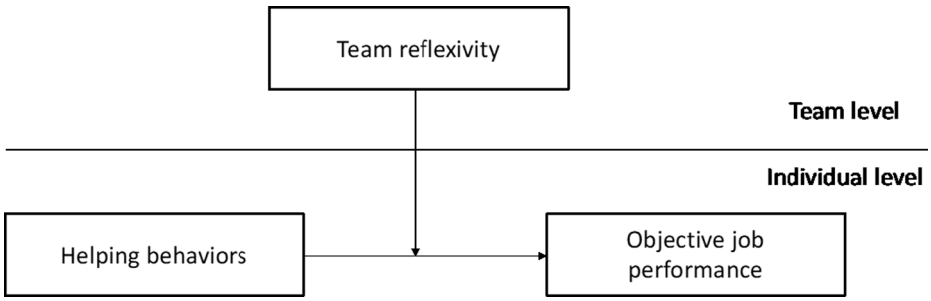

Fig. 1. Proposed research model.

to become a manager, the company may set up fewer target billable hours and provide more time to further develop that employee's leadership skills (e.g., via mentoring and leadership training etc.). An individual's utilization rate is commonly used in many PSFs in performance reviews, compensation and rewards distribution. The firm provided us data for this variable after the respondents returned their survey.

Helping behavior. Four items adapted from Lee and Allen (2002) assessed participant helping behavior towards others. They rated the frequency of the following activities: "I willingly give my time to help others who have work-related problems", "I make changes to my work schedule to accommodate others' requests for time off", "I give up my time to help others who have work or non-work problems" and "I assist others with their duties". Using a five-point Likert scale (1 = never, and 5 = always), reliability was 0.76, comparable to 0.75 in Saks (2006) using the same scale.

Team reflexivity. Six items adopted from Carter and West (1998) measured team reflexivity, using a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Referencing the team level, sample items include: "In my assignment team, we regularly discuss whether our team is working together effectively" and "In my assignment team, we regularly reflect on the way in which we communicate". Reliability alpha coefficient was 0.85. Inter-rater agreement was assessed via ICCs and R_{wg} for aggregation. ICC(1) for team reflexivity was 0.11. The ICC(1) value is comparable to similar studies that aggregate individual attitudes into the team level—for example, ICC(1) = 0.12 for employee perceived service climate in Liao and Chuang (2004) and ICC(1) = 0.06 for employee commitment in Nishii, Lepak, and Schneider (2008). The ICC (2) value for team reflectivity was 0.33, lower than the 0.60 cutoff point recommended by Glick (1985) but comparable to coefficients in Liao, Toya, Lepak, and Hong (2009) where ICC(2) values ranged from 0.28 to 0.38. The lower ICC(2) may be due to the small number of respondents from each team (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000). The mean of R_{wg} was 0.84, well above the rule of thumb for R_{wg} of 0.60 (James, 1982) and the more commonly acceptable value of 0.70. Based on the above results, team reflexivity was aggregated to the team level.

Control variables: At an individual level, we controlled for gender, managerial status, job grades and work tenure, factors related to individual performance and perceptions of teams. Gender was operationalized by a dummy variable (1 = female, 0 = male). Managerial status was measured using a dummy variable (1 = manager, and 0 = team member). Job grades were measured based on four categories (1 = Consultant, 2 = Principal Consultant, 3 = Managing Consultant, and 4 = Director/Partner). Work tenure was measured via the number of years the participants had worked in the firm. At the team level, data provided by the organization controlled for team size, a key factor in the quality of within-team relationships (Amason & Sapienza, 1997), and the ratio of females to males, a factor in team outcomes (e.g., Baer, Vadera, Leenders, & Oldham, 2014; Hoogendoorn, Oosterbeek, & van Praag, 2013; Inesi & Cable, 2015).

6. Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for core study variables (mean, standard deviation, and correlations). As respondents were nested in teams with the same manager, multi-level analysis using Mplus (Muthen & Muthen, 2017) was used to test hypotheses. Table 2 provides moderation results for hypotheses testing.

