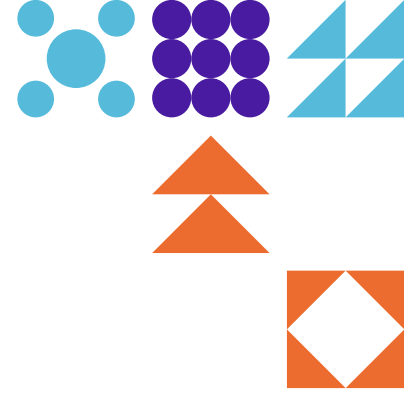#229785

THE INTERACTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING LEADERSHIP

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# The Interactional Framework for Analyzing Leadership

Contemporary business enterprises seek avenues to create a sustainable competitive advantage that will translate into higher profits and bigger market shares. Leadership is one such channel through which firms can modify several organizational attributes, such as their work culture, setting, and processes, to optimize chances of success.

In particular, researchers and practitioners look not only at how the traits of leaders make them effective but also at how the characteristics of the situation and followers contribute to the overall performance. For instance, the vertical dyad linkage that looks at the relationship between two people in a hierarchy, such as a supervisor and a subordinate, has been the subject of controversy since scholars differ on whether the interaction between the leader and the staff member should be measured or considered to be unique and, therefore, handled on a case by case basis (Wagner & Hollenbeck, 2010, p. 201).

Despite the disagreement, stakeholders concur that assessing these associations is an important practice. Notably, all events that unfold in an organization are influenced by broader societal, historical, technological, and cultural factors (Sosik & Jung, 2010, p. 44).

The ability to reconcile all these issues and develop a winning strategy is a core function of leadership, whose impact can be established by examining the interactions between the leader, the follower, and the situation (Wagner & Hollenbeck, 2010, p. 201).

Such an analysis, as described by the interactional framework (IF), uncovers key information about how the three factors relate and feed into the overall performance of a leader and, thus, could be used to develop a sustainable competitive advantage.
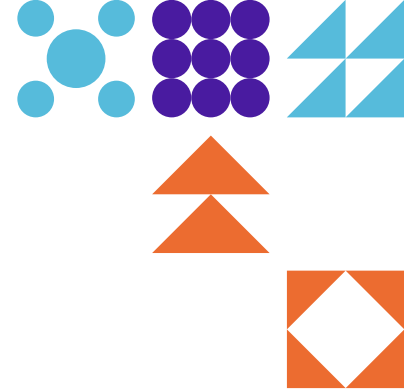
Analyzing the relationship between a leader's traits and the situation provides an opportunity to assess for effectiveness. A manager's personality attributes influence the approach that he or she uses in interacting with the environment. Notably, two main leadership styles result from a person's characteristics, namely, democratic and autocratic. A democratic leader works with employees or teams to help them make decisions, while an autocratic leader makes them without involving subordinate staff.

The level of effectiveness varies between these two approaches. For instance, when Microsoft was starting as a small organization, Bill Gates made all the most important resolutions, and the business achieved its strategic goals. However, as the company grew, it became increasingly difficult to make all the vital decisions. Consequently, he ceded the authority to conduct the daily operations to Steve Ballmer. Over the years, there have been concerted efforts to decentralize decision-making further with little success as most of these functions remain under the control of top executives. In this regard, some experts argue that this particular failure is responsible for the firm's stagnated growth (Wagner & Hellenbeck, 2010, p. 198).

A close examination of Microsoft reveals that the increasing complexity of issues at the company (situation) forced Gates to change his approach. Although he would have preferred to participate in all the critical work processes, his efficacy diminished to the point that he had to delegate some of his responsibilities. Had Gates been a democratic leader, the fate of the firm would probably have been different. Thus, it is helpful to continuously assess the leader-situation relationship to establish fit and guarantee optimal performance.

The interaction between employees and their managers determines how well the superior staffs fulfill their roles. While there are numerous occasions when the two relate, each with its unique outcomes, one particular scenario offers meaningful insight into how the leader-worker relationship influences the performance of the executive. Given the fluid nature of business, workers often encounter situations that require immediate action, which, in some cases, challenges the status quo.
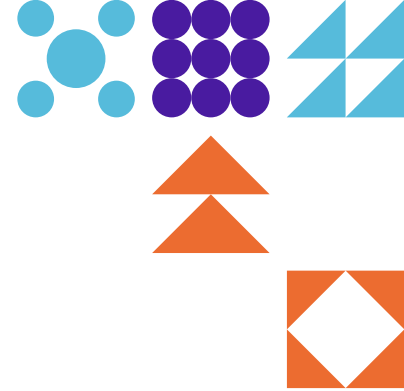
In this context, voice is an important attribute and is considered an extra-role behavior whereby subordinates raise concerns, solve problems, advance their interests, and offer innovative ideas in a challenge-oriented yet constructive approach (Gyensare, Arthur, Twumasi, & Agyaapong, 2019, p. 4).

