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Results of Testing Situational Leadership

Dr. Corinne Bates Professor Liberty University cabates1@liberty.edu, s10map@aol.com

KeyWords

Situational Leadership, Management, Hersey & Blanchard, Path Goal theory, 3rd Party Logistics, Support Group and Operations Group.

Abstract— This study provides a discussion of the survey data collected and summarizes the results of the data analysis. It identifies the research questions with respective hypotheses and analytical techniques used. The Center for Leadership Studies Inc. performed a statistical analysis using the 360-Degree Leadership Style Feedback, Composite Profile and the Style/Readiness Matrix software.

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The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of leadership style and the adaptability of the leader within a distribution organization. The process for achieving this included testing the Situational Leadership Theory. In this study, the researcher examined the leader's style and leader's style adaptability in a distribution organization. The purpose of the examination was to determine the extent of the perception of the leader's leadership style by the leaders' associates, superiors, and followers. According to Hersey et al. (2001), the theory for Situational Leadership proposes that as a leader moves up the various levels of leadership styles, he or she increases the relationship behavior of the followers' readiness levels. In this study, the researcher determined that a positive relationship does exist between subordinates' evaluation rating on leader's leadership style adaptability with the perception of the leader's leadership style adaptability. The results of this study, therefore, provide support for the Hersey and Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory. This chapter discusses the results of hypothesis testing, limitations of study, and the implications for future research.

Results of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1 Hoi: There is not a primary style of leadership in the distribution corporation. Hai: There is a primary style of leadership in the distribution corporation.

Hypothesis 2 Ho2: There is not a secondary leadership style in the distribution corporation. Ha2: There is a secondary leadership style in the distribution corporation. The primary leadership style that is used most frequently is the S-2, selling style. The second frequently used leadership style is the S-1 telling style. The findings revealed that the null hypothesis is rejected for both Hypotheses 1 and 2. It was established, based on the research that a primary and a secondary leadership style exists in the organization.

Over 75% of the leaders that were studied were categorized in the 1 - 2 style profile, which indicates that they tend to be able to raise and lower their relationship or supportive behavior, according to the Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) SLT. Further insight on this style from Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) is that these leaders also tend to feel uncomfortable unless they are calling the shots. They tend to feel comfort-

able when they are in control and providing structure and direction. This style tends to be effective with low to moderate levels of readiness. It is often an extremely effective style for leaders in crisis situations, where time is an extremely scarce resource. Leaders with this style, when crisis or time pressures are over, often are not able to develop people to their fullest potential.

Hypothesis 3 H0 3: There is no difference between the leader's perceptions of his or her leadership style adaptability compared with the perception ratings given by their peers, followers and bosses in the distribution corporation. Ha3: There is a difference between the leader's perceptions of his or her leadership style adaptability compared with the perception ratings given by their peers, followers, and bosses in the distribution corporation. Based on the findings, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there are differences in the perception of the leader's style adaptability compared to the perception of the follower's style adaptability, associated style adaptability, and boss style adaptability. The findings are based on the low correlation scores. The leader's adaptability scores in comparison to his or her follower, associate, and boss are different from how the leader views him or herself. Most leaders may perceive themselves with a high style adaptability score, whereas their followers, associates, and bosses may perceive them with a much lower score.

Hypothesis 4 Ho4: There is no difference in the perception of the overall leadership style adaptability between the support section and the operations section. Ha4: There is a difference in the perception of the overall leadership style adaptability between the support section and the operations section.

A comparison of means between the two groups of the organization (1=support, 2=operations) was tested. The findings support rejection of the null hypothesis. It was found that there are differences between the two groups in the organization. The tests revealed that the support group scored higher in comparison to the operation group in the style adaptability score. The support group scored in the moderate range, which indicates that a leader reads and responds well to a several readiness levels. Generally, according to Hersey et al. (2001), leaders in this range have a readiness level whereby they misdiagnose, or they have a style that they do not use or both.

According to Hersey et al. (2001) another possibility exists whereby the styles based on task are a frequent part of the job and sometimes do not slow down to consider readiness. The operations group fell into the low adaptability score, which indicates that the leader relies on heavy concentrations of limited influence strategies. Per Hersey et al. (2001) this may work if they only experience a limited variety of readiness levels. This range can also indicate that a leader is trying a variety of styles, hoping to find one that works instead of focusing on readiness.

Hypothesis 5 H0 5: There is no difference in the perception of the followers' leadership style adaptability between the support section and the operations section. Has: There is a difference in the perception of the followers' leadership style adaptability between the support section and the operations section. The findings support rejection of the null hypothesis.

A comparison of means between the two groups of the organization (1=support, 2=operations) was tested. It was revealed that there are differences between the two groups in the organization. The followers' support group scored higher in the style adaptability score in comparison to the followers' operations group. The scores indicated that the support group fell into the low-moderate style adaptability. This is an indication that the leader usually reads and responds well to several readiness levels. The operations group fell into the low style adaptability, which indicates that the leader is trying a variety of styles, hoping to find one that works instead of focusing on readiness.

In this study, the researcher further supported the Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) Situational Leadership Theory. The LEAD-Self and LEAD-Other was used to determine the leadership style and adaptability of the leader. The leaders differ in their ability to vary their style to accommodate different situations. While style range indicates the extent to which the leader is able to vary his or her style, style adaptability reflects the degree to which his or her changes in styles are appropriate to the level of readiness of the people involved in different situations.

Limitations of Study

The results of this study are based the areas of leader's style, leader's style adaptability, and the perception of the leader's associates, followers, and superiors. In the past year, the distribution corporation has undergone significant restructuring, and the organization would only allow the use of the Hersey and Blanchard leadership effectiveness and adaptability survey. Any other surveys measuring other variables were prohibited. First line managers and middle managers were the only ones surveyed.

The organization recommended that upper management be excluded from the study. In past studies, Norris and Vecchio (1992) recommended testing Hersey's and Blanchard's (1974) Situational Leadership Theory's "... three-way interaction (leader task, leader relationship and follower readiness level) using a hierarchical regression approach"(p. 335) the researcher did not utilize this recommended methodology. The follower readiness level was not surveyed, and the researcher was not looking for causation; therefore, this methodology was not used.

Implications for Future Research

This study used the construct of the leader's style and leader's adaptability to provide a measurable construct to Situational Leadership Theory. For this study, the researcher defined leader style and leader style adaptability using the perception of the leader's peers, subordinates, and superiors. Future research should include other distribution corporations. Other areas to focus on could be the perception of the leader's subordinates, peers, and superiors solely. A pre- and post-survey should be done within a limited time frame to determine the effectiveness of the LEAD-Self and LEAD-Other survey.

Further research should include other corporations. In summary, "the evidence from research clearly indicates that there is no single all-purpose leadership style. Successful leaders are those who can adapt their behaviors to meet the demands of their own unique situation" (Hersey, 1997).

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