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## LEADERSHIP IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT: THEORETICAL APPROACH

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received: 2025.01.06 Received in revised form: 2025.01.07 Accepted: 2025.01.09 Available online</p> <hr/> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Leadership; Strategic Management; Strategic Leadership; Leadership in Strategic Management;</p> <p>JEL CODES: L1,</p>	<p><i>Leaders can make significant contributions to the functioning of the firm, regardless of their time and position. Leadership with effective strategies can provide a fundamental foundation for the effective use of the strategic management process. Leaders who follow strategies can accelerate the growth of relevant strategic activities and determine how to implement them. These activities serve as a gateway to higher average results and strategic competitiveness. Managers working in various organizations are fully aware of the need to create a strategic plan for the future of their organizations and participate in the effective adoption of these well-planned plans. In strategic management, the leader assumes various roles. He/she creates the conditions for change. Secondly, he/she selects key players from the organization and in the third stage, he/she creates a leadership team by shaping the vision and strategy through a visionary process that breaks down the existing hierarchy and clarifies the strategy that the entire organization can understand.</i></p> <p><i>Taking into consideration above mentioned facts, the article focuses on theoretical background of the topic. Scientific literature has been used in order to shed light into the topic.</i></p>

### 1. Introduction

There are many companies that are growing rapidly in modern times. Companies facing this competition need a competitive advantage in order to maintain business continuity and compete in the competitive business world (Anggraeni et al., 2023).

The presence of leaders in organizations is effective in motivating employees, making them more motivated and committed to their jobs. Therefore, companies need leaders who support and guide individuals. It is not important to try to achieve goals by controlling employees with orders and instructions. What is important for leaders is to work with high motivation and bring the team together.

In general, there are four main elements common to all definitions of leadership. These elements can be listed as follows:

Leader: An organization member who can influence the members of the group.

Followers (members): People who accept the influence of the leader.

Purpose: Consists of goals, interests, and needs that bring group members together.

Environment: A basic element consisting of factors such as the competence of the members, the level of relationship, goal achievement, and the level of motivation.

Leadership is a set of behaviors that enable people to express the goals of the organization and then motivate them to contribute together to achieve the goals of the organization. Basically, the leader plays a significant role in making decisions that will ensure the effectiveness (efficiency) and success of the organization. A leader should support his subordinates to lead. He should treat everyone equally without any discrimination. He should value everyone's participation. The leader is responsible for building strong relationships both vertically and horizontally within the organization. A leader needs to involve everyone in the strategic management process because this is positively related to overall performance.

It is the leader's commitment to help achieve the strategic vision. Most importantly, in order to be a champion, the leader's goals must be integrated with the strategic goals and objectives of the organization. For this, the leader's power must be used correctly, honestly and with conviction. A leader must have a clear mental approach to the need for change and the capabilities of the organization (Bajwa et al., 2011). The effectiveness of the organization depends on the strategies used to realize the company's vision. Management adopts the strategy with a vision that will enrich the firm's ability to perform well or when needed. Today's business environment is changing rapidly and leaders often try to adopt agile and process-enhancing strategies to enable the organization to respond to change. Management has influenced all decision-making processes and decision-making is the foundation of the strategic management process. It facilitates the entire process from conceptual framework to evaluation for strategy formulation. In particular, strategy implementation is completely dependent on effective decision-making.

## **2. The Meaning of Leadership Term**

Leadership is the activity of a group of people who direct the activities of the group to achieve the goals of the group (Ogbeidi, 2012). Leadership is an understanding related to management rather than the leader of a company or organization. Leadership is defined as a dynamic process of working in groups in which a person freely invites and influences other group members to commit to group goals or common goals within a certain period of time and in a certain organizational context (Abeguki et al., 2014). As can be understood from here, elements such as purpose, leader, target audience, environment and conditions are very important in the leadership process. Leadership occurs as a result of a person perceived as a leader influencing their actions and behaviors by supporting them rather than using power over their followers. The right to leadership is a privilege that group members grant to the person or persons they accept as leaders. For leadership, there is a need for common goals that will bring the members of the organization together, a leader who will influence and motivate these members, a target audience that will support this leader and accept him as a leader, and an environment that will enable all of these to happen. When these conditions are met, it is possible to talk about leadership. According to Stogdill (1974), leadership is generally defined from two different perspectives. One of these defines leadership in terms of process, and the other in terms of characteristics. The leader is known as the person who directs the activities of the members of the organization in accordance with the organizational goals and organizes their activities. It is

defined as the person who has the characteristics that can successfully influence the members of the group (Ivancevich and Matteson, 2002: 425). Some definitions of leadership are given below:

- Leadership is the act of maintaining interaction and agreement in order to mobilize and develop the company (Hambrick and Mason, 1984).
- Leadership is a role that organizes those who strive to achieve their goals according to the situation and answers their questions (Dessler, 1980).
- Leadership is all the behaviors of an individual to direct the behavior of a group to a common goal (Ülgen, 2013).
- Leadership is a directed interpersonal interaction process in an environment where the communication process takes place in order to achieve predetermined goals (Eren, 2005).
- Leadership is the activity of influencing human behavior in an organized group to achieve a specific goal (Dinçer, 2007).

