



# History of Organizational Theory

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## ABSTRACT

*Throughout history, people have been captivated with the ways in which leaders sway groups of people, organizations, and even governments to fulfill certain objectives and to meet specific goals. This captivation increased researchers' desire to understand and improve effective leadership and resulted in a vast amount of literature on the subject.*

**Keywords:** Situational Leadership Theory, Leadership styles, Organizational Theory, History of Organizational Behavior Theory.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Situational Leadership Theory shows the various stages of development between a leader and a subordinate in a controlled environment with variable situations that are crucial to subordinate readiness levels. Leaders must be able to effectively navigate the variable situations while maintaining a steadfast course toward accomplishing required goals. Thus, they have become quite accustomed to using many non-coercive influences to guide members of workgroups toward shared objectives and common goals within an organization.

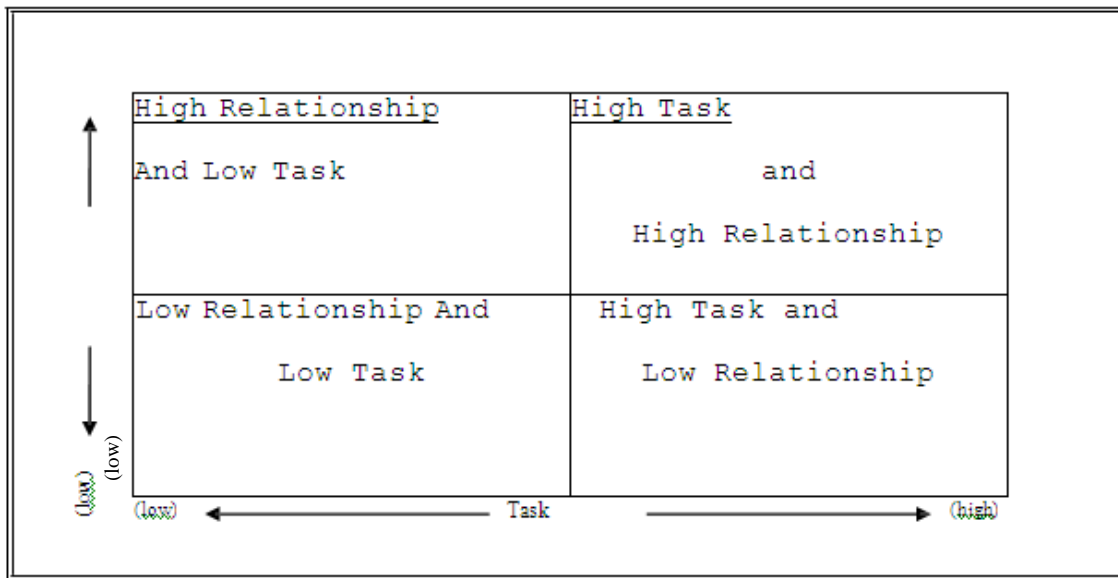
Leaders often boost subordinate workers feelings of personal ownership and responsibility for the particular service or product they help provide or produce. This sort of leadership has become effective, as more and more workers find themselves in job situations that require them to be self-directed. Because of the need for the more self-motivated type worker, many leaders have had to evaluate their leadership skills and abilities. The importance of leadership in the private and public sector has resulted in a large volume of research, which attempts to understand and explain leadership. Gibb (1969) identifies almost a thousand studies on effective leadership, and the field has continued to grow during the last 30 years. A more recent review (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994) includes some 100 articles published since 1969.

The study of leadership has been and continues to be a dominant part of the literature on management and organization behavior. A review of scholarly research introduces multiple variations of leadership patterns varying from individual traits; behaviors; interaction patterns; role relationships; follower perceptions; influence over followers; influence on task goals; as well as influence on the organizations culture as a whole. These approaches to leadership are each embedded with conceptual weaknesses and a dearth of cogent empirical evidence (Yuki, 1989, p. 87).

Although the understanding of leadership has been evasive, significant progress has been made in the study of leadership traits, behavior, power, and situational factors (Yuki, 1989). Leadership styles are now being examined with an emphasis on keeping the variable situations that must be overcome in mind, while simultaneously meeting required goals. This means that leadership has to be viewed as a multi-faceted responsibility where a leader's power, influence, and behavior are used favorably and simultaneously, yet intermittently, as the studies below well indicate.

## 2. OHIO STATE LEADERSHIP STUDIES

The Ohio State University leadership studies focus specifically on leadership behaviors. The studies initiated in 1945 by the Bureau of Business Research at Ohio State University found that leadership styles vary considerably among leaders (Hersey, et al. 1996). The leadership studies conducted are responsible for isolating two independent dimensions of leadership behavior and refers to them as initiating structure and consideration. These two dimensions are identified as a result of a series of 150 questions attempting to describe how a leader behaves (Korman, 1966). The questionnaire is entitled the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) (Korman, 1966). Figure 1 show quadrants were developed for initiating structure and consideration.



