Theories of Leadership

Social psychologist and person belonging to management fiedl have developed different theories to explain the behaviour of the leaders. Some important theories are:

1. Great man theory of leadership or trait theory
2. Behavioural theory of leadership
3. Situational theory of leadership
4. Contingency theory of leadership
5. The path goal theory of leadership
6. The managerial grid theory of leadership

The great man theory

"The history of the world is the history of great men." - Thomas Carlyle

According to this theory, a leader is viewed as a person possessing a distinct set of personality traits.

Stogdil pointed out those traits as follows:

- Alertness
- Self-confidence
- Personal integrity
- Self assurance
- Intelligence &
- Dominance needs

Two basic assumptions of great man theory

1. The first assumption is that - leadership is a general attribute. A specific person is leader in all situations and all times. Carter (1953) found that a leader in one task also tends to be a leader in the other tasks. But this assumption was rejected because this is not true for all the situations. Carter and Nixon found that leader in mechanical type of tasks no longer remains a leader when faced with the task that require mental or intellectual ability. This showed that leadership is not a general trait.

2. The second assumption is that - the leader has unique background that distinguishes him from his followers. But this assumption was also rejected by other theorists. For eg. Mahatma Gandhi possessed no such unique traits, he was bright, hardworking, peace loving and thousands of his followers possess the same traits.

Weaknesses of the theory

The weaknesses and failure of the trait theory are :

1. All traits are not identical with regard to the essential characteristics of a leader.
2. Some traits can be acquired by training and may not be inherited.
3. It does not identify the traits that are most important and those that are least important in identifying a successful leader.
4. The trait required to *attain* the leadership may not be the same that are required to *sustain* leadership.
5. It fails to explain the many leadership failures inspite of having the required traits.
6. It ignores the environmental factors, which may differ from situation to situation.

Behaviour theory of leadership

This theory studies the leadership by looking at leaders in terms of what they do. It does not concentrate on traits of leaders, rather it emphasises the study of activities of the leaders to diagnose their behavioural pattern.

Research studies conducted by Katz, Maccoby and Morse suggested that - leadership behaviour be defined along employee - centred dimension and production- centred dimension, both complement each other.

The study conducted by Ohio State University, identified two factors affecting the leader's behaviour:

1. Consideration behaviour (CB)
2. Initiating structure behaviour (ISB)

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- CB establishes the rapport between the leader and the group, a mutual warmth and trust, a concern for the needs of the members of the work group, an attitude that encourages participative management, two-way communication and respect for the feedback of the followers.
- ISB involves creating a work environment, so that the work of the group is organized, coordinated, sequential, organizationally relevant so that people know exactly what is to be done and how it is to be done. The structure involves having the leader organize and define the role of each member, assign tasks to them and push for the realization of organizational goals.

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An important discovery made by the Ohio studies was that - the leader does not necessarily have to rate high both on consideration as well as structure element. He could be high both on one and low on the other and still lead the group successfully.

- Both structure and consideration were related to satisfaction and they affect grievances and employee turnover.
- Groups with medium and high consideration but low structure are lowest in grievances and turnover.

Situational Theory

Difference between Situational Theory and Contingency theory

The main **difference** **between** **contingency** and **situational** leadership **is** that **contingency** leadership **theory** considers that a leader's leadership style should match the right **situation**, whereas **situational** leadership **theory** considers that a leader should adapt his style to the **situation** at hand.

Contingency Theory

This theory states that - an analysis of leadership involves not only the individual traits and behaviour but also a focus on the situation.

The effectiveness of the leader behaviour is contingent upon the demands imposed by the situation. There are three major components that are significant for leadership effectiveness:

- Individual differences among leaders
- Differences among the situations and
- The manner in which these two variables are related.

Contingency Theory

Its a class of behavioral theory that claims that there is no best way to organize a corporation, to lead a company, or to make decisions. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external situations

Several contingency approaches were developed in the late 1960s.

- Contingency theories of leadership focus on particular variables related to the environment

- According to this theory, no leadership style is best in all situations.

- Success depends upon a number of variables, including the leadership style, qualities of the followers and aspects of the situation.

