

Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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Introduction

Leadership plays a significant role in the workplace and can influence both individual and team performance (Bass, 1985). This report explores situational leadership and considers its impact on workplace performance through comparison with other recognised leadership theories. The report also evaluates the authors own ability to use a range of leadership styles in different situations and when working with different types of people. Self-assessment questionnaires will be used to support reflection on the authors leadership strengths and areas for improvement. The report will also assess the authors ability to set direction, motivate, delegate, and empower others within the workplace, drawn on both leadership theory and practical experience gained in a care home environment.

Critically assess a recognised leadership model or theory in relation to its ability to impact on individual's workplace performance

Situational Leadership

(Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) developed Situational Leadership around the idea that there is no single best way to lead people. Instead, leaders need to adjust their approach based on the skills, experience, and confidence of those they are working with. This marked a shift away from older leadership theories, which suggested that successful leadership was largely linked to fixed traits or behaviours (Northouse, 2022). The model breaks leadership down into four styles: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2013). Directing involves giving clear instructions and closely monitoring work, whilst coaching combines guidance with encouragement. Supporting focuses on building confidence and involving employees in decisions, whereas delegating gives individuals' responsibility for managing their own work (Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Zigarmi, 1985). Unlike Trait Theory, which places greater emphasis on qualities such as confidence, determination, and intelligence (Stogdill, 1974), Situational leadership suggests that effective leadership depends on both the individual and the situation (Yukl, 2013).

The theory remains popular because it is practical and easy to apply in many workplace settings (Northouse, 2022). Supporters believe that adapting leadership styles to suit individual needs can improve confidence, development, and performance at work (Thompson & Glasø, 2015). Even so, the theory has faced criticism with some researchers questioning the little evidence supporting the model and argue that it can be difficult for leaders to accurately judge what type of support employees need at a particular time (Vecchio, 1987).

Impact on Workplace Performance

Situational Leadership can improve workplace performance because it recognises that people do not all need the same approach. Less experienced employees many need clear direction, whilst more experienced employees often prefer more independence. (Thompson & Glasø, 2015) suggests that adapting leadership styles

to individual needs can improve performance at work. The theory also focuses on employee development so by adjusting their approach, leaders can help people build confidence, learn new skills, and become more effective in the role (Yukl, 2013). Employees may also feel more valued when leaders understand the support they need. (Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Zigarmi, 1985) argue that this can strengthen working relationships and improve commitment.

Despite these benefits, the theory has limitations. (Graeff, 1997) argues that accurately judging what people need is not always easy because individuals often respond differently to the same approach. And there are also questions about the evidence to support the model. (Vecchio, 1987) claims there is limited research showing that matching leadership styles to employee development will always improve performance. Leadership is also only one factor that affects performance as staffing levels, workload, workplace culture, and employee wellbeing can also influence how people perform at work (Mullins, 2023). Overall, situational leadership provides a useful way of understanding how leadership can affect workplace performance, but its success depends on a leader's ability to adapt their approach to different people and situations.

Comparison with Alternative Leadership Approaches

Situational Leadership is not the only theory that suggests leaders adapt their approach. Adairs Action-Centred Leadership models and Tannenbaum and Schmidt's Leadership Continuum also recognise that different situations may require different leadership behaviours. (Adair, 2009) argued that leaders need to balance three areas. These being, achieving the task, supporting the team, and meeting individual needs. Whilst this shares some similarities with situational leadership, Adair places equal importance on all three areas whereas situational leadership focuses more on the needs, confidence, and development of the individual.

(Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1973) also emphasised flexibility. Their model suggests that leaders can move between making decisions themselves and involving employees in decision making. Whilst both theories recognise that one approach will not suit every situation, situational leadership focuses more on the employee, and Tannenbaum and Schmidt focus more on the amount of authority shared with others (Mullins, 2023). When comparing the three theories, Situational Leadership appears to provide the strongest link to individual workplace performance because it focuses directly on employee development and support. For this reason, it offers a clearer explanation of how leaders can adapt their approach to help individuals perform better at work.