**Figure 1:** The Ohio State University Leadership Quadrants

**Source:** J.K. Hemphill, *Leader Behavior Description* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1950)

### 3. University of Michigan Leadership Studies

The Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan attempts to approach the study of leadership by locating clusters of characteristics that seem to be related to each other and to various indicators of effectiveness. The studies identify two concepts called the employee centered leadership style and the job-centered leadership style (Hersey et al., 1996). Leaders who are described as employee-centered emphasize the relationship aspect of their job. This type of leader places importance on relationships conjunction with job effectiveness (Reddin, 1967). He or she believes that it is important to take an interest in everyone, respecting his or her individuality and personal needs. Job-centered leaders emphasize production and the technical aspects of the job. They tend to relate task orientation and technical skill with job effectiveness; employees are seen as tools to accomplish the goals of the organization (Hersey et al., 2001).

The conclusions of the University of Michigan leadership studies are that: (a) more effective leaders tend to give employees support and satisfy employees' needs, (b) they adopt the methods of group supervision and strategy, and (c) they tend to set behavior-oriented goals. Considering the drawbacks of these conclusions, this research does not consider situational variables. There is no evidence to show that leader behavior does change in different situations (Hersey et al., 2001). Behavioral theories use leader behavior as a dependent variable and study its relationship with organizational effectiveness and task satisfaction. The common problem the in Ohio State University and University of Michigan leadership studies is the lack of concern for the situational factors. Effective leadership takes place in certain situations or environments; therefore, situational variables are a necessary factor to consider. Because of the methodological weakness of behavioral theories, situational leadership theories emerged during the 1960s (Hersey et al., 2001).

### 4. Two Independent Dimensions of Leadership

Initiation structure concerns planning as well as organizing the work and tasks of others (Reddin, 1970). This factor is descriptive of the extent that a leader goes in initiating and organizing the activities of a group to define the way the work is to be done. Initiation structure includes insisting that the group maintains performance standards, establishes timetables for accomplishment of tasks, and meets deadlines. The leader decides in explicit detail what needs to be done and how it should be done. The leader establishes a chain of command with clear lines of communication and clear patterns of work organization. The support provided by the leader is directed towards defining and structuring the efforts of subordinates (Bass & Stodgill, 1990). Consideration is concerned with the leader establishing and maintaining relationships (Reddin, 1970). This factor describes the extent to which a leader displays concern for the welfare of the other members of the group. This includes expressing appreciation for good work, stressing the importance of job satisfaction, maintaining and strengthening the self-esteem of subordinates by treating them as equals, making special efforts to help subordinates feel at ease, being easy to approach, putting subordinates' suggestions into operation, and obtaining subordinates' approval on important matters before going ahead. This leader focuses on building relationships, establishing friendships, building mutual trust, and demonstrating interpersonal warmth (Bass & Stodgill, 1990).



### 5.3-D Management Style Theory

Reddin (1970) developed his 3-Dimensional Theory of Leadership Effectiveness (3-D Theory) from the two central elements of leadership behavior produced by the Ohio State University Leadership Studies. Reddin developed a four style typology of task and relationship orientation from these two elements of behavior. The essence of 3-D Theory is that the two main elements of leader behavior are tasks to be accomplished and the relationships with the people who carry out the tasks. Coordinating tasks, leaders may emphasize task or relationship behavior in small or large amounts. Additional aspects of the 3-D Theory are (a) separated style, b) dedicated style, (c) related style and (d) integrated style. Separated styles consist of low task and low relationship orientation. Thus, it is separated from both task orientation and relationship orientation. The dedicated style describes leaders that use high task orientation, but low relationship orientation. The related style describes high relationship orientation and low task orientation, and the integrated style combines a high amount of task and relationship orientation.

