

Advance Course in Social Psychology

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Lecture 48: Group Leadership- Part VII

Hello friends, welcome back. Let us continue with the discussion pertaining to group leadership. In the previous discussion, I have talked about the contemporary styles of leadership that is leader-member exchange, transformational leadership, transactional and charismatic leadership style. Today, I will again come back to some other theories, early theories of leadership and which has its applicability in the recent trends as well. So, we can consider those theories in today's discussion both as early trends or the recent trends. Based on this discussion, let us continue with this theory that is situational leadership theory or the life cycle theory of leadership.

This leadership style was developed by Hersey and Blanchard and developed while working on the management organizational behavior. This theory was introduced in 1969 as a life cycle theory of leadership and later on it was renamed as situational leadership theory that is SLT although referred to as contingency theory. We have already discussed about Fiedler's contingency theory and path goal theory. This is also a part of but it has lot of applicability in recent trends.

The fundamental principle of this model is that there is no single best style of leadership. The most effective leadership is contingent on the followers. Now here the importance has been given to the followers not only to the leader or the situation but the follower. The follower's readiness that is ability and willingness to accomplish a particular task. It is not only about every time leader's willingness or readiness to take up the task or initiate any task.

It is also about the follower's ability and willingness to take up the task. We cannot impose, the leader cannot impose anything on the follower. It has to be the follower's readiness in terms of ability and willingness. A very simple imagination can be that any leader who is assigning any task to the follower or to an employee the task which an employee cannot perform or does not have good hand at the task then definitely there has to be some imbalance or indiscriminacy that can affect the overall organizational performance. So this according to Hersey and Blanchard any leadership only is effective when it is contingent on the level of the follower's readiness in terms of ability and willingness.

Therefore, effective leadership varies not only with the person or group that is being influenced but also depends on the task, the job or function that needs to be accomplished. So there has to be an alignment between the follower and the situation. What kind of situation it is? What kind of job a follower can perform based on his ability and willingness and then only we can say that the leader has good understanding of the situation and the follower. So there they have identified two fundamental concepts of situational leadership theory. The first is the leadership style where they have identified two types of leadership.

The task style and the relationship style. The task style and the relationship. The leader organizes and defines roles for members of the work group and the leader explains the task that members are to do when, where and how they are to do them. The task style means the leader is identifying that which role will be performed by the follower based on his willingness and ability. What when, where and how everything is dictated by the leader based on the task.

Nothing is being considered only the task that has to be performed and achieved by the follower. This is one identification of situational leadership. The other is the relationship style. The leader has chosen, has close personal relationship with the members of the group and there is open communication and psychological and emotional support. So the leader connects with the follower based on the relationship that he or she desires to establish with the follower.

There is emotional connect, there is open communication and the leader and the follower maintain a positive or a heightened interpersonal relationship between each other. So according to Hersey and Blanchard, the leadership style in terms of amount of the task behavior and relationship behavior that the leader provides to their followers based on that situation and they categorize leadership styles into four behavior. Now even when the task style and leadership style is there, still they have defined the follower and the leadership style into four categories based on the situation. So those situations are renamed from, has been named from S1 to S4, situation 1, situation 2, situation 3 and situation 4. So under what situation based on the follower's ability and willingness, which leadership style is more applicable? So based on the understanding of the follower and the situation, the leadership style can be imposed.

That is why this theory is known as situational leadership theory. So the key to leadership effectiveness is to match up the situation with the appropriate style. So there are following four basic styles that has been identified by Hersey and Blanchard. Telling, selling, participating and delegating. So here leaders tell people what to do and how to do it.

Now when any follower who is novice, who has no idea how the task has to be performed, then under such type of situation which type of leadership will match in that situation, it is the telling

style where the leader has to instruct the follower because the situation says that the followers have no idea, they are ambiguous or they are completely novice that how the task has to be performed. Under such kind of situation, telling leadership style is the most appropriate one. That is a perfect match. The other is selling. Leaders provide direction but they attempt to sell their ideas to get people on board.

They know what the vision has been set for the organization, the leaders know but at the same time they have to also identify that which employee or how many followers can work on that vision or idea and what followers and employees can join the leader as a team. So this is a selling style that the leader is selling the idea and trying to find the best match between the follower and the task. So the situation is to identify the follower which easily matches with the follower. So the follower says that here it has to be a selling style where the leader is imposing the vision and identifies followers who can match with that vision. This is a selling style.