Application to Workplace Practice

Situational Leadership can be applied to many situations within a care home. Staff often have various levels of experience and confidence, meaning they may not all need the same approach. This reflects the main idea of the theory, which suggests that leaders should adapt their style to suit the needs of the individual (Hersey &

Blanchard, 1969). For example, new housekeeping staff often need things explained more clearly whilst they learn cleaning procedures, infection control requirements, and daily routines. As they become more experienced, they are normally able to work more independently and require less involvement from others. This supports the view that employees may need different levels of direction and encouragement as they develop (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2013).

The theory can also be linked to workplace changes such as new cleaning schedules, inspections, or periods of staff shortage. During these situations, some employees may adapt quickly while others may take longer to adjust. (Kotter, 2012) argues that people respond differently to change and highlights the importance of adapting leadership approaches when circumstances change. These examples show how Situational Leadership can be used in practice. But again, its success depends on leaders being able to notice what the individuals' needs are and respond accordingly. As (Mullins, 2023) notes, workplace performance can also be influenced by other areas such as workload, staffing levels, and the working environment.

Evaluate own ability to use a range of leadership styles in different situations and with different types of people to fulfil the leadership role.

Own Ability to Use a Directive Leadership Style

The author works within the housekeeping team of a care home and does not hold a formal management position. However, when the supervisor is absent, colleagues will often ask what tasks should be completed first, which floor they are working on or whether concerns need reporting to management and these situations have provided opportunities to use directive leadership style. (Northouse, 2022) suggests that a directive approach can be effective when people need straightforward instructions and a clear understanding of what is expected. This is most useful during busy periods, inspections or when staffing is reduced due to sickness or annual leave. On some shifts only three members of staff may be available instead of the usual five, making it important to prioritise tasks and use time effectively. One of the author's strengths is remaining calm and organised when workloads increase. Colleagues regularly seek advice when they are unsure what should be done first so, helping to organise the workload can help reduce confusion and keep standards high. (Goleman, 2000) claims that a directive approach can be useful when quick decisions are needed and time is limited.

(Hackman & Johnson, 2018) also highlight the importance of clear communication in leadership. This is something the author feels confident doing, particularly when priorities need to change throughout the day. But directive style is not always the best approach because experienced employees are capable of managing their own duties and may prefer to be left to it. This has shown the author that leadership needs to be more flexible to both the colleague and the circumstances.

Own Ability to Use a Coaching Leadership Style

A coaching style is also used within the workplace, particularly when supporting less experienced members of staff or helping colleagues adjust to changes. According to (Whitmore, 2017), coaching focuses on helping people develop their skills, confidence, and ability over time rather than just telling them what to do. The author feels comfortable using this approach and often takes time to encourage colleagues and acknowledge good work. For example, if a team task has been completed to a high standard the author will make a point of thanking the team and acknowledging the effort that has gone into it. Similarly, positive feedback is given when colleagues have worked extra hard and this helps create a happy working environment and boosts morale. The introduction of new cleaning schedules and checklists also provided opportunities to support colleagues as they became familiar with the new routine. Some staff adapted quickly to these changes, but others needed more time to become more familiar with the new routines. In these situations, the author would answer questions, share knowledge, and help colleagues feel more at ease. (Parsloe & Leedham, 2009) suggest that coaching can support learning and help individuals build confidence in their abilities.

One of the strengths of this approach is that it helps create good working relationships. Colleagues are usually comfortable asking for help and advice when they need it. Even so, there are times when honest feedback is needed. If something has not been done properly it is important to point it out so the issue can be corrected and standards maintained. A limitation of this style is that it is not always practical. During busy periods, there may be less time available to support coworkers so a different leadership approach may be needed.

Own Ability to Adapt Leadership Styles in Different Situations

The author has found that workplace demands can change quickly. New members of staff may need more time and encouragement, whereas busy shifts often require clearer instructions and better organisation of tasks. These experiences have helped the author become more flexible when working with colleagues and respond more effectively to changing circumstances (Goleman, 2000). Realising this has helped the author understand that you do not need an official management title to help things run smoothly on a shift and that it is more about being a reliable coworker that people can come to when things get hectic. In the future, the author would like to focus on being more aware of how each team member handles pressure and cater this to how they can support each other when the workload gets stressful (West, 2012).

Own Ability to Adapt Leadership Styles with Different Types of People

The author has found that people do not respond in the same way. New or less experienced colleagues often need more time to settle into their role and may ask for more help whilst learning new tasks. The author enjoys helping colleagues develop and is always happy to answer questions or share knowledge when needed.