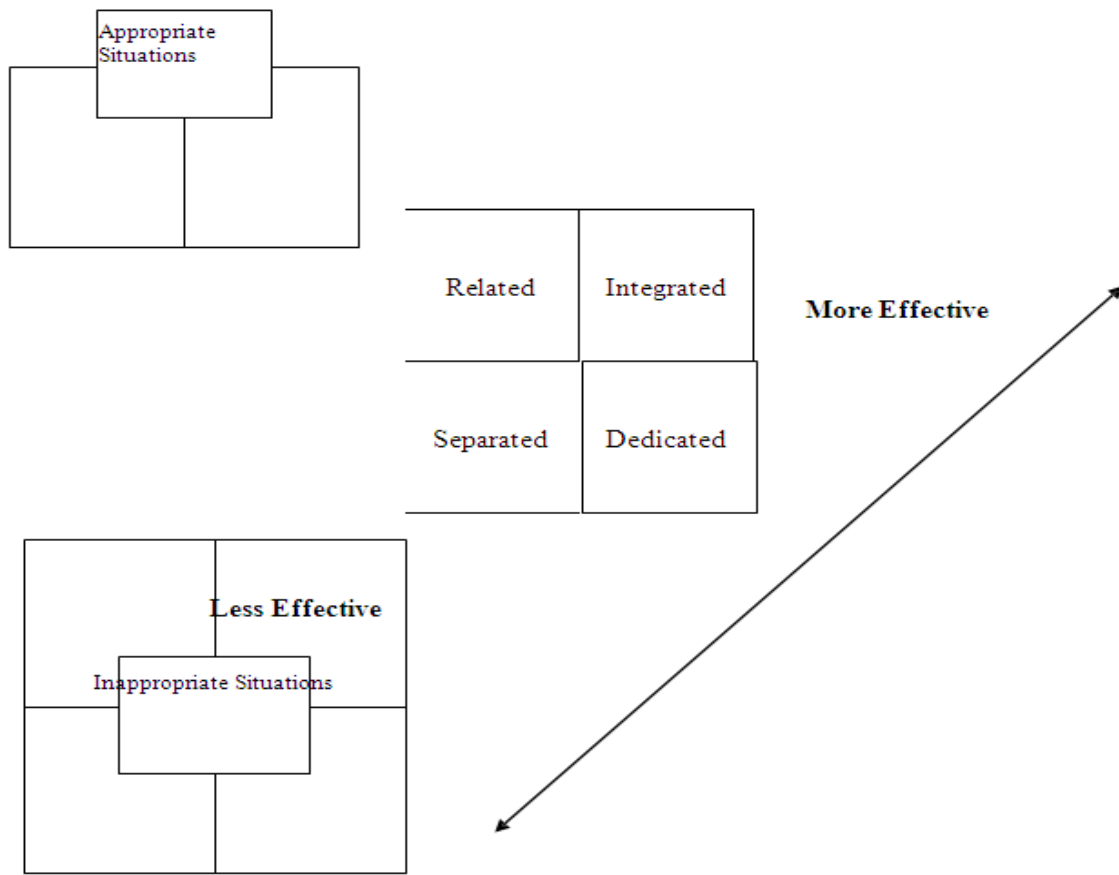
According to Reddin (1967) neither task nor relationship orientation can be considered effective or ineffective until the third dimension, behavior demands of the given situation is added. The effectiveness of the leader is determined by the appropriateness of the leader's task and relationship orientation to the demands of the situation. Thus, a leader that displays a no task or relationship orientation style could be considered effective if that is what the situation requires. This is true for each of the four typologies identified. Each style could be effective or ineffective depending on the situation. As a result, Reddin expands the four basic styles of typology to 12 by adding four task and relationship behaviors that are considered less effective

and four that are considered more effective based on their appropriateness to the situation (Reddin, 1970). The effectiveness of the leader's task and relationship orientation is based on the leader's ability to adjust the level of task and relationship behavior to the demands of the situation (Reddin, 1967). No discrete combination of task and relationship orientation is considered more effective than another. Reddin posits that the effectiveness of any task and relationship behavior is dependent on the appropriateness of behavior to the demands of the situation (Reddin, 1970).

According to Reddin (1970), to be effective a leader needs to know how to read situations. A situation is comprised of five independent, all-inclusive elements consisting of organization, information, technology, subordinates, and superiors (Reddin, 1970). Though he does not list the leader as one of the situational elements, the leader is part of the situation. It is the appropriateness of the leader's behavior to the situational demands that determines the effectiveness of the leader's task and relationship style. Three-D Theory is considered a situational theory that focuses on both the leader and the follower (Reddin, 1970). Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (1969), in their life theory of leadership, extend Reddin's leadership findings by suggesting that leader effectiveness is dependent upon the readiness level of the follower. "Situational leadership is based on an interplay among (1) the amount of guidance and direction (task behavior) a leader gives; (2) the amount of socioemotional support (relationship behavior) a leader provides; and (3) the readiness level that followers exhibit in performing a specific task, function, or objective" (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 1996

p. 442). The authors concur that all situational elements are significant in influencing the leader's behavior. However, emphasis is directed toward the leader's behavior with his or her followers (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 1996). Leader and follower relationships should not focus solely on hierarchical relationships (superior and subordinate), but should include all organizational relationships (superiors, subordinates, and coworkers) (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 1996). In the domain of the psychology of power, these hierarchical relationships can often weaken an organization as the desire for short-term gains can tend to dominate the consideration of long-term benefits (Kets de Vries, Loper & Doyle, 1994).

Since situational theory reasons no one best way to influence people exists, Hersey and Blanchard infer that the leadership style that should be applied to a given situation is dependent upon the readiness level of the follower (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 1996). The authors define leadership style as the behavior of the leader as perceived by the follower" (Hersey et al., 1996, p. 166). Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (1996) examine leader behavior using the two separate and distinctive dimensions previously developed from the Ohio State leadership studies and expanded by Reddin's (1967) 3-D Theory. Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (1996) created a model (Figure 2) that resembles the four quadrants advanced by the Ohio State University studies.



**Figure 2:** Reddin's complete 3-D Leadership Style

Source: Adapted from William J. Reddin (1970) *Managerial Effectiveness* McGraw Hill Publishers New York.

They used the terms, task behavior to represent the initiation of structure dimension and relationship behavior to represent consideration dimension. The four quadrants represent one of four leadership styles. Each leadership style describes a behavior pattern that a person will use when attempting to influence another. The four basic leadership styles are labeled high task and high relationship, high task and low relationship, low task and high relationship, and low task and low relationship.

