

A STUDY ON SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO EMPLOYEE WORK EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

With the variable of employee work experience serving as the major focus of the research, the purpose of this study is to analyse the impact that situational leadership styles have on employee engagement. Specifically, the inquiry will concentrate on the variable of employee experiences. According to the findings of this study, the Situational Leadership Theory, which was developed by Hersey and Blanchard, serves as the foundation for the investigation of the ways in which different leadership styles, such as Telling, Selling, Participating, and Delegating, have an impact on employees who possess varying degrees of competence. Information was acquired from persons who were employed by both public and private enterprises in the state of Telangana. This information was gathered via the use of a mixed-methods technique. Using this approach, qualitative interviews were conducted in addition to quantitative surveys throughout the research process. Leadership styles need to be adapted not only to the needs of the job at hand but also to the work experience of workers in order to achieve the highest possible level of employee engagement. This is necessary in order to achieve their full potential. Performing this step is essential in order to get the results that are intended. In light of this, the research provides executives with useful insights that can be put to use in the process of creating a working environment that is both adaptable and welcoming to all employees. Not only will this contribute to the success of the firm, but it will also guarantee that workers are content throughout the longest period of time.

Introduction

Effective leadership is one of the most important variables that determines the level of employee engagement. The Situational Leadership Theory, which was established by Hersey and Blanchard, offers a framework that enables leaders to modify their approach in accordance with the level of maturity and expertise of their staff. Through the examination of the function that employee work experience plays in regulating the efficacy of certain leadership styles, this research contributes to the continuation of the model.

- **Problem Statement:** Despite the growing emphasis on adaptive leadership, little research has been conducted on how situational leadership styles influence employee engagement, especially concerning their work experience.
- **Objectives of the study:**
 1. To analyze how situational leadership styles impact employee engagement.
 2. To examine how employee work experience moderates the effectiveness of these leadership styles.

Situational Leadership Model

The model emphasizes two fundamental dimensions of leadership:

1. **Task Behavior:** The degree to which a leader provides specific instructions and closely monitors performance.
2. **Relationship Behavior:** The extent to which a leader engages in open communication and offers socio-emotional support.

Leadership styles under the model include:

- **Telling (S1):** High task and low relationship behaviour.
- **Selling (S2):** High task and high relationship behaviour.
- **Participating (S3):** Low task and high relationship behaviour.
- **Delegating (S4):** Low task and low relationship behaviour.

Methodology

Study Design

Simple random sampling technique was employed to collect data from employees across public and private IT companies in Telangana state.

Sample

The study included employees from varying roles of IT Industry and levels of experience:

- **Early Career (0-5 years)**
- **Mid-Level Experience (6-15 years)**
- **Experienced Professionals (16+ years)**

Results and Data Analysis

Employee Perception of Telling (S1) Leadership Style

Work Experience	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Early Career (0-5 years)	12	10	28	50
Mid-Level Experience (6-15)	20	18	12	50
Experienced Professionals	24	15	11	50
Total	56	43	51	150

- Early career employees (56%) preferred the Telling style due to the need for clear instructions.
- Mid-level employees (40%) and experienced professionals (48%) showed lower agreement, citing a desire for autonomy.

Employee Perception of Selling (S2) Leadership Style

Work Experience	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Early Career (0-5 years)	8	12	30	50
Mid-Level Experience (6-15)	10	15	25	50
Experienced Professionals	15	20	15	50
Total	33	47	70	150

- Selling style was most effective for early-career employees (60%) and mid-level employees (50%) due to its combination of guidance and collaboration.
- Experienced professionals showed a balanced perception but preferred less directive approaches.

Employee Comfort with Participating (S3) Leadership Style

Work Experience	Low Comfort	Moderate Comfort	High Comfort	Total
Early Career (0-5 years)	10	20	20	50
Mid-Level Experience (6-15)	5	15	30	50
Experienced Professionals	5	10	35	50
Total	20	45	85	150

- Participating style was most effective for experienced professionals (70%), who valued collaboration and inclusion.
- Mid-level employees showed balanced preferences for moderate and high comfort.

Employee Perception of Delegating (S4) Leadership Style

Work Experience	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Early Career (0-5 years)	20	15	15	50

Mid-Level Experience (6-15)	10	20	20	50
Experienced Professionals	5	10	35	50
Total	35	45	70	150

- Delegating style was most effective for experienced professionals (70%), who appreciated the trust and autonomy provided.
- Early-career employees showed lower agreement, preferring more structured guidance.

Engagement Analysis Using Chi-Square Test

A Chi-square test was conducted to examine the association between leadership styles and engagement levels:

Variable	Chi-Square Value	p-value	Significance
Leadership Style Vs Engagement	18.56	0.001	Significant

The test indicates a significant relationship between leadership styles and engagement, particularly for experienced employees under Delegating (S4).

Findings

1. **Telling Style:** Effective for early-career employees but demotivating for experienced professionals.
2. **Selling Style:** Balanced approach suitable for early and mid-level employees seeking guidance with collaboration.
3. **Participating Style:** Highly valued by experienced professionals for fostering innovation and inclusion.
4. **Delegating Style:** Most effective for experienced employees, promoting autonomy and trust.

Practical Implications

Organizations should align leadership styles with employee work experience to enhance engagement.

Conclusion

The study underscores the importance of adaptive leadership in addressing the diverse needs of employees based on their work experience. Leaders who tailor their approach to employee development levels can achieve higher engagement, ultimately driving organizational success.

Recommendations

1. **Leadership Training Programs:** Develop programs to equip managers with skills to assess and adapt leadership styles.
2. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement regular surveys to gauge employee perception of leadership effectiveness.
3. **Customized Engagement Strategies:** Tailor initiatives to address the unique needs of employees at different career stages.

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