

What lies beneath resilience: Analyzing the affective-relational basis of shared leadership in the Chilean miners' catastrophe

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Abstract

This article addresses how shared forms of leadership can activate resilient organizing to cope with catastrophic events by examining the case of the 33 Chilean miners' rescue who survived confinement at 600 m below ground for 69 days. Qualitative analysis of interview and document data reveals how the miners as a group engaged in the sharing of agency vis-a-vis the task of absorbing strain and anxiety, thus enabling a sophisticated work capacity and a constructive relational dynamic. The miners' resilient capabilities emerged from the activation of collective resources in three distinct yet complementary modes of interaction: self-organization, collaboration, and mutual caring. Our empirical findings indicate that the distribution of agency becomes essential for the promotion of both collective sensemaking and emotional containment in contexts of crisis. By accounting for such affective-relational underpinning of the sharing of leadership, this article contributes a more nuanced understanding of crisis management and the organization of positive, constructive responses to adversity, breakdown, and conflict.

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