

# Practical Application of Fiedler's Contingency Theory of Leadership on the basis of Categories of Effective Classroom Situation

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of the study was to understand the college teacher as a leader in different favourable or unfavourable classroom situation in perspective of Fiedler's Contingency Theory of Leadership. The study was conducted on 400 undergraduate final semester public college students of Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA). To assess the leadership style of teacher, Least Preferred Co - worker (LPC) scale was used. Task Structure and Teachers' Positional Power assessed by criteria of variables that pointed out by Fiedler. Co - relational data analysis conducted in this study to understand the relationship of different situational variables with teachers' leadership style. There was no perfect style of leadership, but investigator tried to find out the application of leadership style for teacher according to situation.*

**Keyword:** Fiedler's Contingency Theory of Leadership, Motivated leadership Style, Task structure, Teachers' Positional Power, Favourable Classroom Situation

## 1. Introduction

The Contingency Theory of Leadership defines the leadership style that should be contingent with situation. That means leader keep right leadership style which is needed at that situation. There are basically two type of leadership style, relationship oriented leadership style and task oriented leadership style. But, in this theory, no one is best style of leadership. It is completely depending on situation what type of leadership should be applied. In a particular situation, if we apply particular style of leadership that make a person perfect effective leader. (Fiedler, 1983)

Fred Edward Fiedler (July 13, 1922– June 8, 2017) developed the Contingency Theory of Leadership in 1958 in his book "Leader Attitude and Group Effectiveness". He researched the perspective of leader effectiveness in grouped situation. He discussed that leader's effectiveness on members depends on leader's control over the situation and application of leadership style. Leader's adaptation by leadership style is not always effective, rather than, leadership style matching with situation is always effective. Therefore, leadership style can be modified as per need to strengthen the effectiveness. A leader can be effective Infront of other members when style of leadership becomes perfect with his or her situational environment around him or her. (Gupta, 2009)

Fiedler was not concern with leader's adaptation with situation. In spiteof that he goaled the compatible leadership style with situational environment. It was important to him that understands what types of leadership style leaders have and how they use it best to make leadership effective. To understand the leader's style of leadership, he used Least Preferred Co - worker Scale (LPC). High LPC means leader concern with good personal skill through making relationship with other members that he called people - oriented leadership style. Another side, low LPC is denoting

the leaders who have focused on task that is task - oriented leadership style. According to him, the Contingency Theory of Leadership has three factors that make leadership style situation based and leader become a effective. These are leader - member relation, task structure and positional power. People or relationship oriented leaders will have performed best when leader - member relationship good or task structure high. It is not depending on leader's positional power. When leader's positional power is strong and task structure is vague, Task - oriented leaders are most effective in this situation. According to Fiedler's Model, after leadership style recognition, finding the best situation known as "Situational Favourableness" to that leadership style of the leader.

### Objective of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study

- 1) To understand the Fiedler's Contingency Theory of Leadership in ground of classroom situation
- 2) To assess the college student's perception about their teachers' classroom leadership style.
- 3) To identify the relationship of teacher - student relational leadership style with Categories of Effective Classroom Situation according to college students.

### Hypothesis of the Study

The following are the null hypotheses framed for the study  
H<sub>0</sub>1 There is no significant relationship between the Teacher - Student relationship and Task Structure in the context of college students

H<sub>0</sub>2 There is no significant relationship between the Teacher - Student relationship and Positional Power of Teacher in the context of college students

## 2. Methodology

At first deeply understood the Fiedler's Contingency Theory of Leadership. Then framed the theory around the college

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teacher as a leader and identified the favorable classroom situation to make the teacher - student motivated relationship. In this purpose 400 different undergraduate public college students of Kolkata Metropolitan Area (KMA) were simple randomly selected from North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Howrah and Hooghly districts of West Bengal. Teacher - student relationship (leader - member relationship) is measured by the Least Preferred Co - worker (LPC) Scale. Goal clarity, path simplicity, solution regularity and solution verifiability of task are checked by students' opinion to understand the task structure. Authoritarian, recommended action, promoting, knowledge, evaluating and initiative power of teacher is measured as positional power of the teacher. Content Validity of all data collection instrument was checked by three subject expert. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability value of Teacher - Student Relationship LPC Scale (18 items), Task Structure Scale (10 items) and Teachers' Positional Power Scale (12 items) were 0.839, 0.815 and 0.921 respectively. All reliability values were above 0.7 that prove the reliability of tools

style according to situation. According to him, leaders' life experience result is only the product of leadership style of individual that can be difficult to change. Instead of that anyone wants to change their leadership style, they should match the particular leadership style to particular favourable situation. (Singh, et. al, 1979) Fiedler's theory of leadership is based on leadership style, situational variation and relationship between them.

