

**SIGNIFICANCE OF SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE FOR
IMPROVING EFFECTIVENESS AND PRODUCTIVITY OF
SUBORDINATES – A CASE STUDY APPROACH**

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Abstract

There are three different leadership styles practiced by leaders such as 'Autocratic', 'Democratic' and 'Laissez-Faire'. We have seen in the past that, these styles are adopted by the leaders based on their aptitude. Recently, leaders have realized that, situational leadership style is the best suitable style for today's environment. Based on author's rich experience of industry and academics for more than 23 years till date, he has observed cases where leaders exercised leadership style other than 'Situational', particularly 'Autocratic' due to which subordinates got demotivated and stopped contributing in a positive way towards benefits of the organization. Author has narrated three cases which highlight the significance of situational leadership style for improving effectiveness and productivity of subordinates. He has also focused on impact of autocratic style of leaders which proves to be unuseful in many situations. At the end, author also gave conclusions and suggestions based on findings.

Keywords:

***Situational; Leadership
Effectiveness;
Productivity; Crisis.***

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1.Introduction:-

There are three major leadership styles practiced by leaders across the globe namely, 'Autocratic', 'Democratic' and 'Laissez-Faire'. In the past we have witnessed that any particular style adopted by the leader is completely based on his or her aptitude. In the recent past, leaders have started realizing that, if you do not choose appropriate leadership style while dealing with your subordinates, it proves to be very tuff for him / her. In turn, it also affects the overall effectiveness and productivity of the organization. Let us see the concepts of these leadership styles including that of 'Situational' style of leadership which seems to be the best and suitable style of leadership or infact a key for becoming successful in an organization in today's ever changing environment.

1.1. Dr. Kurt Lewin's Three Dimentional Theory of Leadership.

In 1939, Dr. Kurt Lewin and his associates conducted research and identified different styles of leadership through their experiment on three dimentional theory of leadership. Let us study and understand these styles one by one.

1.1.1. Autocratic Leadership:-

Autocratic leaders, provide clear expectations to subordinates. This style strongly focuses on commanding by the leader and controlling the followers. There is also a separation between the leader and the subordinates or followers. Such leaders make decisions with less input or without input from the group. This style is usually viewed as controlling and dictatorial. It is observed that, this style is suitable during crisis management. However, this style creates hostile environments and even the followers don't like the dominating leader.

1.1.2. Democratic Leadership:-

Democratic leaders are considered as most effective leaders simply because they involve their subordinates while making any decision. They allow subordinates to give inputs but retain the final decision-making right with them. Subordinates feel involved in the process, get motivated and become creative. Sometimes democratic leaders are taken for granted by the subordinates because everyone's opinion is solicited.

1.1.3. Laissez-Faire Leadership:-

Leaders exercising this style of leadership have very minimum involvement in the decision making process. They normally allow their subordinates to take the decision and own up the responsibility for the decision taken by them. There is very little or no guidance at all. This style is useful where highly qualified subordinates are working in the organization. Leaders exercising this style give birth to improperly defined roles and de-motivation among subordinates.

1.1.4. Situational Leadership:-

This style of leadership is very popular contingency theory. According to this style; leadership is a function of an effective leader, who adopts the appropriate style according to the situation after assessing it correctly. This style is observed as flexible, influential and also alter situation as per requirements. This style provides benefits to subordinates and organization beyond imagination.

2.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:-

2.1.Objectives for the present research paper:-

The research paper objectives are as follows:-

1. To study the concepts of 'Leadership Styles'.
2. To study the impact of 'Situational Leadership style' on effectiveness and productivity of subordinates.

2.2.Research methodology adopted for the present research paper:-

Let us go through the research methodology adopted for the present research paper.

1. The present research is completely based on primary data.
2. The author has discussed three cases here on the basis of his close observations in different organizations during past some years.
3. The author has formed his personal views after analysing these cases.

2.3. Sources of primary data:-

The author has got rich experience of 23 years in industry and academics. He has observed many cases very closely during his interactions in different organizations. The present research paper is attempting to highlight some of the selective cases; and hence, *Observation* is a source of primary data for the present research paper.

3. PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS:-

Let us focus and understand these cases in detail in the present section of the research paper. These cases will provide complete information about the incidences and the ill effects when leader does not use 'Situational' style of leadership while dealing with the subordinates.