The other is participating. The leader focus on the relationship styles, maintain interpersonal communication, there is more emotional connection, the leader provide direction to the employees and they work with the team and share decision making responsibilities. May be the situation says that the members are willing to take up the task and at the same time the followers have all the ability to perform the task based on their qualification, expertise and training. Then the leader can easily identify that there can be a perfect match between the leader and the follower based on exchange of duties or sharing decision making responsibilities. Under such circumstances the leader has more belief on the followers that any follower can take up any responsibility or share decision making responsibilities.

And the last is delegating. Leaders delegate most of the responsibility to the group. They monitor the progress but are less involved in decision making mechanism. So here may be the leader knows, understands the followers that to what extent they are able or they have the ability to perform the task. The leader can be hands off and the followers are hands on and monitoring is there but at the same time the intervention of the leader will only be there when there is some error in the whole mechanism.

In all the four situations the most important thing to identify is that every time the leader is trying to create a perfect match between the follower and the situation. Based on that the leader is imposing a specific leadership style. It can be telling, selling, participating and delegating. So, this is how Hershey and Blanchard has identified four leadership styles based on task and relationship. This is how they have created this framework that is situation leadership theory.

Now once we have discussed about the first concept of SLT that is the leadership style. The other concept is an individual's readiness level also referred to as maturity level. Here maturity is not only about willingness but to what extent followers are motivated enough to perform the task. They are ready to take up the responsibility based on their expertise, based on their experience, based on their qualification, based on their training. The more the followers have higher qualification, experience, expertise and training the more they become competent to take up any responsibility and that identifies the readiness or the maturity level of that follower.

So, according to this another fundamental concept of SLT it is the individual or group's performance that is the readiness level or the maturity level. The level of maturity is defined by three criteria and which is absolutely task specific that is the degree of achievement motivation, achievement motivation of the followers, willingness to take up any responsibility and amount of education and experience. When all these three components are in sync then there can be a perfect match between the leadership, follower and the task. So these are the levels that have been identified by Hershey and Blanchard high, medium and low. The readiness level or the maturity level.

Maturity level is high that means there is a perfect match. If it is medium, low then accordingly that leadership can be identified. If we talk about high maturity level then the individuals are able to do the task on their own and are comfortable with their own ability to do it. That means they are highly experienced, they have expertise and they have all the intellectual understanding and knowledge about the task that what they have to perform. So they are able and willing to not only do the task but to take the responsibility for the task because it is an experience that speaks up at that level.

So this is the highest level of maturity or readiness of the follower. Now this identification or understanding of the maturity level here the performance is going to be high. The other is medium. The medium level which has two levels M3 and M2. M3 has medium maturity but high skills but lack confidence.

Why lack confidence? Maybe they do not have that level of expertise or experience. So individuals with this kind of maturity level are ready to and willing to do the task but they have the skill but are not confident in their abilities. This can be due to lack of experience. This can be due to lack of achievement motivation. When these kind of lackings are being existing among any group members or followers then the leader can identify this kind of situation based on the readiness or maturity level that to what extent some followers are ready to perform the job at which level based on their situation.

So they are not that much confident. So the leader would not fit them in a high performing task job. Maybe they are well fitted in other kind of jobs. Similarly M2 where maturity levels are medium and the skills are limited. Maybe they do not have that level of expertise or training to perform any high level task.

So under such situation individuals are willing to do the task but lack the skills to do it successfully. Initially in the medium maturity they were not having the confidence. They had the skill but not the confidence. But in M2 level their maturity is medium but they have limited skill to perform the task.

So there can be a mismatch. So the leader will try to fit in these kind of followers in some different kind of task maybe where they do not require much efforts to perform any task. This is medium too that is medium maturity and limited skills. And the last is M1. This is the level where the follower has lowest level of maturity where readiness is missing. So individuals lack all the knowledge skills and abilities even the confidence to work on their own and they are often unwilling to take up the task on.

That is obvious when there is no achievement motivation, there is no experience, there is no qualification and there is no willingness to take up the task then which reduces the confidence level then ultimately the follower is being subsided or maybe they are being not included in the group for any specific task to be performed. Now the discussion has its own significance in a way that there is no strategy that is being followed. This is completely understanding of the leader that how the leader is understanding the followers ability and knowledge level based on their maturity. The more they are matured the more they are ready to perform the task the more they have the willingness to perform the task. So based on this is completely based on the leader's experience or interaction with the followers.

So this is how SLT theory has been established to understand not only the ability but the willingness of the followers to perform the task. Now this was till this discussion. At the same time there was another model that was proposed by a blanket that is situational leadership model. They have improvised the previous model and have relabeled the maturity levels that is M4321 highest to lowest they have relabeled those maturity levels as development models. Why? Because there was a very simple reason that they avoided to put any stigma to any follower for being calling them or labeling them as mature or immature.

