

# Critical Evaluated the Contingency Theories of Leadership and Trait Theories of Leadership more Useful for Leaders in Organisation

Le Li<sup>1</sup>, Xiaoli Lu<sup>2\*</sup>, Yangyang Zhang<sup>3</sup>

1. (PhD candidate, the School of Economic and Management in Universiti Putra Malaysia) Anhui Institute of Information Technology, the School of Management and Engineering, Wuhu 241000, China.
2. Anhui Institute of Information Technology, the School of Management and Engineering, Hefei 241000, China.
3. (PhD Candidate in University of Nottingham) Anhui Institute of information technology, the Faculty of Foreign languages, Wuhu 241000, China.

---

**Abstract:** This paper aims to explore contingency theories of Leadership and Trait theories of leadership more useful for Leaders in organisation. Leadership had two important principles; they are trait theories and contingency theory. This essay will focus on the contingency theories or trait theories in leadership and contingency theories, which is more useful for leaders in the organisation. Based on this paper research resulted the quality of leadership and leadership behaviour can promote leadership effectiveness by environmental factors influence. According to the evaluation of both Trait and Contingency theories, Contingency theories are more useful for an organisation to adopt. Trait theory is only used to define traits of the effective leader; however, contingency theories enable the leader to take situational factors and followers' behaviour into account.

**Keywords:** Contingency theories; Trait theories; Leadership

---

## 1. Introduction

According to the deepening of study management and leadership studies, in currently, people work in the Organization, leadership increasingly occupy a significant impact on the work of the Organization (Grint, 2011). Leadership had two important principles; they are trait theories and contingency theory. This essay will focus on the contingency theories or trait theories in leadership and contingency theories, which is more useful for leaders in the organisation. Based on analysis and definition for trait theory and contingency theories and how to useful for leaders work in the organisation. Critical evaluated the trait theories and contingency theories the benefits and merits for in an organisation.

This essay is divided into two sections. The first section is definition and analysis the trait theories and contingency theories how to work in a different situation in the organisation. It discusses what each theory means, what are the major advantages and disadvantages of each theory. According to use some academics theories and models to analysis some example to support some views. The second sections are evaluated these two theories and consider the most useful for a leader.

## 2. Analysis of the Trait theory

Based on the studies about the trait theory, the trait theory has categorised into traditional and modern trait theory. The traditional trait theory thinks the leader characteristics are original (Grint, 2011). On another hand, the modern trait

theory suggests the trait theory Characteristics of a leader is not original, however, the leader characteristics can be formed in the practice of leadership, it can also be created by means of training and development (Roe, 2014). According to the research of “Big Five Models” (Openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism) (Roe, 2014,). Trait theory designed to help the organisation to identify for five leaders feature in the organisation.

## **2.1 Analysis of different types Contingency theories**

Contingency theories included three theories, the fielder’s contingency theory, and path-Goal theory, situational leadership theory (Roe, 2014).

### **2.1.1 Fiedler contingency theory**

The Fiedler’s contingency theory model is considered the leadership characterises and situational characterises (Velde and Fidler, 2002). Effective group performance depends on the proper match between two aspects: subordinate interact with leaders style and leader able to control and influence the degree of context. The model is based on the assumption: different types of situations, there is always some kind of leadership style is most effective. The keys to this theory are that the moral definition of the different leadership styles and different types of situations, and then establish the right mix of leadership styles and situations.

### **2.1.2 Path-goal theory**

In 1971, at the University of Toronto, Canada professor RJ House propose a contingency theory of leadership behaviour, and this theory is path-goal theory (House,1971). The Path-goal theory is the leadership role is how to promote the employees’ work and performance, the performance between the rewards relationship. And finally, meet the needs of employees, inspire motivation of employees, increase employee satisfaction, improve the performance of the organisation (Sheridan, Slocum, and Downey, 1974). This path-goal theory means leadership work includes:

1. A clear understanding of each individual target of subordinates (House, 1971) .
2. Established the reward system in organisation and help that employees achieve individual performance objectives and linked performance efficiency (House, 1996) .
3. Use Help, support, counselling, and guidance different ways to help employees solved any barriers and problems in achieve employees’ high-performance work. Caused the employees can achieve good performance in organisation (House,1971) .

## **2.2 Evaluation and Application of the Trait theory**

The trait theory focuses on the leader should have what leadership qualities, what kind of people can become as a leader, and can get the best efficiency in leadership (Montor, 1988). And research and explore the characteristics of people, such as research and attention to the leaders of character, quality and other aspects of the feature.

