

A Brief Discussion on Situational Theory of Leadership

Mrs. Salma Syeda

Assistant Professor, Masters In Business Administration, Presidency University, Bangalore, India,
Email Id-syeda.s@presidencyuniversity.in

ABSTRACT:

The Situational Theory of Leadership, created by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard, is a well-known leadership framework that stresses how crucial it is to modify one's leadership approach depending on the scenario. An overview of the Situational Theory of Leadership, its guiding principles, and its consequences for successful leadership are given in this abstract. It examines the idea of flexible leadership, the significance of matching leadership styles to follower preparedness, and the part played by contextual elements in determining leadership efficacy. The Situational Theory of Leadership's practical applications are also covered, including those in business, education, and healthcare. Understanding the Situational Theory of Leadership may help leaders better understand how to modify their behaviour in order to maximise follower performance and accomplish organisational objectives.

KEYWORDS:

Follow Philosophies, Leadership, Subordinates, Situational, Style.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Hersey-Blanchard Model, commonly known as the Situational Theory of Leadership, is a leadership theory that emphasises the significance of tailoring leadership approaches to the particular requirements and level of preparation of followers. This idea, which was created by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard in the late 1960s, contends that successful leadership depends on how followers and the issue at hand interact. The Situational Theory acknowledges that various circumstances call for various leadership styles, in contrast to conventional leadership theories that advocate a one-size-fits-all approach to leadership. Leaders need to be adaptable and able to change their actions depending on the particular situation and the skills of their followers. The idea of follower preparedness or growth level serves as the theoretical foundation [1], [2]. The concept states that the competence and degree of commitment or motivation of the follower are the two criteria that constitute follower preparedness. The Situational Theory defines four leadership styles based on these variables:

1. **Telling (Directing):** When followers are very committed but lack competence, leaders use a directive style by giving clear instructions and actively monitoring their performance.
2. **Selling and coaching:** Leaders use a coaching technique when followers are competent yet uncommitted. To assist the followers, grow their talents and become more motivated, they give direction, justify choices, and offer support.
3. **Participating in (Supporting):** Leaders take a supportive stance when followers have high skill but fluctuating commitment. They enable cooperation, promote involvement, and provide support and resources to keep followers motivated.
4. **Delegating:** Leaders are able to delegate when their followers are highly competent and committed. They provide followers liberty and decision-making power while exercising little monitoring.

The Situational Theory of Leadership acknowledges that contextual elements including the nature of the work, the organisational culture, and the traits of the followers may also affect a leader's ability to lead effectively. Leaders must evaluate these variables and modify their leadership approach as necessary. The Situational Theory's practical application resides in leaders' capacity to assess followers' preparedness and modify their behaviour appropriately. Effective leaders are adept at recognising the

growth requirements of their subordinates and giving them the proper amount of assistance, direction, and autonomy. There has been extensive use of the Situational Theory of Leadership in a variety of settings, including business, education, and healthcare. It offers leaders a useful foundation for boosting follower productivity, boosting job happiness, and fostering organisational efficiency. Leaders may create a pleasant work atmosphere, develop trust, and produce desired results by changing their leadership style to suit the unique requirements of their followers and the circumstances [3], [4].

The Situational Theory of Leadership's foundational ideas and consequences will be further explored in the debate that follows, along with the theory's benefits and drawbacks. Leaders may improve their capacity to successfully lead and inspire their followers in a variety of challenging scenarios by comprehending and putting this principle into practise. The Situational Theory of Leadership has become quite popular as a result of how useful and applicable it is in actual leadership situations. It acknowledges that there is no one style of leadership that works for all situations and that great leaders must be flexible and attentive to the individual requirements of their subordinates as well as the current circumstance. The need of forging close bonds between leaders and followers is emphasised by this philosophy. Leaders may build trust, provide open lines of communication, and promote a collaborative atmosphere by evaluating follower preparedness and changing their leadership approaches appropriately. Higher levels of follower engagement and commitment result from this because it fosters a feeling of mutual respect and shared purpose [5], [6].