There are three different theories discussed in the scientific literature about leadership (Yukl, 1999):

- Trait theories (1930-1950);
- Behavioral theories (1950-1960);
- Situational leadership theories (1960-1970).

#### *Trait theories*

According to this theory, the characteristics of the leader are considered the most important factor determining the effectiveness of the leadership process. The main reason why a person is seen (accepted) as a leader in a certain group and leads this group is the characteristics of this person. According to this theory, a leader is different from others in terms of physical and personality characteristics. Physical, intellectual, emotional and social characteristics make individuals leaders. According to research, these differences are as follows (Bass, 1990):

1. Emotional characteristics: Self-control, passion, sense of trust, perception, liking and satisfaction, high sense of achievement, etc. are included here.
2. Social characteristics: Friendship and camaraderie, self-acceptance, sociability, etc. are included here.
3. Physical characteristics: Gender, height, sympathy, speech, race, influence, power, age, activity, etc. are included here.
4. Mental characteristics: Knowledge, talent, attention, initiative, intelligence, determination, foresight, responsibility, realism, persuasion, etc. are included here.

When it is possible to identify individuals with these characteristics among group members, it will be easier to find and train individuals who will lead groups. By paying attention to individuals with these characteristics in personnel selection, they can be trained as future managers and leaders. However, some researchers do not find it appropriate to associate leadership only with the characteristics of individuals. Because, according to them, the list of characteristics is endless and it is difficult to define and measure them. Studies have shown that sometimes effective leaders do not have the same characteristics. Sometimes, it has been

observed that there are individuals among group members who have more characteristics than the leader characteristics but do not appear to be leaders. This situation is the exact opposite of the trait theory (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991).

### *Behavioral Theories*

The main purpose of behavioral leadership theories is to reveal certain and similar behaviors of leaders and thus try to explain leadership in terms of behaviors. The leader should support the efforts of group members, exhibit behaviors that observe personal values and clearly state organizational processes. The benefit of this theory is that it reveals behaviors and informal leaders as well as formal leaders and creates conditions for individuals to acquire leadership behaviors through training (Schriesheim and Bird, 1979).

There are enough behavioral leadership theories. We present a few of them to your attention:

#### **1. Ohio State University Research**

The first research on behavioral leadership was conducted at Ohio State University (started in 1945). The main purpose of the research was to determine how an effective leader is defined. At the beginning of the research, various definitions were created that showed the behaviors exhibited by leaders and then these definitions were subjected to factor analysis to determine the factors that explain the behaviors of leaders. As a result of this study, two main dimensions were determined that determine leadership behaviors. These are: Consideration of people (focus on human relations) and initiative (focus on work) (Shartle, 1979).

The factor of consideration of people refers to the leader's behavior of creating trust and respect in followers and developing friendship with them. It is thought that a leader who considers people will be able to communicate more effectively with followers and will be more effective in achieving goals because he/she is closely interested in their demands and needs (Likert, 1979).

The initiative factor is the factor in which the leader determines the goal, group members, communication system, work-related times and instructions in order to complete the tasks related to the goal on time. It is believed that leaders who consider work will influence group members to do more and better work because they put all their energy and attention into the work. In recent years, it has been observed that there are leaders who display both types of behaviors in organizations.

#### **2. Blake and Mouton's Management Style Matrix**

The management style matrix, created by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton in 1964, was created to determine the behaviors of leaders. They proposed a two-dimensional management style matrix, "interpersonal orientation" and "production orientation", when evaluating leadership behaviors. They suggested that the most effective leadership style could be obtained when the interpersonal and production orientation dimensions were evaluated together. In the interpersonal orientation, the leader is interested in the human dimension of the job. He/she provides the necessary production conditions and requirements for the motivation of everyone in the group. The production-oriented leader is interested in the production and quality of the product. In the management style matrix, these two different factors, considered as interpersonal and production orientation, are placed in a matrix and different leadership behaviors are

explained according to their positions in this matrix (Blake et. Mouton, 1985).

There are 5 different types of leaders in this matrix:

Type 1: Ineffective leader: He/she makes the least effort to complete the work required to stay in the organization.

Type 2: Club leader: The leader emphasizes thoughtful, relaxed, and friendly relationships, but has minimal interest in the task.

Type 3: Task leader: The leader uses his authority to ensure efficiency and has little interest in human relations.

Type 4: Organizational leader: A compromise type who tries to balance the amount of work to be done with the morale of the employees.

Type 5: Team leader: This is the most effective leader type in the matrix. He is most effective with people who are dedicated to the task and achieve high productivity.

Mutual trust and respect are at their highest. Everyone is aware of their interdependence.

Therefore, a manager who understands the management style thoroughly can change it through various training programs.