Hypothesis 1 proposed a negative relationship between individual helping and objective job performance. Results in Table 2 (Model 1.1) indicate that the standardized coefficient of objective individual job performance on helping was not significant (β = -0.02, *n.s.*). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that the team reflexivity moderated the relationship between individual helping behavior and objective individual job performance. All individual constructs were group-mean-centered (except for the dependent variable individual performance). All team constructs were grand-mean-centered. Results in Table 2 (Model 1.2) show that the interaction between individual helping behavior and team reflexivity was negative ($\beta = -0.15$, $p < .05$). Fig. 2 plots the interaction between individual helping behavior and team reflexivity on objective individual job performance at ± SD of individual helping behavior and team reflexivity. It shows that when team reflexivity is higher (+SD), the link between helping behavior and objective job performance is positive (Gradient of simple slope = 11.51, T = 115.10, $p < .001$). When team reflexivity is lower (-SD), the link between helping behavior and objective job performance is negative (Gradient of simple slope = -12.27, T = -30.87, $p < .001$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

7. Discussion

This study examined the disputed relationship between helping behavior and objective individual job performance. In our sample of 60 consulting project teams, we find that individual helping behavior is unrelated to objective job performance. Instead, this relationship depends on a key team process, team reflexivity, to provide members with the opportunity to consider task strategies, ways to attain team goals, and consequently create opportunities for, and recognition of, individual helping behavior. When teams have higher reflexivity, increased individual helping behavior is associated with their greater job performance. When team reflexivity is lower, increased helping is associated with lower job performance.

7.1. Theoretical contributions

By identifying the moderating role of team reflexivity in the helping-job performance relationship, we find that team-level conversations regarding task strategies and members' work appear to foster conditions that enhance the effect of helping behavior on the helper's own job performance. Observing that team reflexivity can enhance and enable the impact of helping on objective individual job performance leads us to suggest that helping behavior itself actually takes many heretofore

Table 1
Descriptive statistics and correlations of study variables.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Between team level										
1. Team reflexivity	3.58	0.42								
2. Team size	1.87	0.47	-0.12							
3. Female workers (%)	0.26	0.18	-0.03	-0.05						
Between individual level										
4. Objective individual job performance	77.97	19.54	-0.04	0.10	0.06					
5. Helping behaviors	3.93	0.57	-0.01	-0.07	0.15*	-0.02				
6. Gender	0.22	0.42	-0.11	0.04	0.32**	0.08	0.05			
7. Managerial status	0.26	0.44	0.01	0.01	0.00	-0.27**	0.06	-0.19**		
8. Job grades	2.04	0.91	-0.02	-0.04	-0.07	-0.34**	-0.02	-0.26**	0.58**	
9. Work tenure	6.48	6.35	0.03	-0.04	0.05	-0.06	-0.03	-0.09	0.22**	0.49**

Note: The Level 2 variables were disaggregated before calculating within-level correlations. N = 220–227 at individual level; = 58–60 at team level.
** $p < .01$.
* $p < .05$.

Table 2
Results of hierarchical linear modeling for team viability and objective individual job performance.

Variables	Objective Individual Job Performance							
	Model 1.1				Model 1.2			
	Standardized coefficient	Standard error	T-test	p value	Standardized coefficient	Standard error	T-test	p value
Level 2 (team level)								
Team size	0.17	0.15	1.22	0.22	0.18	0.15	1.21	0.23
Female workers (%)	0.11	0.12	0.86	0.39	0.11	0.12	0.87	0.38
Team reflexivity					-0.01	0.15	-0.08	0.94
Level 1 (individual level)								
Gender	-0.01	0.06	-0.15	0.88	0.01	0.05	0.26	0.80
Managerial status	-0.18	0.10	−1.92	0.06	-0.19	0.10	−1.94	0.05
Job grades	-0.27	0.10	−2.79	0.01	-0.26	0.10	-0.2.63	0.01
Work tenure	0.10	0.06	1.65	0.10	0.10	0.06	1.64	0.10
Helping	-0.02	0.07	-0.23	0.82	-0.01	0.07	-0.18	0.86
Cross-level interactions								
Helping * team reflexivity					0.15	0.06	2.35	0.02
R^2	0.14	0.04	3.27	0.00	0.17	0.05	3.47	0.00

Note: N = 58 at team level and 220 at individual level.

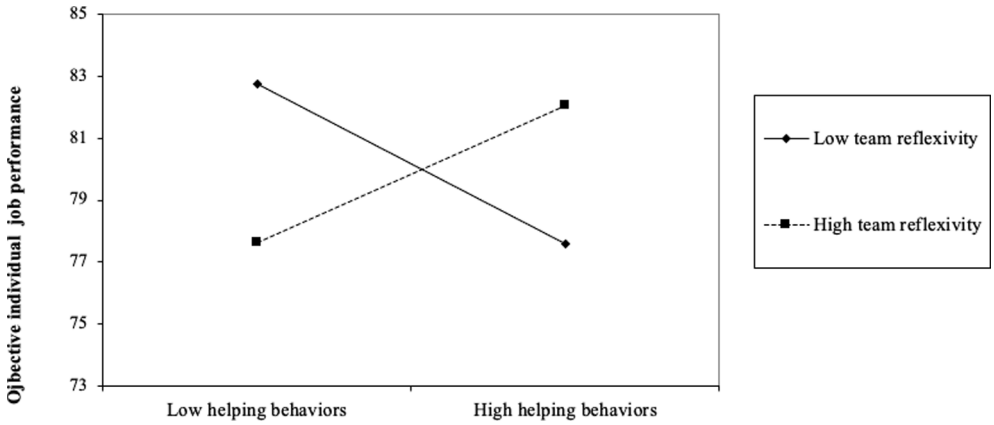

Fig. 2. Interaction between helping behaviors and team reflexivity on objective individual job performance.