The Situational Theory's focus on ongoing development and progress is another asset. It encourages leaders to make investments in the education, training, and motivation of their followers. With this strategy, the organisation creates a pipeline of competent and driven future leaders in addition to enhancing individual performance. The Situational Theory of Leadership also acknowledges that a variety of situational conditions may affect a leader's ability to lead. The specifics of the assignment, the organisational culture, and the requirements of their subordinates must all be taken into account by the leader. Leaders may change their leadership styles and make well-informed judgements by taking these aspects into consideration. The Situational Theory of Leadership has certain drawbacks in addition to its advantages. Accurately determining follower preparedness and choosing the right leadership style present a difficulty. It necessitates that leaders have a thorough awareness of the skills, drives, and developmental stages of their followers. Furthermore, the theory does not explicitly outline how to switch between various leadership stances when circumstances or follower maturity evolve [7], [8]. In conclusion, the Situational Theory of Leadership provides a useful framework for leaders to modify their leadership philosophies in accordance with the particular requirements of their subordinates and the situational circumstances. Leaders may increase their performance and create a healthy work environment by understanding the significance of follower preparedness and taking situational elements into account. However, for this theory to be effectively put into practise, leaders must have strong interpersonal skills, an acute sense of observation, and the capacity to make wise choices based on the particular dynamics of each circumstance [9], [10].

II. DISCUSSION

According to the situational theory of leadership, managers should use the style of leadership most suited to each subordinate's level of aptitude and level of commitment. This theory outlines four leadership styles. This is one of many theories explaining how various leadership philosophies may be acceptable in various situations; it places a special emphasis on the manager's responsibility for fostering the skills of his or her employees. Both academics and practitioners have long been interested in studying how leaders and managers behave towards the people they are responsible for. There is widespread agreement that some leadership philosophies are likely to be more successful than others in directing, inspiring, and growing followers, yet leadership theorists have proposed several definitions of these successful philosophies. The sections that follow list the theory of situational leadership's key components, describe how it relates to other theories of leadership, and evaluate the theory's viability and practical applicability. Since it was initially proposed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard in 1968, the situational theory of leadership has shown to have lasting appeal. The idea has undergone several minor revisions by the authors since it was initially published. The following overview is based

on Situational Leadership II, the most recent iteration of the theory. The idea suggests four supervisory leadership philosophies that combine supportive and directive behaviours. The four fashions are fundamentals

1. Directing (high directing, low supporting)
2. Coaching (high directing, high supporting)
3. Supporting (low directing, high supporting)
4. Delegating (low directing, low supporting)

Each style is suitable for a certain stage of a subordinate's ability and commitment to complete a job, according to the theory. To get the greatest performance out of the subordinate, the manager's leadership style should adapt as the subordinate's levels of skill and commitment fluctuate. People who are enthusiastic about a new work but lack the necessary information or abilities may struggle with it. benefit from directed supervision, when the manager clearly outlines the requirements and instructs and gives examples of how to carry out the work. The fundamentals of the work may have been understood by subordinates after some practise and learning, but their competence level is still not very high, and it's possible that their initial passion and confidence for the new task have diminished. They will thus gain the most from a coaching style of supervisory leadership, in which the manager solicits input while maintaining control over the choices the boss is still extremely directive and is also highly supportive, offering praise and encouragement for the subordinate's efforts. Although subordinates' skill level develops with time, they sometimes experience insecurity and lack of confidence. The kind of supportive supervision that includes praising, encouraging, and other types of assistance will be most helpful to them. The manager could serve as a sounding board for a subordinate's suggestions, but he or she won't often make the final decision.

Finally, a delegating method is the best strategy when the subordinate's confidence and skill level increase. The management delegated the duty to a subordinate while still offering some encouragement, kudos, and recognition for that person's accomplishments. The philosophy of situational leadership is predicated on the idea that individuals are really motivated to grow and learn. It follows that one type of supervision should be replaced by the next in the sequence as employees enhance their abilities over time with the right guidance and assistance. The ultimate goal is to create empowered, independent subordinates who are highly effective. The subordinate's dedication and skill level determine the suitable management style. Following is a succinct summary of the subordinate's degree of development and the suitable leadership style:

1. Stage 1: low competence, high commitment a directing style
2. Stage 2: low to some competence, low commitment a coaching style
3. Stage 3: moderate to high competence, variable commitment a supporting style
4. Stage 4: high competence, high commitment a delegating style