Leadership style of individual teacher measured by Least Preferred Co - worker (LPC) scale where examined the eighteen reciprocal attribute. According to the model there was basically two type of leadership style i. e. Relationship Oriented Leadership Style and Task Oriented Leadership Style. Relationship oriented teacher are maintaining the teacher student relationship and their LPC score is above 64. In other side, task oriented teacher are focused on their instructions that they give to their students and want to get students results as soon as possible. They only believe in success and failure at any cost. Their LPC scores are below 58.

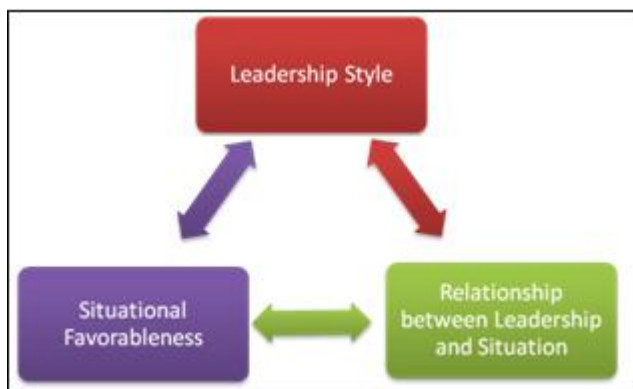


Figure 1: Components of Contingency Theory

### 3. Discussion and Analysis

#### Fiedler's Contingency Theory of Leadership

Fred Fiedler was one of the leading researchers of twentieth century in organisational behavioural psychology. When other researchers described the leadership and organisational performance as traits of personality and personal characteristics of leaders, at that time, he introduced leadership styles and behaviours of leaders as organisational performance. In the 1967, he gave solutions to the trait theory through the Contingency Model. He produced relevant framework for leadership that make it dynamic. His model is an organisational framework where people can evaluate the effectiveness of a leader in a particular organisational situation. He told through this model that leader's effectiveness depends on the situation. There is no best type of leadership, but leader should use best leadership

Table 1: Reciprocal Attributes of Leadership Style and LPC Score

Attribute	Always	Sometimes	Always	Attribute	
Pleasant	8	7	6 5 4 3	Unpleasant	
Friendly	8	7	6 5 4 3	Unfriendly	
Rejecting	1	2	3 4 5 6 7 8	Accepting	
Tense	1	2	3 4 5 6 7 8	Relaxed	
Distant	1	2	3 4 5 6 7 8	Close	
Cold	1	2	3 4 5 6 7 8	Warm	
Supportive	8	7	6 5 4 3	2 1	Hostile
Boring	8	7	6 5 4 3	2 1	Interesting
Quarrelsome	1	2	3 4 5 6 7 8	Harmonious	
Gloomy	1	2	3 4 5 6 7 8	Cheerful	
Open	8	7	6 5 4 3	2 1	Guarded
Backbiting	1	2	3 4 5 6 7 8	Loyal	
Untrustworthy	1	2	3 4 5 6 7 8	Trustworthy	
Considerate	8	7	6 5 4 3	2 1	Inconsiderate
Nasty	1	2	3 4 5 6 7 8	Nice	
Agreeable	8	7	6 5 4 3	2 1	Disagreeable
Insincere	1	2	3 4 5 6 7 8	Sincere	
Kind	8	7	6 5 4 3	2 1	Unkind

Another situational variable is Task Structure that referce the group task would be structured or not. It represented the task's clarity to the leader and also to the members. If group task is unstructure then everything would be ambiguous. To complete the goal, leader doesn't have clear solution with corrcet approach to leadreship. But structural grop task have clear idea about the goal. In this situation leader and members can adapt proper approach to reach the goal. Fiedler classify the task structure in high and low.

Table2: Situational Variables and Favourableness: Eight - Octant Continuum

Situational Variables	Leader Member Relationship		Good				Poor			
	Task Structure		High		Low		High		Low	
	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak		
Types of Situation (Octants)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
	Very Favourable				Very Unfavourable					
	Task - Motivated Leaders		Relationship - Motivated Leaders		Task - Motivated Leaders					

Third situational variable of the theory was Leader Positional Power. It refers the the amount of power that a

leader has over the member or group. Leader positional power represents which extent leader can reward and punish

the group. Stronger power of leader can control the situation in a higher degree. If leader loss their positional power, leaders do not control the situation and they don't have

proper resources to control. Fiedler classify the Leader Positional Power in strong and weak.