## 6. Contingency Theory

Fiedler (1967) and Fiedler, Chemers, and Mahar, (1977) agree that an effective leader will manage both the employee relations and task requirements of the organization. Fiedler (1967) developed the contingency theory of leadership effectiveness suggesting that the performance of a group is dependent on the interaction of leadership style and situational favorableness. He defines the favorableness of a situation as "the degree to which the situation enables the leader to exert his influence over this group" (Fiedler, 1967, p.13). There are three major situational variables, which seem to determine whether a given situation is favorable to leaders. These include (a) the leader's personal relationship with the member of the group, (b) the amount of structure that the group has been given, and (c) the power and authority that the position provides (Fiedler, 1967).

Fiedler operationalizes the measurement of leader behavior through an instrument he calls the Least Preferred Co-Worker Scale (LPC). Using this instrument, respondents are asked to describe one person with whom they have worked with very well, as well as one person with whom they have worked very poorly. The questionnaire asks respondents to rank the relationships on several polar scales. A total of all of the scale scores equals the LPC score. A manager who exhibits a low LPC score represents an individual with a task orientation while a high LPC score indicative of a person who is relationship oriented (Fiedler, 1967).

The theory attempts to provide an understanding of the relationship that exists between an effective leadership style and the readiness level of the group. Readiness is the ability the follower has to take responsibility for his or her actions. Subordinate readiness moderates the two primary aspects of leadership, task and relationship and leader effectiveness (Blank, Weitzel, & Green, 1990).

According to contingency theory, as the level of readiness of the follower continues to increase, the demand for structure facilitation on the part of the leader decreases, as does the need for the leader to interact with the group for socio-emotional support (Blank, Weitzel, & Green, 1990).

Another element labeled subordinate readiness also must be taken into account. Readiness is defined as the extent to which a follower has the ability and willingness to accomplish a specific task (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 1996). It is the responsibility of the leader to assess not only the readiness of the individual followers, but also of the group as a whole.

All persons tend to be in varying states of readiness, so the leader must therefore possess the skills to assess the readiness level of the individual follower and assign responsibilities accordingly so that the entire group accomplishes all required assignments (Nadler & Tushman, 1990). These skills include setting goal, establishing standards, defining roles, and assigning responsibilities.

The skills needed to set goals, establish standards, define roles, and assign responsibilities are considered structuring skills and are fundamental to effective leadership (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 1996).

Figure 3 illustrates appropriate leadership styles corresponding to the four levels of readiness, according to Hersey's, Blanchard's, and Johnson's (2001) Situational Leadership Model. The four levels of follower readiness are matched to the four situational leadership styles required by the followers.

READINESS LEVEL	APPROPRIATE STYLE
R1 Low readiness Unable and unwilling or insecure	S1 Telling High task and low relationship behavior
R2 Low to Moderate readiness Unable but willing or confident	S2 Selling High task and high relationship behavior
R3 Moderate to high readiness Able but unwilling or insecure	S3 Participating High relationship and low task behavior
R4 High readiness Able competent and willing confident	S4 Delegating Low relationship and low task behavior

R1	S1 high	S2 2 <sup>na</sup>	S3 3 <sup>ra</sup>	S4 low probability	R2	S2 high	S1
2 <sup>na</sup>	S3 2 <sup>na</sup>	S4 low probability					
2 <sup>nd</sup>	R3	S3 high	S2	S4 2 <sup>nd</sup>		S1 low probability	
2 <sup>nd</sup>	R4	S4 high	S3	S2 3 <sup>rd</sup>		S1 low probability	

**Figure 3:** Leadership styles appropriate for various Readiness Levels. Source: Adapted from Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard, LEAD Questionnaires and Manual (2001).

### 7. Path-Goal Theory

According to the Path-Goal Theory (House & Mitchell, 1974), a leader influences a follower's work-goal accomplishment through "...delegating and assigning tasks (initiating structure) and being supportive and considerate of followers needs (possessing an empathic understanding)" (p. 81). Before a follower completes a task, the follower naturally considers the "...path instrumentality concerning the rewards forthcoming as a result of work-goal accomplishment" (House, 1971, p. 322). When a follower "...projects that engaging in certain behavior will result in a desired reward they will indeed engage in that behavior" (House, 1971, p. 325). The follower's performance is further influenced by the followers "...ability to accomplish the task, environmental barriers to completing the task, and the support necessary from others to complete the task" (House, 1971, p. 325). The leader is the one who determines the extent to which work- goal (task) accomplishment will be "...recognized and rewarded with such intrinsic and external rewards as financial increases, promotion, assignment of more interesting tasks or opportunities for personal growth and development" (House, 1971, p. 330).

According to House (1971, p. 331), the level of task clarity moderates the amount of leader initiating structure and consideration. The more ambiguous the task is, the greater is the amount of structure the leader should exhibit.