It's crucial to remember that the proper supervision approach depends more on the work at hand than it does on the supervisees themselves. As a result, for any given subordinate, a delegating style may be suitable for certain duties, a supporting style for others, and so on. Although the theory focuses on interactions between managers and subordinates, the styles may also be used in a training or educational setting to explain how teachers and students interact. To be effective as situational leaders, managers must: (1) evaluate the confidence and competence of their subordinates in relation to a particular task; (2) employ each of the four leadership styles, which may require overcoming the manager's own preferences for one or two of the styles; and (3) communicate with subordinates about and explain the use of the various styles so that they understand and accept the process. The idea was eventually broadened to include leadership of teams and of organisations. The theory was first intended to explain supervisory styles a manager may use towards a specific subordinate. Although the initial emphasis was on teaching a subordinate how to do a particular job or tasks, the idea may also be applied to circumstances when choices that have an impact on the whole team must be made, relying on the competence and dedication of the team members.

Relationship with Other Theories of Leadership Styles

The degree to which leaders are directive or participatory in approaching the choices that they and their teams must make was a key component of a number of previous well-known theories of leadership styles that came before the situational theory of leadership. According to one theory put out by Robert Tannenbaum and Warren H. Schmidt, managers might choose from a range of methods to decision-making, ranging from totally participatory at one end of the spectrum to directive at the other. According to this hypothesis, the decision's nature and the traits (knowledge, abilities, and attitudes) of the subordinates would determine the most successful method.

Other viewpoints were based on studies that separated supervisory behaviours into two major groups: task- and people-oriented behaviours. Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton advanced the widely accepted view that managers might continuously use a style of leadership that had a high respect for both task accomplishment and the requirements of the subordinate. This presupposed that subordinates might act independently, accountable and driven to produce success at work. The situational theory of leadership developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard has many fundamental principles with those of Blake and Mouton and descends from the same sources. The situational theory of suitable leadership style makes a unique addition by supporting many leadership philosophies based on the shifting demands of subordinates in connection to certain tasks. Pathgoal theory, one of the latter theories of leadership styles, also proposed that, depending on the situation, leaders should use one of four alternative subordinate-facing styles. However, path-goal theory prioritised selecting a style that best matched a subordinate's motivating demands above that person's aptitude and dedication. Leaders were supposed to choose a style based on the peculiarities of the work they are doing as well as the variables that would drive the subordinate. The concept of transformational leadership, which is similarly concerned with how to develop subordinates and with subordinate motivation and has stressed the role of leaders in motivating their followers, has had an effect on many of the more modern theories of leadership. The notion that leaders must strike a balance between care for job completion and concern for helping their people, however, is still a big element of modern thinking about leadership.

Importance

The situational theory of leadership has shown to be reliable; it is well recognised and used in many leadership and supervisory training programmes. The theory offers clear direction on how to act towards subordinates at various phases of growth, and the fundamental components of the model, of matching style to subordinate preparedness, are clearly comprehended. The development of each subordinate's competence and the evolving leadership philosophies that foster empowerment and self-reliance seem to be logically compatible, and the model has an intuitive appeal. Additionally, the focus placed on managers' responsibilities for helping their employees improve is commendable and, therefore, promotes both personal development and organisational sustainability. However, a number of objections to the situational theory of leadership have been presented, pointing out specific restrictions and places where the theory is not entirely apparent.

Peer-reviewed, independent investigations of the idea are few. Only the need of thorough instruction when subordinates start on new responsibilities and the advantage of a decrease in this directive style as they gain experience are offered by the studies that have been done to support its adoption in practise. Thus, there is little empirical evidence from independent research to support the situational leadership model's accuracy or efficacy. The model's crucial element, the depiction of subordinates' developmental stages, has drawn special criticism. The capacity and commitment of the subordinate to complete the assignment are used to describe their level of preparedness. Which leadership style should be used is indicated by the combination of these two factors. The model's combination options, meanwhile, are not all-inclusive. For instance, the subordinate is said to be devoted yet incompetent at the beginning of each new assignment (Blanchard refers to the subordinate at this point as "an enthusiastic beginner"). However, not all newcomers are enthused. Similar to the third stage, the fourth considers subordinates who are both competent and committed, albeit some capable subordinates may not be committed. The theory is silent on the appropriate leadership philosophies to use in these

circumstances. Although there may be variance in the competence and commitment of subordinates, the four combinations contained in the model do not account for all possible scenarios, making the model's implementation more complicated than it may initially seem.