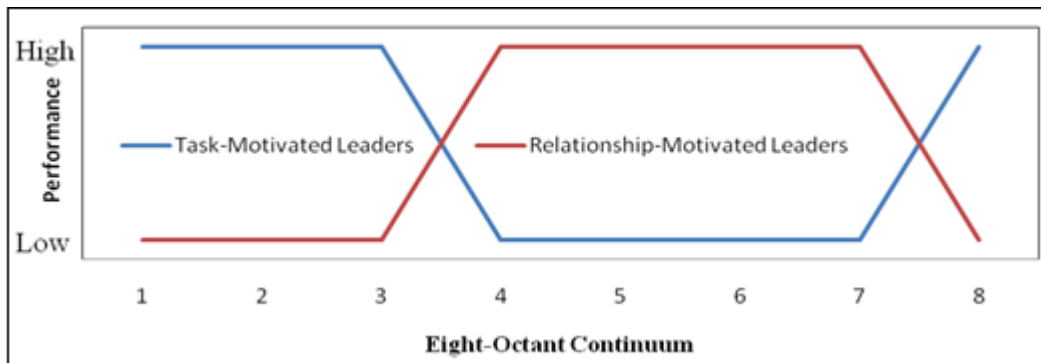


Figure 2: Performance of Leader and Type of Situation

According to the theory, Leader - member relationship is most important variable to effect the situation. In this situation, Task Structure and Leader Positional Power are moderately and least important respectively. These three variables interact with each other and create eight possible situations that call Eight - octant (Table 2 & Figure 2). Table 2 describe all possible type of situation. 1<sup>st</sup> octant and 8<sup>th</sup> octant are denoting very favourable and very unfavourable situations respectively. Task - motivated leadership style is best in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> continuum situation and relationship - motivated leadership style is best in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> continuum situation. (Mathews, 2022)

**Student's perception about their Teachers' Classroom leadership Style**

In this present study, teacher - student relationship (leader - member relationship) is measured by the Least Preferred Co - worker (LPC) Scale. Goal clarity, path simplicity, solution regularity and solution verifiability of task are checked by students' opinion to understand the tusk structure. Authoritarian, recommended action, promoting, knowledge, evaluating and initiative power of teacher is measured as positional power of the teacher. After the analysis, researcher found that teacher - student relationship is most influencing factor than task structure and teachers' positional power to making favourable teaching learning situation (Figure 3). Therefore, relationship - motivated teachers are comparatively higher in number (Figure 4).