Models in contingency leadership theory

○ *The Fiedler Contingency model*

○ *Hersey & Blanchard's Situational Leadership model*

○ *Path-Goal theory*

○ *Charismatic Leadership*

Fred Fiedler

- Fiedler (1964, 1967)
- Situation Moderates Leader Effectiveness and Subordinate Traits
- Based on "Least Preferred Coworker" (LPC)
  - Indicates Leader's Motive Hierarchy (nAFF)
  - High LPC is Considerate
  - Low LPC is Directive
- Based on Situational Favorability
  - Leader-Member Relations, Position Power, Task Structure
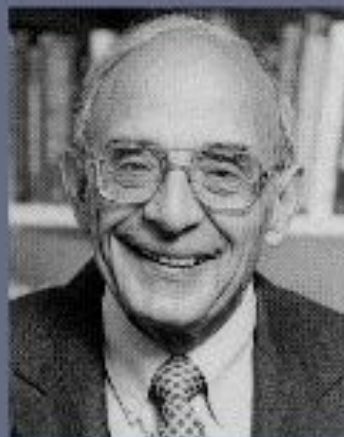
Fred Fiedler

LPC – leadership instruments

To measure the leadership style

Least Preferred Co-Worker (LPC) Scale

High LPCs = Relationship-motivated
Low LPCs = Task-motivated

Situational Variable Factors

Contingency theory suggest that situations can be characterized in terms of three factors:

1. **Leader - Member Relation**

2. **Task structure**

3. **Position power**

Leader-member relation

○ *Consist of the group atmosphere and the degree of confidence, loyalty and attraction that followers fell for their leader.*

○ *The quality of the leader-member exchange relationship mediates the relationship between* **transformational leadership** *and* **innovative behavior, affective organizational commitment and employees' satisfaction with Hr-practices.**

Task structure

Considered as structured when:

- Is the degree to which the requirements of a task are clear and spelled out

✓ the performer know the requirement clearly

✓ the path to accomplishing the task has few alternatives

- Task that are completely structured tend to give more control to the leader, whereas completion the task can be less demonstrated control and influence.

✓ completion the task can be clearly demonstrated

✓ only limited number of correct solutions to task exist

Position Power

- *Position power: the amount of authority the leader has to reward or to punish followers*

- *Includes the legitimate power*

- *Strong: a person has the authority to hire and fire or give raises in rank or pay*

- *Weak: vice versa*

Situational Variables

- *The most favorable situation are those having good leader-follower relations, defined tasks, and strong leader-position power. (task-motivated)*

- *The least favorable situation are those having bad leader-follower relations, structured tasks and weak leader-position power. (task-motivated)*

- *The moderately favorable fall b/w these two extremes. (relationship-motivated)*

Leader Behavior	Group Members	Task Characteristics
Directive leadership "Provides guidance and psychological structure"	Dogmatic कट्टर Authoritarian	Ambiguous अस्पष्ट Unclear rules Complex
Supportive leadership "Provides nurturance" पोषण	Unsatisfied Need affiliation Need human touch	Repetitive Unchallenging Mundane and mechanical सांसारिक
Participative "Provides involvement"	Autonomous Need for control Need for clarity	Ambiguous Unclear Unstructured
Achievement oriented "Provides challenges"	High expectations Need to excel	Ambiguous Challenging Complex

The path-goal theory suggests that a leader **directs followers' behavior** by **motivating** them to **accomplish goals**. The effective leader **compensates for deficiencies of his/her followers** in order to **overcome obstacles** toward a goal, which in its turn **increase followers' intrinsic motivation** (comes from within). According to this theory, the four leadership styles that function to **minimize role ambiguity** (unclear role and responsibility of worker)and provide reward for the followers are **directive, supportive, participative, and achievement oriented behaviors**. Different organizational environments, situations, and tasks dictate to the leaders which of the four path-goal styles to choose in order to be effective.

Task and Environmental Characteristics

Obstacles:
- Design of the task
- Formal authority system
- Work group

Employee

Characteristics:
- Experience
- Ability
- Locus of control

Goals

Path

Path-Goal Leadership

Consider:
- Employee characteristics
- Task & environment characteristics

Select Leadership Style:
- Directive
- Supportive
- Participative
- Achievement-oriented