Another problem is that it's not quite clear how much assistance a leader should provide at each stage of the model. Although the directing and delegating methods are classified as "low support" techniques, the theory's thorough description (as well as practical management experience) show that both of these styles need some level of assistance. Another issue with the idea is how the management should conduct a group discussion regarding choices the whole group must make when group members have varying degrees of skill and commitment. Another drawback is that the theory's full scope only applies when the manager has more talent than the subordinate and is hence qualified to lead and mentor: In contemporary businesses, where managers are accountable for This isn't always the case, especially with professionals and knowledge workers outside their own field of specialisation. Despite these drawbacks and areas of ambiguity, the descriptions of the four styles offer insightful advice on the various ways in which leadership can be used, especially when the detailed descriptions are studied. Managers can use this information to reflect on how they interact with their staff and where they can improve their leadership skills.

III. CONCLUSION

The Situational Theory of Leadership gives leaders a flexible and useful framework to modify their leadership philosophies in response to the unique requirements and level of preparation of their followers. This idea acknowledges that successful leadership does not include a one-size-fits-all strategy and calls for leaders to be flexible in response to the dynamics of the circumstance and the skills of their subordinates. The situational theory's strength comes in its focus on the significance of situational awareness and leaders' capacity to modify their behaviours in response. In order to give the right amount of guidance, support, and empowerment, leaders may adjust their approach by evaluating follower preparedness and taking the context into account. The Situational Theory accepts that interactions between leaders, followers, and the particular situation at hand affect how successful a leader is. It emphasises the value of developing solid bonds, encouraging candid communication, and encouraging cooperation. Leaders may foster a productive work atmosphere that improves motivation, engagement, and overall performance when they match their behaviours with the demands of their followers.

It is crucial to remember that the Situational Theory of Leadership has its difficulties. Strong observational abilities, emotional intelligence, and the capacity to evaluate and adjust to changing circumstances are essential for leaders. To improve leadership techniques and successfully address changing requirements, it also requires ongoing learning and growth. The Situational Theory emphasises the complexity and diversity of real-world leadership situations, despite its limitations, and provides a useful viewpoint on leadership. By adopting this strategy, leaders may increase their leadership effectiveness, boost follower performance and happiness, and ultimately help their organisations succeed. The Situational Theory of Leadership may help leaders identify follower preparedness, fit their leadership styles to the circumstance, and make defensible judgements in practise. Leaders may develop a flexible and adaptable leadership style that unlocks the potential of their followers and promotes organisational success by implementing this idea into their leadership practises.

REFERENCES

- [1] A. Seidel, T. A. Saurin, G. L. Tortorella, and G. A. Marodin, "How can general leadership theories help to expand the knowledge of lean leadership?," *Prod. Plan. Control*, 2019, doi: 10.1080/09537287.2019.1612112.
- [2] R. J. House and T. R. Mitchell, "Path-Goal Theory of Leadership," in *Leadership*, 2019. doi: 10.2307/j.ctvpg85tk.25.
- [3] D. Tourish, "Is Complexity Leadership Theory Complex Enough? A critical appraisal, some modifications and suggestions for further research," *Organ. Stud.*, 2019, doi:

10.1177/0170840618789207.

- [4] A. A. Gumusay, "Embracing Religions in Moral Theories of Leadership," *Acad. Manag. Perspect.*, 2019.
- [5] G. Bäcklander, "Doing complexity leadership theory: How agile coaches at Spotify practise enabling leadership," *Creat. Innov. Manag.*, 2019, doi: 10.1111/caim.12303.
- [6] W. Fourie and F. Höhne, "Thou shalt not fail? Using theological impulses to critique the heroic bias in transformational leadership theory," *Leadership*, 2019, doi: 10.1177/1742715017730453.
- [7] J. Tong, "Theories of Leadership and Church Management," *Excel. Deo J. Teol. Misiologi, dan Pendidik.*, 2019, doi: 10.51730/ed.v3i1.6.
- [8] G. Jian, "Transforming the present moment through conversation and narrative: Toward a hermeneutic leadership theory," *Commun. Theory*, 2019, doi: 10.1093/ct/qty016.
- [9] J. N. M. Lui and J. M. Johnston, "Validation of the nurse leadership and organizational culture (N-LOC) questionnaire," *BMC Health Serv. Res.*, 2019, doi: 10.1186/s12913-019-4290-z.
- [10] M. K. Hassan, "Transformational leadership: A constructive analysis of leadership behavior," *Int. J. Bus. Manag. Invent.*, 2019.