

## **Advance Course in Social Psychology**

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### **Lecture 44: Group Leadership- Part III**

Hello friends, a very warm welcome to the new discussion. of this module that is group leadership. We were discussing about different types of leadership and styles of leadership. Today, I am going to discuss about another theory of leadership that is path goal theory of leadership. This is one of the early theories of leadership which were propounded by various OB professionals and social psychologists that how leader in any group situation facilitates his followers, his subordinates towards the achievement of goal. In the previous discussion, I discussed about Fred Fredler's least preferred co-worker.

Today, I am going to discuss about path goal theory of leadership. This theory is also known as path goal theory of leader effectiveness or the path goal model which was propounded developed by Robert House in 1971 and was later revised in 1996. As the term implies path goal theory of leadership, we can easily understand the literal meaning that what this theory of leadership connotes to. So, it is derived from the belief that effective leaders clarify the path to help the followers or the subordinates to achieve their goal and make the journey easier by reducing the roadblocks or pitfalls.

Now, these roadblocks or pitfalls can be reduced by providing all the directives and guidance resources to the followers and subordinates which will make or facilitate the performance of the subordinates and at the same time they can achieve their goal. Therefore, the essence of path goal theory is that it is a leader's job, most important job to assist followers in attaining their goals and provide directives or direction to support and ensure that the goals are compatible with the objectives of the group and organizations. No doubt any group can also take up a very different task, but ultimately that group goal should be related to the organizational goals which will help in the overall effectiveness and growth in the performance of the organization. So, this is the basic assumption about path goal theory of leadership. But there is also a basic assumption that this theory works on two aspects.

The first is that in what and under what circumstances leader behavior is acceptable to the followers and the other is that what should be the level of motivation of a leader to motivate the subordinates. So, under these circumstances, path goal theory is based on two factors. The first is that the leader's behavior acceptability which states that any leader's behavior is

acceptable to the degree that the subordinates perceive the leader's behavior as an immediate source of satisfaction and means of future, source of satisfaction and a means of future satisfaction. That means the present and future which simply notifies that the leader must have the vision for not only for the organization, but at the same time for the followers itself. It is not only that the leader is just focusing on the immediate requirement of any organization or the followers.

It should also be complementary that the subordinates also feel satisfied when they are interacting with the leader based on the leader's behavior. At the other end, the leader's behavior is motivational or should be motivational that it makes subordinate need satisfaction contingent on effective performance. It should not be that the leader is motivating the followers only to meet the organizational goals. But the leader should motivate the followers to an extent that it not only motivates the employees to achieve the organizational goals or group goals. But at the same time, the leader is also motivating to an extent that even the followers are satisfied with their own performance.

That means there should be some need satisfaction of the employees, subordinates or followers. What they need? It should not be that there is imposition of roles, duties that what a leader has imposed on the followers and they are performing. It should also satisfy the needs of the followers and at the same time needs of the organization. And the second that it provides a coaching guidance, support and rewards that are necessary for effective performance. This simply and directly relates to recognition of the performance of the employees which not only motivates, but also gives lot of support because leader is providing motivation along with number of resources available in the organization that makes the performance effective.

It is all about need satisfaction of the followers and it is all about coaching and guidance and directives that can be offered to the employees for enhancement in the performance. So, to test these assumptions, Robert House identified four leadership behaviors. Now, since we are talking about the assumption on the basis of which this theory has been propounded. So, these the two assumptions that is acceptability of leader behavior and motivational aspect of leader's behavior. These two assumptions can be only tested when how identified different kind of four leader behavior which when identified can lead to understanding of the path goal theory of leader effectiveness.

And these patterns of leader behavior are the directive leader, the achievement oriented leader and the participate leader behavior and the last is the supportive behavior. If I just read out the terms, the directive leader, the achievement oriented leader, the participated leader behavior and the supportive leader, we can understand the literal meaning of these terms very easily. It is not a big deal, but ultimately the significance of discussing about these four leadership styles based on House assumption, it becomes mandatory to discuss because we are talking about this theory based on the two assumptions that to what extent follower or the member will accept behavior under what condition. So, if it is the directive leader based on the two

assumptions that is leader behavior's motivation and acceptability, then the directive leader let subordinates know what is expected from them, schedules work to be done and give specific guidance on how to accomplish the task. Now, this directive leader is actually completely focused on providing guidance and directive to the followers.

It is not imposition, it is about clear cut directives that how the job has to be performed. Now, this clear directive is actually talking about leader's acceptability of the behavior. If I go to the previous slide, acceptability of the leader's behavior and at the same time, they are the leader is also motivating based on the guidance. It is all about coaching, it is not about imposition, it is about guidance, it is about coaching, it is about providing detailed directives that how the job has to be performed. The other is the achievement oriented leader behavior.