The trait theory as an approach to get the organisation needs identify which works of a leader in the organisation (Montor, 1988). This trait theory can help identify what is a good leader; the trait theory can help improve the leader efficiencies in the organisation. And finally, can achieve the improve organisation performance.

The trait theory can explain some leader trait relationship between with performance (Cattell, 1965) [2]. For enterprise organizations need to do human resources recruitment and employee job analysis, it can help employees to get an appropriate position. This principle can analyse different employees in different departments to help assess the distribution of their next job (Carlyle, 1849). For instance, when the HR doing the performance appraisal interview. It can help the manager distribution and training employers in the future as their personal development plan<sup>[1]</sup>.

## **3. Evaluations and Application the contingency theory**

According to the researched the work situation impact of the leader, contingency theory extends our understanding of leadership. Prior to the development of contingency theory, leadership theory mainly focuses on the discussion of whether

there is a single best leadership (for example trait theory), and contingency theory emphasizes the relationship between leader style and different situations (Simpkins, 2009). In fact, contingency theory is the point on the effective between leaders' action and the organisation environment. Contingency theories for people to analyse and deal with management issues provide a useful perspective. It requires managers under specific conditions faced by the most organization's external environment, using the appropriate organizational structure, leadership and management, the flexibility to deal with the specific management business (Simpkins, 2009). Therefore, it enables managers to focus shifted to the study of the reality of the situation up, and based on an analysis of the specific circumstances, the corresponding management measures (Simpkins, 2009), which may make management activities more realistic, more effective.

Contingency theories had predictable because the providing useful information about effective leadership model may under certain situations. Based on the fielder model analysis that according to the "hardest working person" test (LPC) and descriptions of the three situational variables (e.g. leader - subordinate relationship thousand works structure and position power), the organisation can determine the chances of success of a person in a particular situation (Fielder,1967). This makes contingency theory with other theories of leadership and judgment that are not predictable.

The situational leadership had three skills: evaluation, flexibility and agreed leadership style. Evaluation is to assess the needs of subordinates in the development stage; elasticity is able to ease the use of different forms of leadership; leadership convention is to form partnerships with subordinates, leaders shape he needs an agreement with subordinates (Graeff,1983). Situational leadership can improve communication between executives and subordinates increase understanding of the culture and make competent to understand the development needs of subordinates, to give the necessary assistance <sup>[3]</sup>.

Situational Leadership Model attractive and affect the entire organization and leadership, which emphasizes the importance of subordinates, stressing leaders can make up for deficiencies in the competence and motivation to a certain extent, this is a logical basis. However, this model has inherent ambiguity and inconsistency (Graeff, 1997), so even though the model at work is focused on leadership to subordinates, but can be prevalent in the majority of real workers, the effect is not the best. This model lacks distinction between leadership and management. Thus, leadership cannot be narrowly understood as decision-making (Graeff, 1997). For job responsibilities, job content is the too trivial concern. Although the leaders or managers in different situations, as indeed should have different, but too much attention to detail, easy to overlook the essence of management and leadership and fundamental <sup>[4]</sup>.

On the other hand, Defects contingency theory is that it does not offer uniform concepts and standards (Simpkins,2009) it failed to form common management functions so that managers are engaged in practical work was difficult to grasp.

## Conclusion

Finally, the quality of leadership and leadership behaviour can promote leadership effectiveness by environmental factors influence. According to the evaluation of both Trait and Contingency theories, Contingency theories are more useful for an organisation to adopt. Trait theory is only used to define traits of the effective leader, however, contingency theories enable the leader to take situational factors and followers' behaviours into account. Compare to Trait theory, Contingency theories performs effectively in motivating followers, and support leaders to appropriately decide suitable approaches at a certain time. Therefore, Contingency theories are most useful for leaders in the organisation to apply compare to Trait theory.

Fund project: Provincial teaching team category of Quality Engineering Project of Anhui Education Department, the specific project name is Business Management professional teaching team, Project code: 2019jxtD145, Project leader: Ms. Xiaoli Lu, which is one of the results of the provincial thesis of 2019 provincial business management professional teaching team.

## References

- [1] Carlyle, T. (1949) *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.
- [2] Cattell, R. (1965) *The scientific Analysis of Personality*. London: Penguin.
- [3] Fielder, F.E. (1964) 'A Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness'. In Berkowitz, L.(ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*(vol. 1:149- 190). New York Academic Press.
- [4] Fiedler, F.E. (1967) *A theory of Leadership effectiveness*. New York: Mc Graw-Hill.