(Armstrong, 2020) suggests that supporting employee development is an important part of effective leadership. Experienced employees often require less involvement and are usually confident managing their own workload. The author recognises that these colleagues generally prefer to be trusted to complete their duties independently whilst knowing support is available if needed. (Belbin, 2010) highlights that individuals bring different strengths and qualities to a team. Meaning leaders should notice these differences when working with others. Working with different personalities has also made the author a lot more flexible when dealing with colleagues and they feel completely at ease working with all kinds of people. These daily experiences have shown that helping to run a floor is not about treating everyone exactly the same way. Instead, it takes a bit of personal flexibility where the support you give is continuously changed depending on what unexpected events come up and who you actually working with at the time (Mullins, 2023).

Assess own ability to set direction, motivate, delegate, and empower others to bring about a workplace change.

Introduction to Self-Assessment

To gain a better understanding of their own leadership abilities, the author completed two self-assessment questionnaires. These were the Leadership Skills Questionnaire and the Leadership Styles Questionnaire. The results provide an opportunity to compare how the author views their own leadership with experiences from the workplace. Self-assessment questionnaires can be useful for identifying strengths and areas for development, but they should be treated with some caution as findings are based on personal judgement rather than views of others (Podsakoff, 2003). For this reason, the results will be considered alongside examples from the authors role within the housekeeping team to assess how accurately they reflect in the day to day.

Analysis of Questionnaire Results

Leadership Skills Questionnaire

The Leadership Skills Questionnaire produced very high scores in all three areas. The author scored twenty-seven for administrative skills, twenty-nine for interpersonal skills and twenty-nine for conceptual skills. These results suggest strengths in organising work, communicating with others and understanding workplace demands (Katz, 1955).

The score for administrative skills appears to reflect the authors experience within the housekeeping team. Even though the author does not hold a management position their colleagues will often ask for advice when the supervisor is busy or absent and also when workloads need organising. Helping to prioritise tasks and ensure important duties are completed has become a regular part of the role. This result therefore seems accurate of the authors ability to remain organised and support others during busy periods. The highest scores were achieved in

interpersonal and conceptual skills with these results appearing quite accurate as the author enjoys helping colleagues, answering questions, and supporting new members of staff as they settle into the workplace. Colleagues seem comfortable asking for help or advice when needed and because of this good working relationships have been developed in the team. As (Goleman D. , 2017) claimed, communication and positive relationships play a key role in effective leadership, and this reflects on the author's own experiences in the workplace.

Although these findings are positive the author understands that self-assessment questionnaires have their limitations. The results are based on personal opinions and may not fully reflect how colleagues or managers would assess the authors leadership abilities. Even so, the findings seem to show to match the authors experiences at work and support the strengths identified throughout the assignment.

Leadership Styles Questionnaire

The Leadership Styles Questionnaire showed a high score for democratic leadership, a moderate score for authoritarian leadership and a low score for laissez-faire leadership. Looking at the results, the author feels they are fairly accurate of how they work with colleagues on a day-to-day basis.

The highest score was for democratic leadership. This was not surprising as the author enjoys working as part of a team and supporting colleagues when needed. Answering questions, helping new members of staff to settle in, and sharing knowledge with others are all common parts of the job, the author also values the opinions of colleagues and believes people are more likely to work well when they feel involved and supported. (Armstrong, 2020) discusses the importance of employee involvement and the positive effect this can have on workplace relationships which is something the author has experienced within the team. The score for authoritarian leadership fell within the moderate range. Again, this seems reasonable as there are times when a more direct style is needed. Staff shortages, inspections, and busy shifts can all create additional pressure and during these periods' colleagues need clear instructions on what tasks should be completed first. The author feels happy helping to organise work tasks and ensuring priorities are understood when required. However, this is not a style that would be used all the time, especially when working alongside experienced colleagues who are confident in their role. The lowest score was for laissez-faire leadership. The author was not surprised by this result as they do not believe people should simply be left to manage without support. Whilst experienced staff are usually capable of working independently there are situations when advice, reassurance or assistance may be needed. For this reason, the author prefers to remain available to help colleagues rather than taking a complete hands-off role.

