

# Pros and cons of situational leadership theory

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The strengths of situational leadership theory are its current use in many organizations, practicality, and prescriptive approach. Situational leadership theory is appealing to many leadership/management practitioners because it is seen as common sense for leaders to be flexible and adaptable to different situational variables, especially the conditions and characteristics of their subordinates and workplaces (Schedlitzki & Edwards, 2014, p. 53). In addition, this theory is practical because it can be easily explained and understood, it is intuitive, and it can be applied across diverse settings (Northouse, 2013, p. 105). Moreover, this theory is also prescriptive, where it is clear on what leaders and subordinates should do and should not do (Northouse, 2013, p. 105). Its guidelines are valuable in guiding situational leadership.

Besides strengths, situational leadership theory has its weaknesses, namely its over-simplified description of the relationship between leader behaviors and situational variables and lack of empirical research that can support assumptions and propositions. Scholars criticize the vagueness of the relationship between leader behaviors and situational variables, specifically the lack of explanation of variations for each leadership behavior category and how they can impact situational factors (Northouse, 2013, p. 107; Schedlitzki & Edwards, 2014, p. 54). Furthermore, this theory lacks empirical support for its assumptions and prescriptions. There is a lack of empirical testing on the theoretical basis of the theory and how it can affect performance variables and outcomes (Northouse, 2013, p. 107; Schedlitzki & Edwards, 2014, p. 54).

Situational leadership theory is a practical, simple, and prescriptive theory that appeals to practitioners and trainers alike. However, it lacks a further explanation of the relationships among its variables and empirical support for its assumptions and propositions. Nevertheless, this theory remains valuable as an important theory that can have widespread organizational value and applications.