The achievement oriented leader behavior sets challenging goals and expects subordinates to perform at the highest level. Now, this is about setting the highest standard of performance for the employees. This is a typical leadership behavior which is only acceptable when a specific condition calls for this kind of leadership style and the followers do experience that if this kind of leader behavior is acceptable and the followers are also motivated to perform at the highest level. This is the significance of this kind of leader behavior. The other is the participative leader behavior.

The participative leader consults with subordinates and uses their suggestions before making a decision. It is all about another aspect at workplace that is decision making. It is not that the leader will just take the decision in a very unilateral fashion. The leader will consult the other followers or members of the group, will solicit their feedback and suggestions and then take the final decision. This kind of behavior is again acceptable and motivates employee to voice their opinion, give their own inputs because the leader is accepting and welcoming the inputs or suggestions of the followers.

So, this is under this circumstance also if it is participative leader behavior, the behavior is acceptable of the leader and at the same time it is also motivating for the followers. And the last is the supportive leader. The supportive leader is friendly and shows concern for the needs of subordinates. This is what motivates employees that the leader is not only focusing on the professional goals of the organization, the leader is also focusing upon the needs of the followers that what they require in a particular moment at the workplace. It is not only about providing the resources, it is also about giving complete attention and emphasis on followers well being.

So, the supportive leader is friendly and shows concern for the needs of subordinates. This again is an acceptable pattern of behavior which motivates followers for highest performance. Therefore, under all these four circumstances or leadership behavior, the directive leader, the achievement oriented leader, participative leader behavior and supportive leader, under all

these four leadership styles, the two assumptions that the leader behavior is acceptable and the leader's behavior is motivational satisfies these two assumptions in a very clear manner. Apart from that, it is not only about leader behavior, some other factors also play a very important role that when other factors are in alignment with leadership behavior, then how that leadership style becomes more effective. So, Robert House has also talked about two factors or variables that moderate the leader behavior and outcome relationship.

There is a moderating factor, leader behavior and the outcome relationship. So, those variables are environment and followers. Environment, it is which is not at all under the control of the leader. We never know what kind of crisis do exist in any organization, it can be about scarcity of the resources, it can be about genuine or immature demands of the employees which are unable to be satisfied or able to be met by the higher authorities or it can be about crisis in the market place. But whenever this environmental factor do exist, this determine a specific type of leader behavior which is required if the follower outcome are to be maximized.

How the leader will try to control the behavior of the followers based on the environment. So, this becomes a foremost responsibility of the leader to not only focus on the maximum output, but also focus on the environmental factors. When these environmental factors to certain extent are being dealt based on the type of leader behavior that has to be adopted, then only there can be a synchronization between leader behavior, environment and the outcome. There can be a triangular relationship among these factors which will define the maximization of the performance and the other is followers personal characteristics. These include locus of control, it is a psychological term where an individual believes the extent to which you feel in control of the events that influence your life.

Sometimes when we are successful, we have internal locus of control that I have achieved success because of my own knowledge, skills and abilities or my own talent. Or if we lose something, then we have external locus of control and we tend to blame the external environment that maybe I was not successful in my task because of certain factors. This is external locus of control. So, this includes locus of control, an individual's personality, life experiences, perceived ability and personal characteristics of subordinates determine how the environment and leader are interpreted. It happens sometimes that maybe a particular leader behavior has not adopted, but due to some personal characteristics of the followers, there is no synchronization between environment leader behavior and the follower.

This again calls for rearrangement of the whole situation where a follower is only included in the team or the group where his personal traits or characteristics are in alignment with the group goals and leader behavior. So, apart from four different kinds of leadership that has been identified by Robert House, these are the other two factors which moderate the relationship between leader behavior and outcomes that is environmental and followers personal characteristics. Thus, the effective leaders clarify the path to help the followers achieve their goals and make their journey easier by reducing roadblocks and pitfalls. This is how because

when environmental factors are being kept under consideration, the followers personal characteristics are being kept under consideration by the leader, identifying the situation and then following a typical leader behavior and in what basis that behavior is acceptable and motivational to the employees or the followers. Then ultimately the roadblocks or pitfalls are reduced and the employees or followers are in a better situation to perform to the highest level.

There are number of researches that has demonstrated that employee performance and satisfaction are positively influenced when the leader compensates for the shortcomings in either the employees or the work setting. That is there has to be a alignment, thorough alignment between leader behavior, environment which comprises of different kind of factors which are not controlled by the leader but still identifying and understanding them, personal characteristics and outcomes. So, there is a triad in a literal form that how these three factors are working in alignment in consortium to reach the highest performance. This is the reflection of the elements of the Path-Cole Theory where the leader behavior can be identified in four forms, the directive, the supportive, the participative and the achievement oriented leader behavior which leads to performance and satisfaction as the outcomes. But this relationship that is leader behavior and outcomes, the relationship is moderated by two factors that is environmental or contingency factors which are situational which includes task structure for formal authority system or work group.