unrecognized forms. All helping, even when motivated by concern for others or the well-being of the organization or client, need not have the same effects. Some helping may enhance both team and coworker performance as in the case where the helper steps in to aid a coworker completing an urgent task the entire team depends on. Other helping may shore up a coworker's poor performance or help them with a personal problem while taking time away from the helper's own critical tasks. Some helping may support the group's effort when a member calls a team meeting in order to solve a problem or resolve a conflict, or it may detract from the group's effort if the individual misidentifies the nature of the problem. The diverse array of helping behaviors and their circumstances are likely to influence the connection between helping and individual performance.

We posit that the task strategies team reflexivity fosters can lead individuals to direct their helping efforts in performance-enhancing ways. Based on the understanding of the big picture of their team's work, helpers can direct their efforts toward supporting more productive use of time, removing barriers to their own performance by targeting constructive help to others with whom they are interdependent. Reflexivity not only can make an individual's contributions more visible to the team but it also can increase the efficacy of their helping in terms of supporting both team goals and their own productivity. Thus, helping

under conditions of team reflexivity can benefit not just team members and the team, but the helper too.

Through its multi-level modelling, our study also answers the call to attend to the effects of context in individual level research. Johns (2006) points out that unmeasured contextual variables at higher levels (e.g., the team) may influence relationships at lower level (e.g., the individual). He suggests that the unrecognized influence of context can actually reverse the sign of relationships between variables, an observation consistent with findings in the present study. The present study introduces the team context into helping research to highlight an important boundary condition on the effects of individual-level helping. In this regard, future research on helping and individual performance should take into account both work context and the structure of work, particularly if work is performed in dynamic teams (Goodman & Wilson, 2000).

We also extend Bergeron et al. (2013) study on the relationship between helping behavior and individual outcomes among professional service staff. In measuring helping, Bergeron et al. (2013) employed an index that subtracted billing hours from the total working hours. This helping measure is problematic since consultants spend their non-billable time not just in helping others but also in undertaking administrative tasks. Our study adopted a behavioral measure of helping, a well-established scale from Lee and Allen (2002), and linked it to an objective measure of individual performance. At the same time, we build on Bergeron et al. (2013) study by taking the team nature of the professional context into consideration. Our findings suggest that it is important to factor in how team processes contribute to the functioning of both individual helping and job performance, particularly in the context of professional service firms where work is mostly done in teams.

Lastly, like many other organizations, PSFs depend on teams to undertake their core activity - client work. Existing studies of PSF teams indicate the importance of knowledge sharing and development (Haas & Hansen, 2007; Werr & Stjernberg, 2003) and that team knowledge integration via communication plays an important role in task completion (Gardner et al., 2012). This study extends that work by identifying reflexivity as a key team-level factor in buffering the potentially negative impact of helping behavior on individual job performance. Team reflexivity, we believe, has important and heretofore unrecognized contributions to make to both individual and team-level outcomes. Our findings suggest that the communication and discussion at the team-level can alter and expand the visibility and recognition of team members and their managers' helping to others. Such shifts can make helping a more functional aspect of teamwork for the team, its members and the larger organization.

7.2. Implications for practice

Both Chinese Taoism and the Bible have a proverb, 'as you sow, so shall you reap,' indicating that helping others can create personal benefit. This relationship manifests in the norm of reciprocity in social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In general, if an individual helps others, the recipient tends to feel obliged to return the favor (Gouldner, 1960). To this end, helping promotes the socialization process, by building builds bonds among people and with the organization. It enhances teamwork and can makes individual jobs easier (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1994). Managers should support employees who help their team and its members. A supportive manager can help buffer helpful employees from the potentially negative consequences of doing so. These negative consequences can include failing to be credited for the value individuals provide by helping as well as engaging in ineffective or dysfunctional forms of helping. Organizations are advised to use a comprehensive framework for assessing individual performance, including both their own job duties and broader contributions, if they wish to promote helping behavior.