## 8. Immaturity-Maturity Theory

While Chris Argyris was at Yale, he examined industrial organizations to determine what affect management practices have had on individual behavior and personal growth within the work environment. Argyris (1957) studied personality trait growth from childhood to adulthood. He finds that there are seven characteristics of personality trait growth. These are:

1. People approach an active state of adulthood from a passive state of childhood.
2. People approach an independent state of adulthood from a dependent state of childhood.
3. People approach a flexible state of adulthood from an inflexible state of childhood.
4. People approach ever-lasting and stable interests in adulthood from capricious and shallow interests in childhood.
5. People approach a broad mind of adulthood from a narrow mind of childhood.
6. People approach equal status with others in adulthood from the subordinate status in family and society in childhood.
7. People approach self-understanding and self-control in adulthood from a lack of rational self- understanding in childhood.

The characteristics discussed above from Immaturity Maturity (IM) readiness to readiness are healthy and on a continuum. They are inhibited and limited by culture and norms. Argyris states most people who develop adult-level performance skills or abilities, are unable to be developed to full readiness (Hersey et al. 2001).

Hersey and Blanchard (1996) develop the readiness concepts of Situational Leadership Theory from Argyris' Maturity-IM Readiness Theory. They define readiness as the extent to which a follower has the ability and willingness to take responsibility for and to accomplish a specific task. According to Zander, Thomas and Natsoulas (1960) the quality of readiness includes (a) high and achieved goals, (b) concern for completion of the task rather than for rewards and (c) expectation of feedback from the task rather than from the attitude. The degree of accomplishment-task, relative readiness influences follower willingness to be engaged in a challenging task at a medium-high level (Hersey et al., 2001).

## 9. Situational Leadership Theory

Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (1996, 2001) initially propose a Life Cycle Theory of Leadership and later changed the name to Situational Leadership Theory. The theory is an expanded combination of the Managerial Grid Model (Blake & Mouton, 1984), the 3-D Theory of Management (Reddin, 1970), and the Readiness-IM Theory (Argyris, 1957). Situational Leadership Theory emphasizes the importance of employee characteristics when a leader chooses a leadership style. Its basic concepts, the model, and readiness elements are discussed below.

## 10. Basic Concepts

After Hersey and Blanchard (1996) reviewed the Ohio State University studies of task and relationship oriented leadership behavior, they argue that in the future, researchers not only should recognize these determinant environmental factors, but they should develop a systematic model of environmental differences related to leadership behavior. At the same time, they argue that there is a curvilinear rather than linear relationship between leader task and relationship-oriented behavior and other variables. Situational Leadership Theory exhibits a curvilinear relationship based on task oriented leader behavior, relationship-oriented leader behavior, and readiness (Hersey et al., 2001).

Hersey and Blanchard (1996) add the follower readiness level to the two leader behavior dimensions of task orientation and relationship orientation to construct a three-dimension theory. They state that the readiness level of group members is an effective and important factor that determines leadership style. Readiness level does not mean readiness characteristics of an individual or groups required for task accomplishment. The leader evaluates the individual and group readiness levels. For example, a manager may find that one of the subordinates in his or her department has advanced to a particular level of readiness, while another subordinate has achieved a different readiness level. The manager should then adopt different leadership styles to work with the two subordinates. When handing over tasks to a subordinate with low readiness, the manager should have clarified structure, instructed carefully and specifically, and provided supervision.

Working with a subordinate who is shy and insecure, the manager should adopt a relationship-oriented leader behavior. This emphasizes good interaction with the follower, supporting and helping him or her to develop a good interpersonal relationship with his or her group, to be concerned with and to take care of personnel needs. If the leadership style and readiness level matches, organizational effectiveness is achieved (Hersey et al., 2001).

Hersey and Blanchard (1996) use task behavior and relationship behavior to describe concepts similar to initiating



**structure and consideration in the Ohio State University studies. These two behaviors make up four leadership styles:**

1. S1-Telling: This leadership style is characterized by above-average amounts of task behavior and below-average amounts of relationship behavior.
2. S2-Selling: This leadership style is characterized by above-average amounts of both task and relationship behavior.
3. S3-Participating: This leadership style is characterized by above-average amounts of relationship behavior and below-average amounts of task behavior.
4. S4-Delegating: This leadership style is characterized by below-average amounts of both relationship behavior and task behavior (Hersey et al., 2001). Readiness levels consist of different combinations of ability and willingness that people bring to each task.

**Responsibility consists of willingness and ability and can be divided into four levels. Each level represents a different combination of follower ability and willingness. The four levels are defined below:**

1. Unable and unwilling to take responsibility: The follower is unable, insecure, and lacks commitment and motivation.
2. Unable but willing to take responsibility: The follower lacks ability but is motivated and works hard.
3. Able but unwilling to take responsibility: The follower has the ability to perform a task but is not willing to use that ability.
4. Able and willing to take responsibility: The follower has the ability to perform and is committed or able and confident (Hersey et al., 2001, p. 177).

**Task-related readiness includes two factors:**

1. Job readiness: This relates to the techniques, knowledge, and ability necessary for the work in which a person engages, and
2. Psychological readiness: This relates to a person's self-confidence and self-respect. When people have high low job-related readiness, it means that they have high low job readiness and high low psychological readiness (Hersey et al., 2001).