Formal authority system whether the communication is horizontal or vertical and to what extent a typical communication pattern can be helpful or can prove to be an obstruction in clearing the path of the communication between the employee and the employer. It can be about task structure whether the structure, the roles and responsibilities are easily understood and identified by every member of the group there is no role ambiguity and work group that what kind of work group or team is functional under particular circumstances. At the same time subordinate contingency factors or the situational factors, locus of control and personal characteristics. So, these two factors moderate the relationship between leader behavior and outcomes. This is the assumption and detailed understanding of the Path-Cole Theory by Robert House that how different kinds of leadership styles are being considered appropriate which are based on acceptability and motivation of the leader towards employees.

Based on the above discussion the Path-Cole Theory has evolved the following assumptions based on the leadership styles itself that which leadership style leads to what kind of outcomes. When it is about directive leadership it leads to greater satisfaction when tasks are ambiguous or stressful than when they are highly structured and well lay out. That means whenever there is ambiguity in the role that what task has to be performed under such circumstances directive leadership is more important as it leads to positive outcomes. Supportive leadership results in the high employee performance and satisfaction when subordinates are performing structured tasks. Here structured task means that norms, status, role, everything, every aspect and property of the organization and group is being clearly defined by the structure by the authorities.

Directive leadership is likely to be redundant among subordinates with high ability or with considerable experience. That is obvious that whenever any employee who has lot of experience in any organization they do not require any direction by the leader their experience directs them in the right path that how the goal can be achieved. Their expertise and experience both become pillars of high performance. The clearer and more bureaucratic the formal authority relationship the more leader should exhibit supportive behavior and de-emphasize directive behavior. This point creates a balance between higher authority and the followers.

The leader here at this point becomes very supportive to moderate the relationship or to bring the relationship between the higher authority which is very much commanding and very much formalized in structure moderates the relationship between higher authority and the employees where the leader provides more support to the followers by representing the grievances or reconciling their conflicts and create a community of interest. Further, directive leadership will lead to higher employee satisfaction when there is a substantial conflict within a work group. Now, who will resolve the conflict? Every group has this ubiquitous feature in terms of conflict and from where the members will get the satisfaction when conflict is also existing in the group. To understand the situation the leader will perform a role of a directive or provide directive leadership where the leader is assigning roles in a very authoritative manner or in a very coaching and guidance manner so that every follower realizes his duty and performs it as per the norms and as per the expectations and ultimately the role the conflict tends to reduce. As soon as the conflict tends to reduce the level of satisfaction of the employees also increases.

So, there is a correlation between leader conflict and performance of the employees because as soon as appropriate leadership intervenes to reduce the conflict the level of motivation also raises high. Subordinates with an internal locus of control those who believe they control their own destiny will be more satisfied with a participative style. When followers have more freedom to perform the task on their own the results also are very positive and members tend to maintain a high internal locus of control that whatever I have done it has brought some positive outcomes and he or she takes a responsibility. Now, this responsibility is in form of recognition, in form of achievement of the goals and appreciation from the higher authority. Further, subordinates with an external locus of control will be more satisfied with the directive style.

This is acceptance of all the followers that how they can perform the job. Their ultimate aim is that satisfaction should be experienced. So, if it is subordinates who experience a high internal locus of control then they are believing in their performance, but satisfaction is there because they have got lot of support from the system. And if subordinates have external locus of control then also they are satisfied because they have experienced directive leadership which gives them proper detailed direction that how the job has to be performed. Even under detailed directives the followers will tend to perform the job on typical lines which will lead them to their goal.

In last achievement, leadership will increase subordinates expectations that effort will lead to high performance when tasks are ambiguously structured. Now, here the achievement oriented leadership when it increases will increase subordinates expectations that effort will lead to high performance when tasks are ambiguously structured. Now, under such circumstances there is a complication also that style of leadership is achievement oriented, but at the same time the expectation is also high from the subordinates. When expectations are high this will lead to performance, but this kind of leadership is only possible to exercise when the structures are ambiguous in nature. That means whenever any job or task is unstructured in nature and the performance has to be high under such circumstances achievement oriented leadership style has positive outcomes in terms of expectations and meeting the expectations by the followers.

So, this is how this path goal theory evolved the following assumptions under what circumstances these four leadership styles will be effective under what conditions based on followers satisfaction, based on the task structure or based on the locus of control. So, in all in all the factors that moderate the relationship between leader behavior and outcomes all these situational factors have been taken into consideration and under what circumstances which leadership style will lead to positive outcomes. So, based on these the assumptions have been established by Robert House. We can say that the theory is useful because it reminds leaders that the central purpose as a leader is to help subordinates define and reach their goals in an efficient manner. No matter what which leadership style has been adopted by the by the leader ultimate goal is to clear the roadblocks of pitfalls of all the employees and at the same time employees reach their goal with high performances.

So, this is about path goal theory of leadership which is again one of the early theories of leadership and is been exercised till day in every organization. The only the only significance of this discussion is that how every organization based on the environment, based on the resources, based on the leader leadership styles and based on the employee behavior or performance any leadership behavior can be adopted accordingly. I end up my discussion here. I will continue in the next class. Thank you so much. Thank you.