In a study looking at the relationship between leadership effectiveness (LE), employee voice (EV), and worker engagement (WE), Gyensare et al. (2019) found that EV had a positive effect on LE, which, in turn, had a similar effect on WE.

The implication of these findings, from a theoretical point of view, is that workers would prefer an environment in which they are encouraged to voice their concerns over one where they are prohibited. The investigators further noted that where employees perceive the leader to be effective in creating a fair system and where their views are considered, their level of engagement in the firm's operations increases (Gyensare et al., 2019, p. 15).

To this end, leaders need to accommodate divergent views not only to benefit from a workforce that engages more with their tasks but also to minimize the adverse effects of a suppressed voice. Such a setup is bound to foster a conducive environment that optimizes a leader's effectiveness.

Peer support systems within an organization influence the leader-employee interaction and, consequently, the executive's effectiveness. Supervisors' perception of the availability of resources affects their ability to fulfill their obligations satisfactorily. One particular study investigated the effect of a transformational leader's perception of the availability of resources (measured as peer support and vigor) on employee burnout (Tafvelin, Nielsen, von Thiele Schwartz, & Stenling, 2019, pp. 166-164).

Using a sample of 217 municipal employees and their leaders, the researchers conducted a multi-level analysis and found that there was a strong negative relationship between transformational leadership behavior (TLB) and burnout among the subordinate staffs.
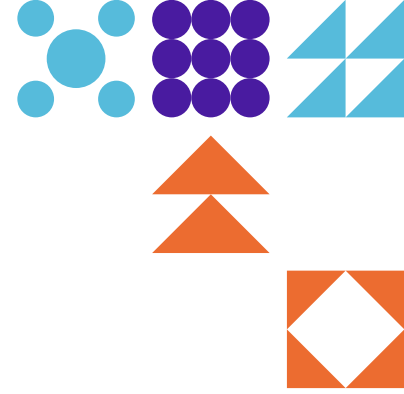
These findings imply that workers become more productive when a supervisor displays more TLBs. Among the relationships examined based on the interactional framework for analyzing leadership is the one between managers and employees.

Executives who believe that they have the support of their colleagues are more likely to perform better. Similarly, those with high levels of energy are equally likely to be more effective, considering that the elevated levels of vigor enable them to engage more transformational leadership behaviors.

This particular phenomenon can be explained by the broaden and build theory, which posits that the formation of new knowledge and skills depends on the range of thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes towards a specific scenario.

In this context, leaders with high levels of energy can accommodate more ideas, question assumptions, and inspire employees towards the desired outcome (Tafvelin, et al., 2019, pp. 66-164). In this regard, organizations need to build a robust support system for all its employees and particularly for leaders to maximize productivity.

Depending on the size of a firm, managing change is one of the most challenging tasks any leader faces, which, in turn, can be used to establish his or her efficacy. The interactional framework of leadership analysis can be applied to assess an executive's ability to manage reforms (effect on the situation).

According to the results of a recent study by Li (2018), selection and adoption of the right strategies enable a leader to successfully transform the operations of a company and integrate new work practices into the organization's culture.

The investigator applied Kotter's eight-step change management model and the 3-H heart-head-hand theory to the Hong Kong Broadband Network to decentralize authority (using the mini-CEO concept), which they hoped would result in better resource management at the department level.
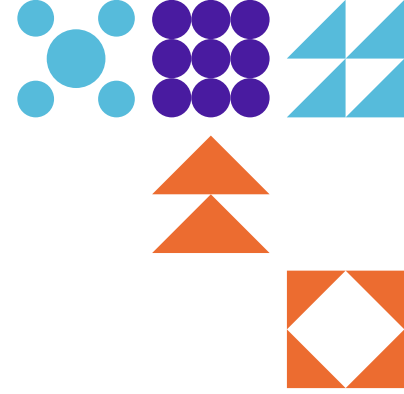
Employees resisted this particular action, and several measures were undertaken to overcome the opposition. First, one of the middle-level managers who opposed the idea resigned.