All together, these results provide an insight into the authors leadership preferences, and they also match many of the experiences discussed throughout the report,

particularly the importance of supporting colleagues while still being able to provide direct instructions when circumstances require it.

Ability to Set Direction, Motivate, Delegate and Empower Others

Set direction.

Although the author does not hold a formal management position, there have been occasions where direction has needed to be provided to colleagues. This usually happens when the supervisor is absent, staffing levels are low or priorities change throughout the day, with colleagues asking what work needs to be done first, and which tasks need to take priority. The author is able to help organise work and make sure important tasks are completed, especially during busy periods when time is limited. Remaining calm when pressure increases is one of the authors strengths and this helps when colleagues are unsure on what needs to be done. Clear communication is important in these situations because it helps people understand what is expected of them and allows work to continue smoothly (Gopee & Galloway, 2017).

The introduction of new cleaning schedules and checklists provided a good example of this. Some staff members adapted quickly, whilst others needed more time to become familiar with the changes and had questions about the new routines. The author helped answer questions and share knowledge where needed and made it easier for colleagues to understand what was expected of them. Whilst the author believes they can provide direction when needed they also know that more experience would help strengthen this ability.

Motivate others.

The author believes they are able to motivate colleagues through encouragement and positive feedback. Simple actions such as thanking team members when a task has been completed to a high standard or a tight deadline can help create a positive working environment and the author feels that people are more likely to stay motivated when their efforts are acknowledged and valued. This was evident during the introduction of new cleaning schedules and checklists because when staff members were unsure about the changes and needed extra time to adjust to the new routines, the author helped by answering questions, sharing their knowledge, and encouraging the colleagues who lacked confidence. (Kotter, 2012) highlight's the importance of supporting people through change as uncertainty can sometimes create resistance or reduce motivation.

One of the authors strengths is being approachable and willing to support others when needed. Colleagues are generally comfortable asking questions and seeking advice which helps strengthen the relationships in the team. And whilst the author feels able to encourage and support others there is still more time to learn about motivating people who may be resistant to change or less engaged in their work.

Delegate others

The author has fewer opportunities to delegate tasks because they do not hold a management position. However, there have been occasions where colleagues have asked for guidance when the supervisor is not available or when priorities need to be clarified. In these situations, the author may suggest who is best placed to complete a particular task based on their experience or familiarity with a specific area. The author understands that delegation involves more than simply asking someone to complete a task. It is also important to make sure people understand what is expected of them and have the support they need to carry out the work effectively. According to (Yukl, 2013), delegation can help individuals take greater responsibility for their work and develop skills over time.

As the author does not formally manage employees, opportunities to delegate are limited so this means there is less experience in this area than there is in supporting or motivating colleagues. But even so, the author understands the value of delegation and how it can help build confidence and responsibility in a team.

Empower others.

The author believes they are able to help empower others by providing support, sharing knowledge, and encouraging confidence in the workplace. This is most noticeable when working alongside new members of staff who are not familiar with routines and procedures. So, by taking the time to answer questions and explain tasks properly it helps people feel more at ease in their role and confident to work independently. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2024) highlights the importance of creating a working environment where employees feel supported and able to contribute and the author believes this is an important part of leadership as people are more willing to take responsibility for their work when they feel trusted and valued.

Even though the author feels able to encourage and support colleagues there is still more to learn about empowering others during bigger workplace changes. So further experience will help develop this ability and strengthen confidence in supporting others in a wider range of situations.

Conclusion

This report has explored situational leadership and its impact on workplace performance. The discussion showed that people do not always need the same level of support or direction and that leadership styles may need to change depending on the individual and the situation. Whilst situational leadership has a number of strengths, its comparison with other theories highlighted that no single leadership style is suitable in every circumstance. The report also explored the author's own leadership abilities in the workplace and reflection on workplace experiences showed that leadership is not about using the same style all the time. The author found that some situations involve spending more time supporting colleagues and answering questions whilst others involve helping colleagues focus on what needs to be done.

The questionnaire results and workplace examples helped the author identify both strengths and areas for development. The author feels confident supporting colleagues, sharing knowledge and working with a range of people and even though there is less experience in delegation due to the nature of the role their experience in the workplace has shown that leadership skills continue to develop overtime through learning, responsibility and working alongside others.

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Appendices



