

Path-goal and situational theories of leadership

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Path-goal theory of leadership is highly applicable in the public health situations; through this leadership theory, the public health leader can gain an in-depth understanding of the employees and then positively inspire their performance through motivation and contentment to enable them provide proper healthcare to patients within the institutions (House, 1971).

Nonetheless, the path-goal theory of leadership has a few strengths and limitations that may affect its application in public health. The strengths and limitations are as described below.

Strengths

One of the strengths of this theory is that it defines vividly and immensely the practical roles of the leader and employees as well. Through this, the leader can clearly specify the scopes of the task to be performed and the processes, as well as the responsibilities that the subordinates need to accomplish in order to achieve the set objectives. In this respect, the leadership behavior tends to be oriented towards achievements, participation, supportive and directive in all aspects.

The path goal theory helps leaders in gaining proper understanding of their work environments. In this perspective, the leader would develop an understanding of the public health institution, and then clarify the appropriate paths that should be taken by the employees in achieving the set objectives (Sarin & O'Connor, 2009). Moreover, the theory illuminates the possible obstacles that may prevent the health institution from achieving its set objectives.

Limitations

The path goal theory is complex since it puts many parameters into consideration and each of these parameters requires proper analysis before selection of a suitable leadership style. Public health institutions comprise of sophisticated systems with diversified leadership structures hence analysis and application of these parameters may not be effective.

The path goal theory criticizes the placement of great responsibilities on the leaders and few responsibilities on the subordinates. This makes the subordinates more dependent on the leadership and in the end inhibits their performance (Laureate Education, 2012). This can have negative influence on the performance of the workers within the public health sector since they would seek to draw their motivation and skills from the leaders rather than from self.

Similarities between the path goal theory and the situational theory

The path goal theory and the situational theory of leadership both share certain similarities most of which have significant impacts in the nature of leadership in public health sectors. Below are some of the similarities between these two:

Both the path goal theory and the situational theory hold on the assumptions that employee motivation largely depend on the leadership and that managers should adapt to their work places as well as employees. In the context of public health, both the theories uphold that the nature of leadership in place has a great impact on the performance of the subordinate employees (Luna & Jolly, 2008).

Both the theories also suggest flexible leadership approach to enable leaders to get the best out of their employees. Flexible leaders are capable of

adapting to any work environment and use their actions and skills to make the company successful (Sarin & O'Connor, 2009). This level of versatility works best for both theories and can lead to significant impacts in the health institution.

Differences

Situational leadership suggests that leadership mainly depend on situational elements, which may include the preferred leadership style as well as the levels of employee motivation, and without these, the leadership may not be effective (Luna & Jolly, 2008). The theory holds that certain factors influence leadership, and such may include leader- member relationships, task structures and the position power.

The path goal theory on the other hand suggests that leadership style has a great impact on employee performance and job satisfaction. The theory does not support situational factors to contribute to quality of leadership, rather it states that successful leaders lay down goals and relatively clear paths through which such goals can be achieved.

Is path goal theory a valid theory of leadership?

Yes, this is because it takes into consideration various leadership styles and matching them to various organizational context in which they can best be applied. Path goal theory takes a number of leadership elements into consideration such as clearing obstacles and giving a clear path for achieving intended goals (Sarin & O'Connor, 2009). These leadership and factors are comprehensive hence making the path goal theory valid and viable within any organizational setting.

References

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