Second, the heart-head-hand theory was applied to help influence the thoughts and actions of the target workforce. Third, subordinate staff members whose performance was above average were promoted and trained for their new assignments. Fourth, a life coach was hired to assist the firm to build teams, help employees set new goals, and aid the management tune workers' mindsets (Li, 2018, pp. 159-158). Since the company's leadership was able to overcome the resistance and, more importantly, incorporate new work processes into the organization's culture, the strategies applied were effective.

Based on the interactional framework leadership analysis, the executives devised methods that converted an adverse situation (resistance to change) to a favorable one, whereby all employees are motivated and work towards a common goal. In this context, the actions of a leader while implementing reforms influence his or her level of success and subsequent effectiveness.

Understanding the efficacy of a supervisor involves examining the relationship between the situation and the subordinate staffs, in line with the interactional framework for leadership analysis. One method is to assess worker behavior in the context of value-orientations and organizational support. In their research, Kalemci, Kalmci-Taxun, and Canbolat (2019) adopted this perspective and investigated the relationship between employee deviant workplace behaviors (DWB), perceived supervisory support (PSS), perceived organizational support (POS), and employee cultural value-orientations. Deviant workplace behavior refers to a worker's voluntary actions that violate the norms of a firm, in effect, threatening its wellbeing.

POS refers to employees' perceptions regarding the value the company places on their contribution and the extent to which their wellbeing is prioritized. PSS has been used to mean workers' views on the value supervisors attach to their contribution and the extent to which the managers prioritizes their wellbeing.
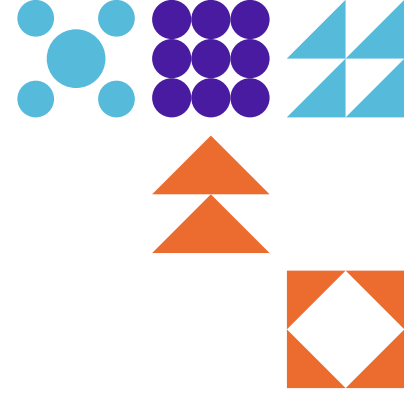
The researchers found that staff members had a positive attitude towards the organization whenever they had PSS and POS that helped them improve their skills. In the absence of support, frustration and DWB are likely to emerge.
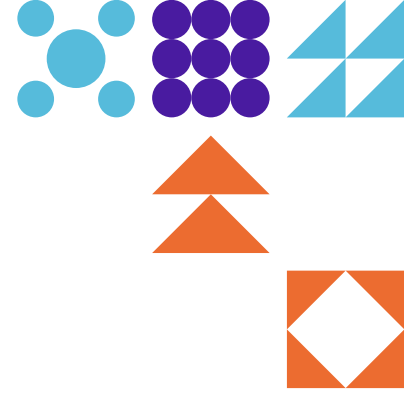
The authors also established that subordinates with a low power distance orientation are more likely to react negatively in the case of unfair treatment compared to workers with a high power distance orientation, who are more likely to legitimize power disparity, obey leadership decision, and avoid confrontation with their superiors (Kalemci et al., 2019, p. 128).

Depending on employees' value-orientation and the environment in which they operate, any acts perceived by the staffs to be unfair will lead to DWB and reduced productivity. To this end, analysis of the employee-situation relationship can reveal the motives behind certain actions which directly impact a leader's effectiveness based on how such issues are managed.

Examining the interaction between the leader and the follower, as per the IF of leadership analysis, provides avenues for establishing an executive's effectiveness. A supervisor's personality traits guide his or her actions, which, in turn, influence workers' behavior. Certain attributes exhibited by an executive elicit specific reactions by subordinate staffs, which may affect the performance positively or negatively. In this context, Erkutlu and Chafra (2019) investigated the effects of Machiavellianism on follower silence using a sample of 793 university faculty members and their superiors (p. 323).