3.1. Case I:-

Mr. Gopal Kulkarni, highly qualified employee working with renowned industry in the marketing department as a 'Marketing Executive'. He was new and hence needed some guidance and support from seniors in the department. In fact, some negligible mistakes were committed by him during last six months. In a bi-annual progress meeting, Marketing Manager, Mr. Wilson Joseph, normally believes in autocratic style of leadership, threatened all his subordinates as usual and said that, whoever is not performing good or not achieving the target will be thrown out of the organization. Mr. Gopal Kulkarni, a poor fellow developed a feeling of insecurity and after such repeated statements of Mr. Joseph. Subsequently, Mr. Gopal stopped coming to the office. According to Mr. Ramesh Jadhav, Assistant Manager (Marketing), (Immediate superior of Mr. Gopal Kulkarni), Mr. Gopal was very sincere and punctual employee of the department. He was actually very honest and loyal employee of the department as many others opined. Subsequently some more subordinates left the organization due to feeling of insecurity.

3.2. Case II:-

Mr. Anil Pardeshi was working as Assistant Officer in HR department in a manufacturing company since last two years. Mr. Johnson, HR Manager, also had autocratic style of leadership, very often, used to threaten his subordinates by saying, "Non-performer will be kicked out". Due to this kind of style of Mr. Johnson, every one in the department was feeling insecure and within

a short span of time 4 out of 5 subordinates of the department left the job. Then he hired new staff on urgent basis, but subsequently they also left the company, in turn there was no employee stability in the department.

3.3.Case III:-

Mr. Abhijeet Mahankal joined as a 'Head' of R & D department of a company. Departmental subordinates were behaving very cautiously with him due to the bad experience of earlier 'Head' R & D, who was asked to quit because of his autocratic style of leadership. Mr. Abhijeet conducted a meeting and assured all of them that, they will be assigned tasks after understanding their interests, capabilities etc. He also urged them to have faith in each other. Subsequently, due to his style of leadership everyone was happy with him. Mr. Abhijeet started praising employees on completion of targets. He also used to deal with everyone differently; taking in to consideration of subordinate's capabilities. This turned out to be a magic and within the period of one year the department started shining among all other departments. Presently, all subordinates of the department are motivated and ready to work beyond their normal working hours, because subordinates' needs, interests and capabilities etc; well respected by the leader. One can easily point out the increased amount of effectiveness and productivity among subordinates and the main reason is a leader with 'Situational' style of leadership. It is needless to say, subordinates also not thinking of leaving the job.

4.FINDING :-

After looking at these three cases, we come to know that in these cases two leaders adopting autocratic style of leadership were not accepted as a leader by the subordinates. Impact of this can be observed in both the cases that, good subordinates left the organization. Whereas, in third case, leader adopted situational leadership style and due to which subordinates were happily working even for extra hours in the organization. In such healthy environment we have observed increased amount of effectiveness and productivity of subordinates, because a subordinate needs, interests and capabilities etc. well respected by the leader.

5.CONCLUSION:-

Based on these cases and objectives of the present research paper, we may conclude as below:-

1. We could study and understand the concepts of 'Leadership Styles' such as 'Autocratic', 'Democratic', 'Laissez-Faire' and 'Situational'.
2. If we look at the impact of these leadership styles w.r.t. case no. I and II, leaders were exercising autocratic leadership style. Subordinates working under these leaders were not feeling secured and they left the organization. In turn, there was no stability among the subordinates. Whereas, in case no. III, the leader has adopted 'Situational' style of leadership, which is very helpful for maintaining healthy environment, employee stability and in enhancing overall effectiveness and productivity of subordinates. It is needless to mention that, credit goes to the leader exercising 'Situational' leadership style.

6.SUGGESTION:-

Author would like to give suggestion to all managers, heading department that, they should adopt 'Situational' leadership style where he / she can deal with everyone differently. This will concentrate on the subordinates capabilities, needs, interests etc. while assigning jobs to them. It will create healthy environment in the organization and maintain employee stability, enhance overall effectiveness and productivity of the subordinates.

7.RESEARCH PAPER LIMITATIONS:-

1. Please note that, inferences drawn in this research paper are based on personal views and opinions, thus, readers may not be in agreement with all the views and opinions expressed here.

8.SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:-

While writing this research paper, author has realised that, there is a scope for future research in depth on following topics:-

1. Is this 'Situational' style of leadership really proving to be fruitful in every sector of today's ever changing business environment?
2. What are the basic requirements of an organization for practicing such 'Situational' leadership style?

FOOT NOTES:-

1. These incidences are real in nature.
2. Names of the individual and organizations are fictitious in nature for maintaining confidentiality.

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