The concept of readiness used in the Situational Leadership Theory refers to job-related readiness. Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) divide readiness into four levels where (a) R1 equals low job readiness and low psychological readiness, (b) R2 equals low job readiness but high psychological readiness, (c) R3 equals high job readiness and low psychological readiness, and (d) R4 equals high job readiness and high psychological readiness (Hersey et al., 2001).

### **11. The Basic Model**

The Situational Leadership Model uses a combination of four different job-related readiness levels and four basic leadership styles. The model can be used to assess a follower's behavior and to select the most effective leadership style. For example, two groups of followers with readiness for accomplishing tasks are at two extremes respectively. One group has the necessary knowledge, techniques, confidence, and the dedication to being the R4 level but another group does not; they belong at the R1 level. When a leader faces R4 followers who have high ability and willingness to engage in a task, the leader does not have to give them instruction or use supportive behavior. They are able and willing to accomplish the task; the leader may leave them alone. The only thing the leader should do is to supervise on a regular basis to make sure that everything is under control. The followers need comments from the leader to make sure that their devotion has been noticed and appreciated (Hersey et al., 2001).

When a leader has R1 followers who have no ability and willingness to engage in a task, the leader should clearly tell them what, when, how, and where to accomplish the task. This does not mean that the leader does not need to use relationship-oriented leader behavior. The leader still needs to be supportive and to engage in two-way communication in order to help followers understand instructions. The most successful leadership style is when a high amount of task-oriented behavior and a low amount of relationship-oriented behavior is exhibited. This is equivalent to the S1 leadership style (Hersey et al., 2001).

The job-related readiness of some people falls between the two extremes and is labeled unable but willing (R2). These people are not capable; they need leader guidance and instruction. Because they are trying and working hard, the leader should support their determination. In this case, the most successful leadership style is a high amount of task-oriented behavior and relationship-oriented behavior, using the S2 leadership style (Hersey et al., 2001).

Readiness level 3 followers are well-equipped with the necessary knowledge and techniques to accomplish the task but



lack confidence or motivation. They do not need a lot of guidance and instruction, because they know how to complete the task. What they do need is encouragement to build their confidence or discussions with the leader to work things out or both. In this case, the most successful leadership style is a low amount of task-oriented behavior and high amount of relationship-oriented behavior or the S3 leadership style (Hersey et al., 2001).

The complete Situational Leadership Model developed by Hersey and Blanchard in the late 1960's, consists of four job-related readiness levels and four leadership styles.

**These are listed below:**

1. Leadership Style 1 (high task-and low relationship- oriented behavior) matched with low readiness.
2. Leadership Style 2 (high task- and high relationship-oriented behavior) matched with low and medium readiness.
3. Leadership Style 3 (low task-and high relationship- oriented behavior) matched with medium and high readiness.
4. Leadership Style 4 (low task-and low relationship- oriented behavior) in match with high readiness (Hersey et al., 2001, p. 182).

## 12. Research Testing the Theory

Hambleton and Gumpert (1982) conducted a survey of the leadership styles used by 159 managers (leaders) as rated by their subordinate (followers). According to Hambleton and Gumpert (1982) the results show that 90% of the managers who were considered high performers were rated by subordinates as using a selling (high consideration and high task) or participating (high consideration and low task) leadership style. This study supports that Hersey's, Blanchard's, and Johnson's (1996) Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) when applied correctly results in significant gain in job performance (Hambleton & Gumpert, 1982). However, the leader style-follower readiness level only matched 29% of the time (Hambleton & Gumpert, 1982).

Hambleton and Gumpert (1982) suggest that "little is known about the requirements for effective leadership" (p.238) and that the results of Hersey's and Blanchard's (1988) SLT are promising. They also encourage further research to try and replicate the findings.

Graeff (1983) examine Hersey's, Blanchard's and Johnson's (1988) Leader Effectiveness Adaptability Description "...diagnostic instrument for measuring leader style, style range, and effectiveness" (p. 289) and concludes that the instrument is replete with a contradiction that significantly diminishes the predictive utility of the instrument. The issue of a reliable diagnostic instrument is a recurring problem in testing SLT. Graeff (1983) identifies existing inconsistencies or contradictions in Hersey's and Blanchard's (1988) LEAD Instrument for measuring leader style. These inconsistencies contribute to the model's lack of utility (Graeff, 1983). Further research of the theory should include use of reliable diagnostic instruments.

Vecchio (1987) conducts one of the "...first comprehensive tests of the principles of Situational Leadership Theory" (p.448). Vecchio studied 303 high school teachers (followers) and 14 high school principals (leaders) and found partial support for the SLT. The study provides strong support for SLT in the area of low follower readiness requiring high levels of task direction from the leader (Vecchio, 1987). This is particularly valid for newly hired teachers. The findings also indicate that followers at higher levels of readiness respond well to moderate levels of task direction and higher amounts of consideration (Vecchio, 1987). For teachers at the highest level of readiness the theory is not predictive, as the amount of task direction is appropriate. However, there is a need for greater consideration than the leaders exhibited (Vecchio, 1987). From the findings, Vecchio suggests that another factor, job category, may be predictive of follower readiness. In this view, low to high levels of readiness are representative of low to high levels of job categories (Vecchio, 1987).