To avoid the stigma of idea of immaturity and making some distinctions in M1 and M2 they have a different version a revised version based on D1 to D2 development 1 to development D2. So these are the development levels relabeled from maturity levels to development levels. So

blanket situational leadership model 2 was used the term competence that is ability knowledge and skills and commitment as confidence and motivation to describe different levels of development. In the initial model if I just go back here it is the readiness that is ability and willingness they have replaced these words with development models and competence that is knowledge skill and ability and commitment that is confidence and motivation. So according to blanket 4 combinations of confidence and commitment make up what we call development level.

So these levels M4 to M1 has been relabeled and revised based on these combinations based on all combinations D1 where competence is low and commitment is high. Then such followers are termed as enthusiastic beginners. So that relabeling has also enhanced the motivation level. So people who have no competence in terms of less ability knowledge and skills but they are high in commitment in terms of confidence and motivation then they are known as enthusiastic beginner and the leader can train these followers to maintain their high level of motivation for better performances. The other is D2 low or oblique middling competence with low commitment and their delusion distracted learners where again competence is very low or may be moderate in terms of knowledge skills and abilities and at the same time commitment is also low.

So here the readiness can be defined as low people followed is not willing much to perform they are disillusioned they are distracted learners. High competence with low variable competence they are capable but cautious performer these are the characteristics of such kind of followers. High competence is there high knowledge is there but at the same time they are cautious performer may be they will find lot of difficulty to adjust their competence with the requirement of the task. They may not fit well and their confidence and their motivation will also go down because there can be a misfit they have higher qualification but may be not fit for the task and the D4 is high competence with high commitment they are self reliant achievers they are self managed they are self oriented in a way that they do not require any instruction and such followers are known as high achievers. Followers have high knowledge skills and abilities and at the same time they are highly motivated and confident on their beliefs and their ability to perform the task.

So this is the another revised model given by Blanchard and the maturity levels have been renamed as development levels in terms of competence and commitment. So in order to make an effective cycle a leader needs to motivate followers by adjusting the leadership style to the development level of the person. Again understanding the followers, understanding the employees that where they mark themselves based on their knowledge skills and abilities their confidence and their willingness or competence to perform the task. So Blanchard postulated that enthusiastic beginners that is D1 need a directing leadership. See if I go back low competence with high commitment that they have low levels of competence maybe they have all the qualities but level of confidence and motivation is low but they are committed then they need a directing leadership style.

Delusion or learners where again confidence is low and commitment is also low then they require a coaching style where they are being mentored they are being put in a specific situation under specific person who will give them training for specific task it can be cross training as well so that the expertise can be expanded and when all the expertise is pooled then a person is able to perform the final or the wholesome job. The other is capable but cautious performer that is high competence with low commitment then they respond best to supporting leadership style because in this D3 level competence they have confidence and motivation they have but at the same time the commitment is low under such circumstances the followers need to be motivated they are supposed to be pushed up so that they are ready to perform the job there is more willingness to perform the job that requires a supporting leadership and self achievers need leaders who offer a delegating style where the leader is hands off and the followers are hands on. So ultimately it is not only about the leader it is not only about the situation but it also important to understand the followers ability or competence so that a perfect leadership style can be established for achieving the group goal. So these are the two models the first situational leadership model based on four styles that is delegating, participating, selling and telling later on this model was revised by Blanchard et al in terms of high competence and high commitment, moderate to high competence to variable commitment then D2 low to some competence and low commitment and low competence to high commitment. So this is how these two models have been revised based on understanding followers.

Another theory of SLT has been also been proposed in the management discord developed by Vesio this is completely based on situational leadership style theory itself but it is an another version of the theory and according to this theory this focuses on the followers that successful leadership depends on selecting the right leadership style contingent on the followers readiness that is the extent to which followers are willing and able to accomplish a specific task. So Vesio identified four behaviors dependent on followers readiness it is a slight extension of the situational leadership styles the followers are either unable and unwilling to do a task and the leader needs to give clear and specific directions to perform the task not much difference but it is a just matter of sharing that how much work has been done even on this theory. If followers are unable and willing the leader needs to display a high task orientation to get them to accept the leaders desire. The third situation is that when followers are able but willing the leader needs to use a supportive and participative style and if the followers are both able and willing then leaders do not have much to do they do not require much efforts to motivate the employers because they fit in well with the job. So the significance of this theory lies in acknowledging the importance of the followers and building on the logic that leaders can compensate for followers limited ability and motivation which entails that the followers can find a perfect match between the follower and the situation.

This is about situational leadership style I will continue about another's leadership style in the next discussion. Thank you so much.