RUNNING HEAD: LEADERSHIP

Compare and Contrast Two Leadership Theories

Name

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# Introduction

Leadership is a process in which a person inspires a group of people to achieve a common goal. At times, the leading group of people may need different styles and behaviours dependent on the circumstances structures, tasks, followers' needs and followers' competence (“Leadership theories,” n.d.). According to the situational theories, leadership effectiveness depends on the ability of leadership to effect followers in several work environments. Tough, not all methods of situational leadership undertake that behaviour of leaders can change, and in all situations, all leaders can be effective. This paper seeks to analyze, compare, and contrast one contingency and one situational leadership theory Fiedler’s Contingency Theory of Leadership and Path-Goal Theory of Leadership Effectiveness

# Overview of Fiedler’s Contingency Theory of Leadership

Fiedler’s Contingency Theory of Leadership is one of the contingency theories of leadership (“Expert Program Management,” n.d.). The contingency theories of leadership emphasize that the ability of a leader to lead is contingent with the situation in which he or she has to exhibit leadership style. These situational factors can be the preferred style of leaders, the behaviour and ability of the followers, the nature of the task and various other situational factors. This is not the only contingency theory; the other theories are also based on the same concept that there is no single best way to lead people. Instead, the best way depends on the situation in which the leader needs to demonstrate his/her leadership skills.

There was a lot of research on the most effective style of leadership in the later stages of the 20th century. Fieldler came up with the concept of one single best leadership style. He gave the idea that the effectiveness of a leadership style is determined by the situation (Fiedler, 2005). The effectiveness is the outcome of situational factors interaction with different leadership styles. This gave birth to the new era of leadership search elaborating in effect leadership behaviour dependent on the circumstances. In 1951, Fieldler begins the research which leads to the development of the contingency model's that was later integrated with the contingency resource model. Fieldler's contingency model is still considered as the best theory to study the leadership effectiveness, epitomized by two important factors, leadership style, and situational favorableness.

# Overview of the Path-Goal Theory of Leadership Effectiveness

The Path-Goal Theory of Leadership is one of the situational theories of leadership developed by Robert House in 1971 and later the theory was revised in 1996 (Evans, 1996). According to this theory, the behaviour of a leader is contingent on many factors such as motivation, satisfaction and the performance of followers. This theory encourages managers to enter in various leadership styles and then decide what suits best according to the situation (“Path-Goal Theory of Leadership,” n.d.). This helps a leader identify which is the best way to support the followers in the achievement of their goals and objectives. Not only the leader develops the path for their followers but also remove the obstacles in the way of their followers. In addition, they also offer rewards along the route.

There are four leadership styles associated with this type of leadership according to House and Mitchell, Supportive Leadership, Directive Leadership, Participative Leadership, and Achievement-oriented leadership. Supportive leadership involves considering the needs of followers and showing concerns. Directive behaviour involves telling leaders what to do; participative style involves involving followers and taking their opinions. Achievement-oriented leadership is setting challenging goals in order to self-improvement. In addition, the leader also shows trust and faith in followers' skills and abilities.

# Comparison and Contrast of two theories

An analysis of both theories reveals that the theories some similarities and differences as well. The contingency theory of Fieldler has faced criticism due to the fact that it does not allow flexibility and fails to describe the appropriate behaviour if there is a mismatch between the leader and the situation (Yukl and Yukl, 2002). In this scenario, the path-goal theory becomes more suitable because it encourages leaders to indulge in different situations, which offers room for more flexibility. However, both the theories aim to support the right leader behaviour, best suitable for the situation and the followers but there are different deficiencies that make the path-goal theory more flexible and suitable for certain situations.

According to Fieldler’s contingency theory, leaders are most effective when their behaviours match with the situational factors (Fiedler, 1976). This theory was developed based on Fiedler’s Least Preferred Coworker. The LPC shows task motivated style while the high LPC indicates relationship motivated style of leadership. After the analysis of leadership, the next step is to describe the situation based on task structure, position power, and leader-member relationship. The good leader-member relationship is characterised by trust, loyalty, and confidence while the poor relationship is characterised by unfriendly interactions (Northouse, 2018). The next step is to assess the task structure that involves clarity of elaboration and the number of available alternatives.

The example of this can be taken in the manufacturing job to move boxes from one point to another. These are high task structure in this case as compared to the manager managing who is dealing with many complex projects from different domains, here the task structure is low and few instructions and elaboration cannot be provided. The third element that has to be considered is portraying leader’s legitimate power to apply punishment and rewards. This change with the leader’s authority and power with respect to the task such as hiring or promoting an employee. The last stage in the contingency theory is assessing a leader's effectiveness by matching it with the LPC with the situation. This shows that leaders who are relationship motivated are more effective in different favourable situations while those who are task motivated are effective in their different extreme situations.

This restricts the leadership style to different situations that are not flexible at all. The leadership becomes ineffective if the leader is not matched with the situation and the leader is faced with the situation of stress, anxiety and immature reactions. It is the fact that situation changes from time to time in an organization, for instance, a company has three managers which are task motivated, but the conflicts occur due to the change in higher management which hinders efficiency and productivity. The rest of the factors remain the same in this case, the situation now needs the leaders that are relationship motivated to better the relationship between leaders and followers. Here the contingency model fails to improve the leader's behaviour in the changing situation. On the contrary, the path-goal theory offers more flexibility and develop several other leadership styles.

The path-goal theory helps managers in creating different paths for different followers and the best match with the need and requirement of each of the followers, in this way, the leader is able to enhance group effectiveness (Dixon and Hart, 2010). The leader is ready to assist followers in choosing the best path for themselves and help them to achieve definite goals in the workplace. The leader also assists followers in removing any obstacles that come in their way, in addition, the leader also supports the followers emotionally and supplement whatever is missing in the environment. Leaders also offer rewards to those subordinates who are able to achieve their goals, which eventually increases employees and followers’ satisfaction. According to this theory, effective leaders chose behaviours that are best suited for their employees (Northouse, 2018).

According to this leadership theory, there are numerous characteristics that can result in increasing the effectiveness of the leader. These include the need for affiliation, preferences for structure and the desire for control, self-perception, and the capability of leaders to accomplish their goals. These characteristics affect the leader because the leadership style of a leader affects the motivation of his or her followers (Vandegrift and Matusitz, 2011). The next stage of this theory is the evaluation of task characteristics such as authority system and the workgroup of subordinates. Therefore, this theory emphasizes that the leader should choose one or more suitable styles and leadership behaviours based on the needs of followers and the task assessment that if it is challenging, unclear and ambiguous.

Lastly, this theory focuses on four different behaviours of leadership including the directive, supportive, participative and achievement-oriented leaderships as discussed earlier. The directive style is more suitable for clear instructions and timelines, clear performance standards and rules and regulations. They are more effective in managing complex responsibilities and authoritative subordinates. The supportive leaders care about their followers and the participative leaders are inspiring their followers and increase job satisfaction of employees (Malik, 2013). Achievement-oriented leaders challenge their followers to do their best.

# Conclusion

To sum up, the contingency theory suggests that the effectiveness of leaders can be achieved if they are only best suited to the situation and the right employees. This means that hiring the best suitable employees for a job is the only key to success. While the situation and scenarios keep on changing and contingency theory loses its effectiveness. On the other hand, the other theory focuses on the fact that a leader can adapt to more than one leadership styles depending on the situation and subordinates. The most versatile leadership approach is most suitable to increase a leader's effectiveness. Overall, the path-goal theory is more suitable in this case.

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