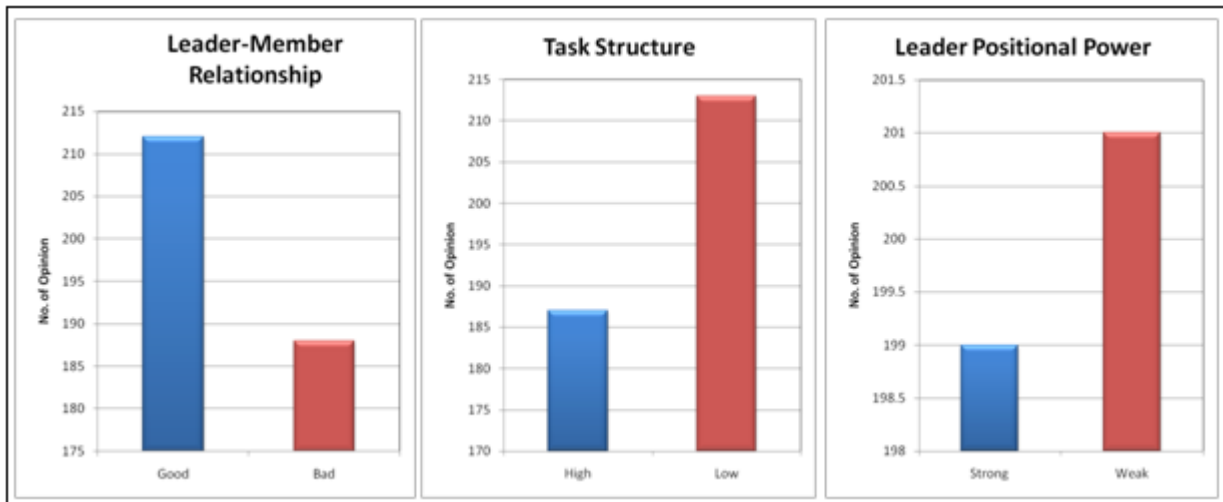


Figure 3: Students Opinion about Situational Variables of Teachers

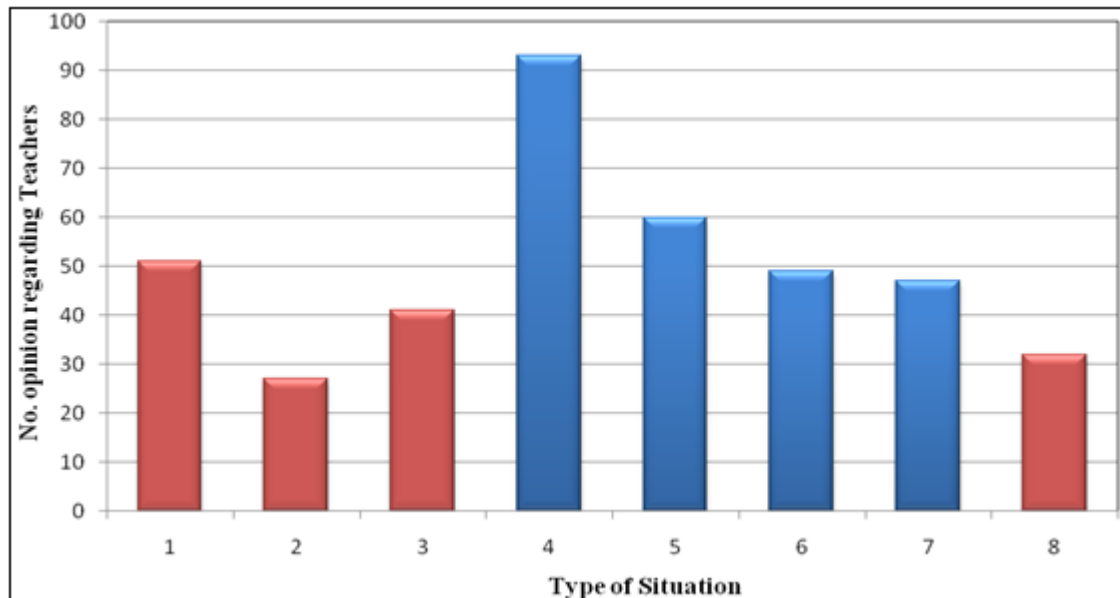


Figure 4: Effective Classroom Situation According to Students Opinion

Investigator adapted to hypothesis to identify the relationship of different favourable classroom situation variables with teachers’ leadership style. Before testing the hypothesis investigator checked the normality of the data

according to the variables. Sample data followed Normal probability curve (NPC). Skewness and kurtosis values of all data set had near to zero.

Table 3: Correlation test of Classroom Situational Variable and their Result

Ho	N	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	r	p	Remark
Ho1	400	Task Structure	Teacher - Student Relationship	-.014	.094	Ho1 fail to rejected
Ho2		Teachers’ Positional Power		.452	.029	Ho2 rejected

From the above result, it was proved that there was no significant relationship between Task Structure and Teacher - Student Relationship, because significance value was 0.094 that above the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore null hypothesis (Ho1) failed to reject. But in another side, there have significant positive relationship ( $r = 0.452$ ,  $p = 0.029$ ) between Teachers’ Positional Power and Teacher - Student Relationship. Therefore null hypothesis (Ho2) rejected.

4. Findings of the Study

- 1) Investigator can relate Fiedler’s Contingency Theory of Leadership with college teachers and their classroom situation.
- 2) Most of the college teachers have in relationship - orientation and relationship - motivation teaching - learning process.
- 3) College students thought that their teachers have been maintaining relatively good teacher - student relationship in their classroom situation.
- 4) According to students, task structure doesn’t relate with teachers leadership style.
- 5) Above half of students thought that teacher instructed task structure was comparatively low.
- 6) Positional power of teachers can positively relate with teacher - student relationship orientation.
- 7) Classroom situation was moderately favourable for students and also for teachers.

5. Conclusion

Investigator found from his study that Fiedler’s Contingency Theory of Leadership can apply on teaching learning classroom situation. According to students, College teachers of Kolkata Metropolitan Area colleges have very much followed the relationship oriented leadership style as teacher. Teachers and students can understand each other’s emotions strengthening their relationship. Teachers are more emotionally intelligent. Students follow their teacher and they have been improving their emotional intelligence. That is representing their social well - being.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended from this study that teachers will make task structure for their students should be more associated with their relationship orientation. After that teaching - learning classroom situation will get higher situational favourableness. Where, teacher - student relationship will be more task - motivated leadership beside of relationship - orientation. It would be the more effective teaching - learning process that proves their actual achievement.

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