In the context of PSFs for example, the individual utilization score is a key indicator for performance–but not the only one. Some PSFs have adopted a balanced scorecard for assessing individual performance, including efforts to develop others. In another example, a UK-based university introduced collegiality as a criterion in senior professorial promotions, reflecting activities in research (e.g., supporting the career development of junior academic colleagues); in teaching (e.g., collaboration with and support for colleagues in the development of teaching approaches and delivery); and in leadership responsibilities (e.g., mentoring colleagues). In both private and public sectors, helping requires time and other resources on the part of helpers. We advise employers to use performance and promotion criteria that support employees to effectively provide support to colleagues when there work is highly interdependent.

We find that team reflexivity can enable helping behavior to be both more effective and appropriately recognized. This finding suggests that attention needs to be given to understanding the particular contributions of helping behavior in a given organization. Reflexivity can aid this understanding through frequent member discussions regarding important problems and shared efforts to solve them. Indeed, reflexivity may not only promote the visibility and effectiveness of helping behavior but also encourage its practice. Appropriate reinforcement for helping behavior can be realized by a bundle of practices, a) the team's shared awareness of its goals and purpose, b) a focus on how to improve its performance and conversations related to how team members contribute to this improvement, c) followed up by concrete actions on the part of the team. Team reflexivity then provides a process to keep improving individual and team performance. This process can also contribute by clarifying what helping behaviors fail to add value, guiding the individual away from "help" that might be at odds with team performance, such as covering up a colleague's mistake or spending time on non-critical tasks.

For individual employees, helping can provide satisfaction and a sense of well-being. According to Claudius Claudianus, "*virtue is indeed its own reward*". Yet, not all helping is equally valuable. Learning how to help effectively takes time and effort. We advise managers to provide coaching on how to avoid helping's dysfunctional consequences.

7.3. Limitations and future research

This study also has limitations. First, an alternative causal ordering is possible: Helping may result from being identified as a high performer, providing a means of reciprocating that recognition. However, that causal direction is not easily accounted for by the observed moderating effect of reflexivity and the absence of a zero-order relationship between helping behavior and performance. Although our time-lagged study moves beyond cross-sectional designs, it cannot fully test causality. Future research should assess helping in a panel design to more fully investigate the helping - objective job performance link.

This study investigated the moderating role of team reflexivity in part to operationalize the visibility Bergeron (2007) proposed as a moderator. She further proposed that the reward system (outcome-based versus behavior-based reward systems), role ambiguity and reciprocity can change the direction of the relationship between helping and individual outcomes and these need to be fully examined empirically. These additional moderators should be tested as well to better understand when and why helping affects individual job performance. Existing research found that individual performance moderates the helping-performance link where the link is stronger among better than worse performers (Turnipseed & Rassuli, 2005). Future research is needed to further understand when helping will increase individual job performance.

In terms of level of analysis, this study investigates the cross-level effects between team and individual variables. A more comprehensive picture can be obtained by employing broader levels of analysis to test the cross-level effects of organizational, team and individual factors influencing the helping - individual performance link. This study

focused on a special context –professional service project teams, which was appropriate for the research question. However, it raises questions about the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. More research is needed to further test the findings in this study to other context where interactions between team members are often needed.

We note that the proposed conflict between helping and task performance can be contested. Although helping takes time, it can facilitate the development of intangible resources such as friendliness, kindness, conscientiousness, dependability and belongingness, also important for task performance (Den Hartog, De Hoogh, & Keegan, 2007). Helping others is key to building trust among team members, which leads to knowledge exchange and combination (Collins & Smith, 2006). Spending time on helping in the short run may lead to reciprocal support from other team members subsequently.

Increasing attention is given to the factors that drive helping behavior. Examples include individual attachment style (Geller & Bamberger, 2009), personal values such as social dominance orientation and psychological collectivism (Shao, Resick, & Hargis, 2011) network size (Stea, Pedersen, & Foss, 2017), empowering leadership (Raub & Robert, 2010), status distance (Doyle, Lount, Wilk, & Pettit, 2016) and organizational routines (Grodal, Nelson, & Siino, 2015). Future research should shed further light on the antecedents of helping. Helping involves both a provider and receiver, although research mainly focuses on the provider side. Attention to why people seek and accept help would contribute to a more multi-faceted research agenda (Thompson & Bolino, 2018).

8. Conclusion

Organizations frequently organize work in teams and expect members to help each other in order to contribute to overall effectiveness. Yet, helping others can come at a cost to individuals when their own job performance suffers. This study sheds light on the conditions under which helping behavior can enhance performance, showing how team reflexivity contributes to understanding of the contributions helpers can make to their teams. We hope that our findings will help to encourage more widespread helping in organizations.

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