Focus on Motivation:
- Define goals
- Clarify path
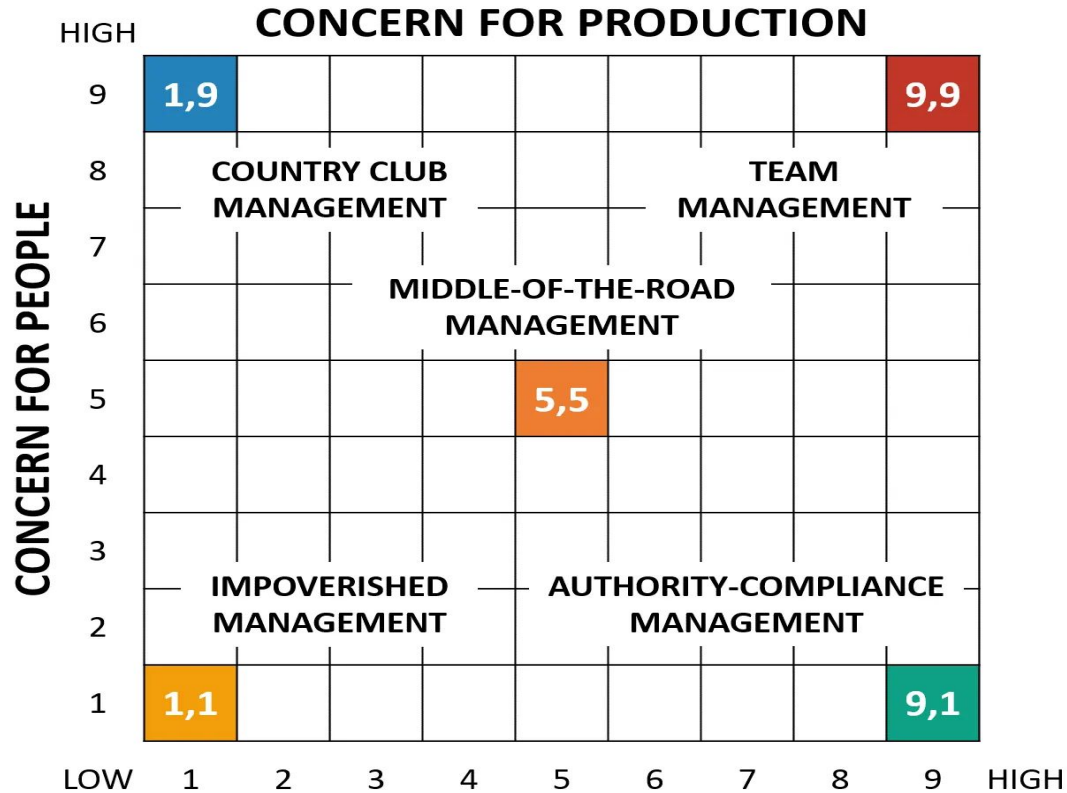- Remove obstacles
- Provide support

- **Directive**: The leader informs his/her followers on what is expected of them, such as telling them what to do, how to perform a task, and scheduling and coordinating work. It is most effective when people are unsure about the task or when there is a lot of uncertainty within the environment.

- **Supportive**: The leader makes work pleasant for the workers by showing concern for them and by being friendly and approachable. It is most effective in situations in which tasks and relationships are physically or psychologically challenging.

- **Participative**: The leader consults with his followers before making a decision on how to proceed. It is most effective when subordinates are highly trained and involved in their work.