Followers with low levels of readiness held jobs that required less skill. As the degree of skill increased so did the level of follower readiness. Vecchio (1987) suggests, "SLT should be studied with an across-jobs perspective and recognizing that high levels of follower readiness may obviate the need for supervision rather than specifying a particular style of supervision" (p. 450). Goodson, McGee, and Cashman (1989) go one step further than Vecchio (1987) in testing Hersey's Blanchard's and Johnson's SLT. The purpose of their study is to test the prescriptions for effective leadership as specified in Hersey's and Blanchard's (1988) SLT. In Goodson et al study (1989) interactive effects of leadership style and follower readiness on employee perception and attitude are examined. The specific prescriptions offered by the SLT regarding best, second-best, third-best, and least effective styles are tested for all four levels of subordinate readiness. The interaction between leader behavior (initiating structure and consideration) and follower readiness hypothesized by the SLT is not supported. No support was found for the best, second, third or least leadership style, but the findings are more consistent with results obtained in traditional leadership research.

Vecchio (1987) only studied the best matches of leader style and follower readiness and those that Hersey and Blanchard state have the highest probability of success. Goodson, McGee, and Cashman (1989) tested all four styles for each of the four levels of follower readiness. Their study of 450 employees (followers) and 85 store managers (leaders)





of a national retail chain indicated that “regardless of the style predicted to be best, second-best, third-best, and least at any level of follower readiness selling and participative styles were consistently associated with higher levels of satisfaction, while telling and delegating were associated with lower levels of satisfaction” (Goodson, McGee & Cashman, 1989, p. 450). An interesting aspect of Goodson’s, McGee’s and Cashman’s study is that task behaviors, when combined with supportive behaviors, produce more positive outcomes suggesting that “consideration was appropriate for every level of follower readiness” (p. 450). The study further confirms that adaptive behavior is a necessary function of effective leadership (Goodson, McGee & Cashman, 1989).

Goodson’s, McGee’s and Cashman’s (1989) findings suggest that followers may need high amounts of consideration regardless of their readiness level. They state that the “...implications of their findings [are] unique to their own sample and the results may not apply to employees in other types of organizations” (Goodson, McGee & Cashman, 1989, p. 458). This warrants further research.

Blank, Weitzel, and Green (1990) examine Hersey’s, Blanchard’s, and Johnson’s (1988) SLT variable of follower readiness to determine whether there is a “...difference in leader effectiveness based on the prescribed relationship of leader style and follower readiness” (p.584). Their study examines the underlying assumptions regarding the theory prescriptions that subordinates’ readiness moderates the relationship of leader task and relationship behaviors with indication of leader effectiveness. The results of their study of 27 residential hall directors (leaders) of 353 residential advisors (subordinates) does not support the basic underlying assumption of Hersey’s and Blanchard’s SLT that the readiness level of the follower is predictive of the amount of task and relationship behavior that the leader discharges (Blank, Weitzel & Green, 1990). Their results do support that follower readiness is “...an important situational variable to be considered in leadership research” (Blank, Weitzel & Green 1990, p. 588).

Blank, Weitzel and Green (1990) suggest “more research is needed to clarify the degree of contribution that SLT makes to the understanding of leadership” (p.596). Specifically, the situational variable of follower readiness is the only variable on which Hersey and Blanchard focus, but there are other situational factors such as position power, leader-member relations, etc. that should be the subject of further research (Blank, Weitzel, & Green, 1990). Norris and Vecchio (1992) tested Hersey and Banchard’s SLT using 91 nurses. The results of their study provide little support for predicting leader behavior founded on worker readiness levels. However, Norris and Vecchio deduce that although the elements of structure and consideration are well established, a problem exists in the use of reliable instruments to measure leadership style.

Correspondingly, the measurement of the readiness levels of workers is equally as difficult since it is not as well established. Norris and Vecchio (1992) suggest that the “...best form for testing SLT may be on jobs that have relatively few task and that are highly correlated in terms of performance” (p.334). In their findings, the relationship between performance and leader-member exchange, performance and maturity, and performance and satisfaction with supervision approximate the correlation that were reported by subordinates. The results of the hierarchical regression analyses are presented for each of the three criteria. The inclusion of the three-way interaction term did not significantly increase the proportion of criterion variance that could be accounted for. In short, none of the criteria provide support for the hypothesized three-way interaction. Mike Smith (1991) examined the training of situational leadership with engineering managers.

The study focuses on 18 hours of a leadership course, which consisted of 12 hours of lecture/discussion, six hours of data analysis, and various applications. Seven power bases are identified as potential means from which a leader can successfully influence behavior. The engineer managers present examples of effective use of each power base (Smith, 1991).

As in the distribution corporation, each manager/supervisor attended a situational leadership training class. Each year a four-hour refresher course is conducted to ensure effectiveness of the training. Cairns, Hollenback, Preziosi, and Snow (1998) focus on the interaction of the leader’s behavior and follower readiness and then measure it to determine leader effectiveness.

