

The lion king movie analysis essay sample

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Today's world requires leadership to compete and succeed. The rapidly changing conditions in the workplace demand adaptive leadership styles, and the success of an organization relies on leaders evaluating and applying effective leadership styles before workplace failures occur. The Disney's animated movie "The Lion King" portrays a combination of leadership styles and changing conditions. We chose to analyze Mufasa, King of Pride Rock, and explain his use of the Path-Goal Theory and its different leadership approaches based on who he was leading and the situation. Additionally, French and Raven's Five Bases of Power is presented in order to highlight Mufasa's success in leading the Pride Rock Kingdom, while simultaneously using the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) approach with Zazu.

Robert House's Path-Goal Leadership Theory states that effective leaders need to engage in different types of leadership behavior depending on the nature and the demands of a particular situation¹. French and Raven's Five Bases of Social Power describes how different forms of power affects one's leadership and success. ² Mufasa portrayed these theories of management throughout his leadership of Simba, Scar, and Zazu.

Mufasa is a strong and powerful lion who possesses positive traits such as intelligence, patience, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability; he is also strong, trustworthy, brave, respectful, and loyal. Based on the trait approach³, he demonstrates attributes of an effective leader, holds a deep understanding of the forces that make the Pride Lands balanced and healthy, and varied his leadership approach based on whom he was leading (See Exhibit 1). The Path Goal Theory outlines four leadership styles- Directive, Supportive, Participative, and Achievement-Oriented, and

these styles of leadership can be tailored to each subordinate¹. Mufasa effectively used the achievement-oriented and participative approach with Zazu; he also effectively used the supportive approach. However, he ineffectively used the directive approach with Simba and Scar. French and Raven's Five Principles of Social Power is an important concept in understanding Mufasa's success and lack thereof in leading his kingdom.

The theory asserts that there are five main forms of power: Reward, Referent, Legitimate, Expert, and Coercive. These five bases fall into two categories: Personal Power, which results from a leader's individual characteristics, and Positional Power, which stems from the leader's hierarchical position². Mufasa was more successful in leading his subordinates when he used personal power as opposed to when positional power. For example, Mufasa succeeded in teaching Simba to pounce, using a referent relationship with Simba as well as his own expertise in pouncing to guide his son⁴. He however failed as a leader when he commanded Simba not to explore the elephant graveyard⁵ (see Exhibit 3). He would have been more effective if he provided expert reasoning to Simba in a friendly tone, and explained that there were ruthless and murderous hyenas that lived in graveyard. French and Raven's Five Principles of Social Power offer a useful insight into Mufasa's successful and unsuccessful leadership of the Pride Rock Kingdom.

Zazu acted as a counselor to Mufasa in the same way Tom Hagen did to The Don. They had a relational and psychological contract between them, in addition to a trusting relationship. Zazu portrayed all three components of

trustworthiness to Mufasa – competence in the way he carried out his tasks, benevolence as he interacted with others in Pride Rock, and integrity with which he performed all of his work⁶. As defined by Graen's Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Approach⁷, the King and Zazu also shared an "In Group" High Quality Exchange. Zazu shared a very close relation to his boss, and was very protective of Mufasa and his family. He tended to focus on a higher quality of work in comparison to other animals in Pride Rock. Mufasa utilized referent power and the achievement-oriented style approach when managing Zazu, who appeared to strongly respect and admire the King (see Exhibit 1). Mufasa set challenging goals for him, such as developing Simba into a good leader, and trusting that he would meet his expectations.

Mufasa failed greatly in managing his brother, Scar. He ignored Scar's needs and relied only on his positional power as king to lead the restless lion. This oversight by Mufasa cost him a potentially valuable ally and ultimately led to his downfall. Despite Scar's dissatisfaction, Mufasa, exercised only coercive and legitimate power to influence Scar. Scar made it clear that he was envious of Simba's birthright to be future king when he said:

"I was first in line until that little hairball was born" ⁸ (see Exhibit 4).

With little concern for Scar's dissatisfaction, Mufasa responded immediately in a loud, threatening tone:

"That hairball is my son and your future king" ⁸.

Scar then walked away defiantly, and Mufasa leapt in front of him, roared and reacted as though he were challenging Mufasa's authority. Mufasa relied

on legitimate power, as he felt comfortable and unthreatened as king and as Scar's brother. He also depended on coercive power, knowing that he could physically dominate and punish Scar if deemed necessary.

One of the issues with using only legitimacy and coercion is that both result in compliance at best and in resistance and mutiny at worst^{4, 9}. Scar complied with Mufasa's orders but not enthusiastically or committedly. Mufasa's coercive aggression and complacency only made things worse, caused resistance and ill will, and ultimately motivated Scar to overthrow and murder him. Unlike Don Vito Corleone's controlled disposition, Mufasa let his temper get the better of him, and he ignored Scar's needs, aspirations, and obvious defiance. Indeed, Scar could have been a valuable asset to the kingdom, considering his persuasive personality, clever instincts, and ambitious nature. Instead of avoiding Scar's blatant frustration, Mufasa should have addressed the conflict head-on using firmness and reason. He should have found a collaborative solution that met both of their needs, such as using a Leader-Match strategy. He could have offered Scar a position within the Pride Lands, made Scar feel powerful and valued, and avoided much frustration.

Mufasa effectively and ineffectively managed his son. He set a great example and was someone who proved to be very well respected and admired, much like Don Vito Corleone. Mufasa failed in managing Simba when using the directive leadership approach. When Simba asked why he could not go to the Elephant Graveyard, Mufasa simply refused and did not

explain why⁵. He did not provide him with details or an explanation which caused great curiosity in the cub.

Depending on the situation and person being lead, different leadership styles succeed at different rates. Mufasa acted as a strong leader and showed specific trait approaches while teaching Simba how to lead using specific qualities such as motivation, reinforcement, intellectual stimulation, inspiration, integrity, discipline and empowerment. In this way Mufasa clearly passed his legacy and vision on to his son. However, Mufasa clearly underestimated Scar and did not foresee the bigger problem and its potential risks. This proved to be an opportunity for Scar, who overtook the kingdom at the first chance by getting rid of Simba and creating alienation within Pride Rock. Scar unmistakably showed a strong desire of self-actualization, which could have been avoided if Mufasa provided him with a position within the kingdom.

As a result we can conclude that during peacetime, Mufasa was an effective leader with a great deal of consideration and high structure¹⁰. However, his style was not effective when the situation turned hostile and violent. We can therefore demonstrate that his contributions of style-based leadership are effective depending on the situation at hand. In the Godfather, the Don explained how our enemies must overestimate our flaws and underestimate our strengths in order to anticipate their next move and be ready for any attacks^{9, 11}. Had Mufasa followed this advice, he would have been a more effective leader in managing Scar, and would have had a longer reign as King of the Pride Lands and Ruler of Pride Rock.