Machiavellianism is an approach whereby individuals operating in social settings deceive others for personal gains. Employee silence (ES) is a dysfunctional behavior whereby workers intentionally withhold information, concerns, opinions, and suggestions about issues that are important to the firm. ES has such detrimental effects as increased corruption, absenteeism, turnover, and reduced commitment. The researchers found that there is a positive association between leader Machiavellianism and employee silence and a negative one with relational identification, which indicated that an increase in Machiavellianism resulted in increased ES.
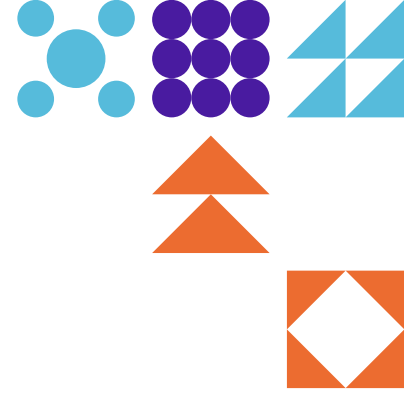
In this regard, the leader-follower relationship that the worker perceived to be negative is likely to adversely affect the executive's efficacy. They also established that relational identification explained how Machiavellianism affected ES and that it was a psychological pathway that influenced worker behavior choices (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019, p. 323). These findings indicate that employees seek to withhold information as a means of protection from selfish executives. In this regard, a supervisor's personality traits within the work setting directly influence subordinates' actions. In this regard, leaders must be careful to act only in ways that influence employee behavior positively.

The leader-situation interaction within a firm can be used to establish a supervisor's efficacy. Managers create an environment in which employees function. A supportive work setting where workers communicate and share information freely has better outcomes compared to a hostile workplace where staffs experience little to no support from the management. This phenomenon has been studied and its impact on performance has been noted. In a recent research, Park and Kim (2018) investigated the impact of the transformational style of leadership (TL) on organizational learning (OL), interpersonal trust (IPT), and knowledge sharing behavior (KSB) and climate (KSC) (p. 1408).

In this particular study, knowledge sharing meant that workers provided or received task-specific information, know-how, and feedback, which promoted collaborations aimed at solving problems. Interpersonal trust referred to a belief about the dependability of a workmate and the extent to which the colleague can be relied upon to prioritize the needs of the team. KSC comprises social interactions whereby all departments within a firm exchange employee expertise, experience, and knowledge.

OL refers to the use of better knowledge and understanding to improve work processes and employee actions. The research found a positive association between OL and TL mediated by interpersonal trust and knowledge sharing climate and behavior. The investigators also established that TL positively affected IPT, OL, and KSC (Park & Kim, 2018, p. 1417).
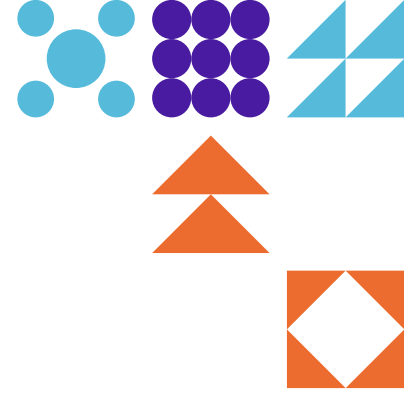
These results imply that transformational leadership can create a supportive environment for all employees, which promotes organizational learning and leads to improved performance at all levels. In this context, firms that need to optimize their performance may consider adopting a transformational style of leadership, which would enable them to create a supportive environment that enhances knowledge sharing among members of staff.

Overall, the interactional framework of leadership analysis provides a mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of executives. By examining the leader-follower-situations relationship, a supervisor's capabilities to lead can be assessed. The personality of a manager influences whether workers will express their views, opinions, observations, and ideas freely or will intentionally withhold such information. Where subordinate staffs voice their concerns, higher levels of employee engagement and leadership effectiveness have been achieved. On the contrary, silence results in increased corruption, absenteeism, and turnover, all associated with lower leadership efficacy. Managing change poses several challenges to supervisors, and their ability to navigate all the obstacles is a measure of their effectiveness, The interaction between subordinates and the environment (situation) also affects an executive's impact on the business.

For instance, when staffs feel the work setting lacks support from the management or immediate supervisors, they are more likely to engage in deviant behavior, with adverse impacts on the performance of the organization. Similarly, a leader who feels that the workplace lacks peer support is less likely to invest his or her time and energy in the firm. On the contrary, a transformational leader may choose to create an environment that fosters knowledge sharing, which, in turn, promotes organizational learning. Under such a setting, performance is likely to increase for all employees. The success of a business depends on a leader's personality and the way he or she navigates challenges to create the right environment for employees to function optimally. Any failures on his or her part, as revealed by the application of the interactional framework, will reflect in various aspects of the company and its ultimate performance.

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