This study of SLT was conducted in an actual business environment in contrast to a great deal of previous leadership studies that focus on an academic laboratory setting (Kets de Vries et al., 1994). Their study consists of senior level leaders and followers in service and manufacturing businesses of large Fortune 100 companies. The results of the Cains et al study provided significant correlation coefficients which suggested that the observed independent variables are consistent with each other. Additionally, a summary of regression analyses shows the results of the hierarchical regression analysis with analysis on variance on the independent variables (initiating structure, consideration, and follower readiness) and the resultant examination of the significance of these three variables on the performance criteria. The results of omnibus tests revealed no statistical differences at the alpha.

Finally, results of partitioned tests indicate statistical differences at the high readiness level, but the mean differences are in the opposite direction of SLT. The mean differences at the low readiness level are in the direction of SLT. The study provided more understanding about SLT and the concept of matching. Vries, Roe, and Taillieu (1998) studied the impact of supervision leadership effectiveness on organizational behavior. They focus on two studies of insurance



agents in the Netherlands. Moderated regression analysis showed that need for supervision moderates the relationship between task-oriented leadership and work stress but not between task-oriented leadership and jobsatisfaction.

Miriam Johnson (1998) explored the SLT on staff interaction with children and youth in the child care industry and SLT effectiveness in residential group care settings. Four leadership styles were used to determine SLT effectiveness. According to her findings, the model has been criticized for assuming that each subordinate in the work group is functioning at the same level. Johnson suggested that in actual work situations the heterogeneity of follower's readiness might adversely affect a manager's ability to follow the prescriptions of the Situational Leadership Model. The benefits of the model are: (a) increased awareness by staff members of their own preferred leadership style and an interest in learning and practicing other styles; (b) appreciation of the value of others preferred styles; (c) increased sensitivity to the changing needs of clients, both as individuals and as groups; and (d) increased willingness on the part of staff members to adjust their behaviors to meet the changing needs of individual clients, and of client's groups.

York (1996) conducted an empirical examination of social workers in both leadership and clinical positions in a variety of social work agencies in two states. The objectives of his study were: (a) to determine the extent to which social workers placed emphasis upon support and delegation of responsibility in accordance with the propositions of the situational model, (b) to determine whether persons in organizational leadership positions differed from other social workers on their level of adherence to the propositions of this model, and (c) to determine whether persons with higher performance ratings differ from those with lower performance ratings on their level of adherence to the SLT model. Responses to York's (1996) survey tend to embrace the propositions of SLT model that are related to the delegation of decision responsibility and to reject the propositions related to supervisory support. Also, social workers in both leadership and clinical positions in two states were found to readily embrace two of the three propositions of the Situational Leadership Model that deals with the delegation of decision responsibility. They embrace, to a lesser extent, the third proposition regarding decision participation. Strongly supported is the idea that subordinates with high task readiness should be delegated more responsibility than those with either moderate task maturity or low task maturity. Supported to a lesser extent is the idea that staff with moderate task readiness should be delegated more responsibility than those with low task readiness. It was also found that compliance with the propositions of this model were not predicted by position level, supervisory performance rating, or the receipt of an above average payraise. Ireh and Bailey (1999) examined the relationships among school superintendents' leadership styles, style adaptability, and certain characteristics of school districts identified in the literature as contributing to the success or failure of planned change in schools. The relationship between leadership style adaptability and readiness of staff for organizational change are modestly related to district expenditure per pupil. The analyses from the first research question show that when acting singularly and in relationship with other predictor variables, only district expenditure per pupil was significantly, positively and linearly related to superintendents' leadership style adaptability (Ireh & Bailey, 1999).

The analysis of results from the second research question yielded no variables that were statistically significant related to superintendents' tendency to use as their predominant leadership style either the telling (S1) or the selling (S2) leadership style. The results of a multiple regression indicated that years of experience as an administrator statistically, significantly contributes to their tendency to use the participating (S3) style of leadership.

Three variables, years of experience as an administrator, recruitment status, and type of school district, make statistically significant contributions to the prediction of the use the delegating (S4) style of leadership. A follow-up analysis was performed to see if selling and participating superintendents differed significantly with respect to 11 continuous and three dichotomous variables. The results showed no statistically significant difference between selling and participating superintendents on any of the independent variables. Superintendents in this study use participating and selling leadership styles in leading school employees through change implementation.

### **13. Summary**

The study of situational leadership factors has and continues to be the focus of many academic research studies (Abdul-Raheem, 1994). The literature demonstrates that Hersey's and Blanchard's (1988) SLT has been used extensively as a method of training managers. However, "more research is necessary to clarify the degree of contribution that SLT makes to the understanding of leadership" (Blank, Weitzel, & Green 1990, p. 589). Situational leadership opens the lines of communication between subordinate employees and management, causes feelings of worth (in regards to work environment) in subordinates, and makes it possible for personal and organizational goals to be accomplished through mutual agreement (Blanchard, 1994).

As the work force enters the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, innovative measures have been taken to allow management to become increasingly aware of the need to be effective in managing a smarter, sharper workforce. Public and private industries are increasingly using SLT to train managers to effectively manage a changing workforce.



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