- **Achievement**: The leader sets challenging goals for her followers, expects them to perform at their highest level, and shows confidence in their ability to meet this expectation. It is most effective in professional work environments, such as technical, scientific; or achievement environments, such as sales.
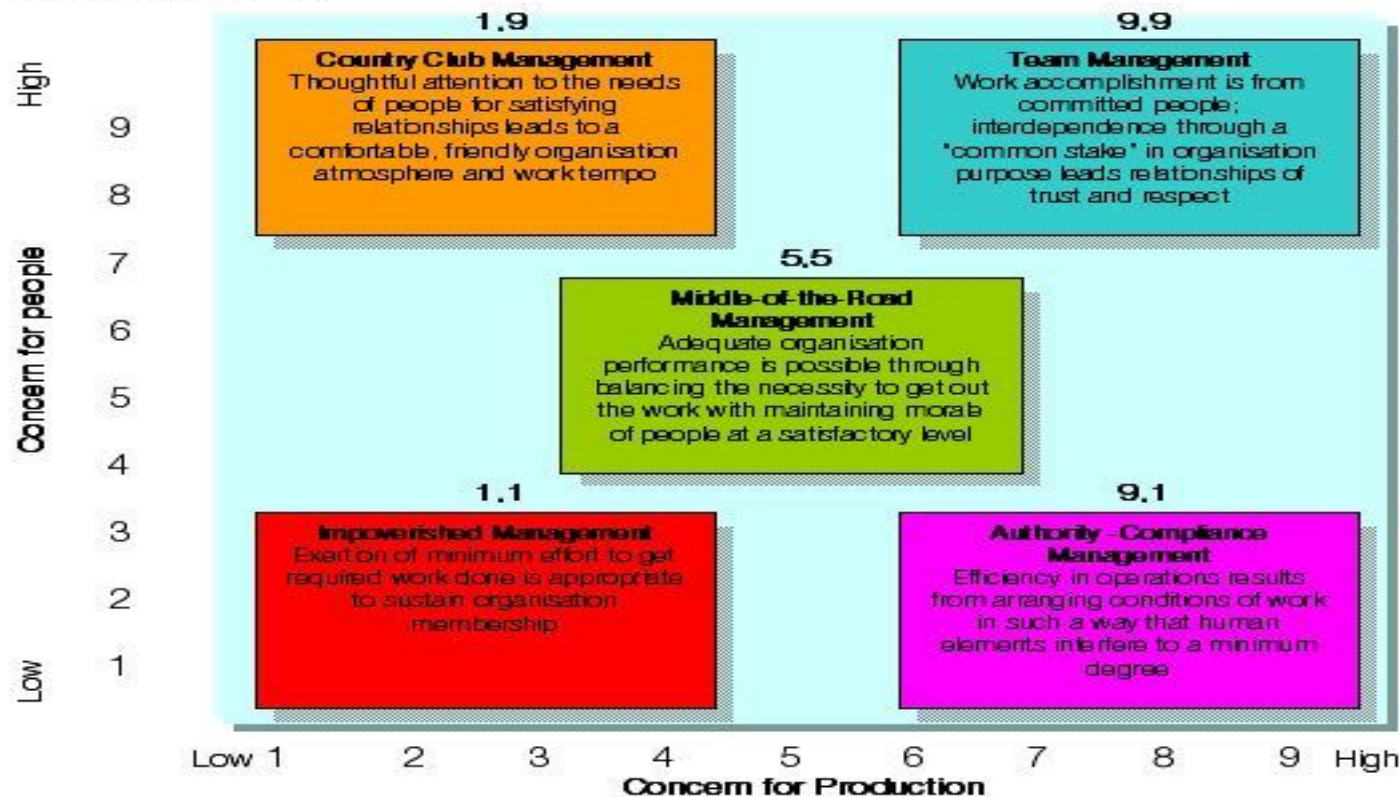
Conclusion

As noted earlier, the independent variables of Path-Goal Theory are the leaders' behavior, thus the path–goal theory assumes that people (leaders) are flexible in that they can change their behavior or style, depending upon the situation.

Managerial grid theory

Managerial Grid Theory

The Leadership Grid

Concern for people (vertical axis: Low to High, 1–9)
Concern for Production (horizontal axis: Low 1 to High 9)

1.9 — Country Club Management
Thoughtful attention to the needs of people for satisfying relationships leads to a comfortable, friendly organisation atmosphere and work tempo

9.9 — Team Management
Work accomplishment is from committed people; interdependence through a "common stake" in organisation purpose leads relationships of trust and respect

5.5 — Middle-of-the-Road Management
Adequate organisation performance is possible through balancing the necessity to get out the work with maintaining morale of people at a satisfactory level

1.1 — Impoverished Management
Exertion of minimum effort to get required work done is appropriate to sustain organisation membership

9.1 — Authority - Compliance Management
Efficiency in operations results from arranging conditions of work in such a way that human elements interfere to a minimum degree

What constitutes a good manager? Based on behavioural research studies on leadership and management (e.g. Ohio State Studies and Michigan Studies), two basic management behaviours can be identified as important: task-oriented behaviour and people-oriented behaviour. Even though these two factors are not the only important management behaviours, concern for both the task and the people must been shown at some reasonable level. Inspired by these findings, Blake and Mouton from the University of Texas proposed **a two-dimensional Managerial Grid based on a manager's concern for production (task-oriented) and concern for people (relationship-oriented)**. Each axis on the grid consists of a nine-point scale with 1 meaning a low concern and 9 a high concern. Depending on a manager's score on each of the two axis, you can assign different types of management styles to managers.