### ***3. Research at the University of Michigan***

The purpose of the research conducted by Rensis Likert at the University of Michigan was to examine successful groups and determine the leadership behaviors in these groups. Here, low productive and high productive employees in groups from different organizations were analyzed and the difference between an effective leader and another was analyzed and four main factors were determined as a result (Likert, 1979:148):

- Support: Behaviors that increase the attention given to the personal feelings of group members are important and measure individual behaviors.

- Facilitating relationships: Behaviors that support the development of close and mutually satisfying relationships among group members are important.

- Goal Emphasis: Motivational behavior is important in achieving group goals and achieving high performance and measures work-oriented behaviors.

- Facilitating work: Behaviors that facilitate the achievement of goals by providing resources such as tools and technical information are important and measure work-oriented behaviors.

The first two of these factors measure personal behaviors, while the other two measure work-oriented behaviors. If a leader values people, he will support group members and give priority to interpersonal relationships. He will increase the satisfaction of group members on the basis of delegation, try to improve working conditions and pay attention to the individual development of employees. This is extremely important for increasing morale and motivation in the team. Such leaders support the development of the team by delegating their authority and ensure that members are satisfied with the effective working conditions within the organization. If a leader values work, he will emphasize the person's purpose and the facilitation of work. He will monitor the work of group members according to predetermined principles and methods and will punish them using formal authority. The leaders' behavior based on command and

obedience creates conditions for group members to feel under pressure, which negatively affects their morale and motivation.

➤ *Situational Leadership Theories*

These theories rely on the current situation and conditions to explain the behavior of leaders. As researchers continue their work to develop the concept of leadership in different organizational structures, they have encountered very different results. In some cases, individual-focused leadership behaviors have been found to be very effective, while in other cases, task-focused leadership has been found to be more effective. This has developed the concept of leaders adapting to the situation (Fiedler, 1954:381). The understanding that there is no single type of leadership that can be defined as "best" and that the most effective leaders are those who can adapt their leadership approaches to the situation is the main idea of situational theories. The general assumption of situational leadership theories is that different situations require different leadership styles. Leaders emerge according to the characteristics and demands of the environment. Individual characteristics are not taken into account, only environmental characteristics are relevant. According to this theory, a leader motivates employees by showing different behavioral patterns depending on the situation of the job. Situational leadership theories state that the most appropriate leader behavior will change depending on the situation (Fiedler, 1958).

According to this theory, the main factors that determine the effectiveness of a leader are as follows:

- Characteristics of the organization in which the leadership is established;
- Past experiences of the leader and followers;
- The nature of the goal to be achieved;
- Skills and expectations of followers (group members).

The leader is responsible for developing strategies to achieve the vision. Basically, creating a strategy means providing a roadmap, and this roadmap must be clear and focused. It is the responsibility of the leadership to connect the strategy process to the vision. It should encourage a learning culture by providing a clear set of values for the organization (Fiedler, 1967). Values guide the behavior of the organization and direct it in the right direction. Both the vision and strategies should reflect these values. When a leader understands the importance of values, the process of creating and implementing strategies becomes easier. The most important role of leadership is to integrate people into the strategic management process. It should include everyone to ensure sensitivity to change (Azhar et al., 2013).

### **3. Strategic Leadership**

A company's competitive advantage can be affected by the strategy implemented by the company's management. Managers play an important role in aligning the company's goals as leaders in the implementation of the company's operational activities. According to (Jooste and Fourie, 2009), strategic leadership is the ability of leaders to foresee, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others to create the strategic changes the organization needs. The leader should be able to define the company's goals, vision, and mission and develop the human resources it has.

Strategic leadership is defined by Ireland and Hitt (2005) as the ability to see the future, create a vision, maintain flexibility, think strategically, and work with others to initiate change that will create a meaningful future for the organization. Accordingly, a company gains competitive advantage when its strategic leadership processes are difficult for competitors to understand and imitate. Faced with the challenges of a global economy, without effective strategic leadership, a firm is unlikely to achieve superior levels or even satisfactory performance.

Rowe (2001) defines strategic leadership as the ability to voluntarily influence others to make daily decisions that will increase long-term sustainability while maintaining short-term financial stability.

According to Sullivan and Harper (1997), strategic leadership is the management and control of logical and well-thought-out actions such as purpose, culture, strategy, core identities and critical processes that constitute the organization in its most basic sense. Strategic leadership is not only about performing well today, but also about providing deep, long-term change and transformation at the heart of the organization. According to the authors, when the management dimensions are examined in a Venn diagram, strategic leadership is at the center of creation, team building and management clusters. Guillot (2003) defines strategic leadership as the ability of a wise, experienced general manager to create a vision and make important decisions in a complex and uncertain strategic environment. According to the author, the purpose of strategy is to connect the results to be achieved, the paths and methods, while the purpose of strategic leadership is to define the goals, choose the best ways and implement the most effective methods. When strategy is seen as a plan, strategic management thinks and decides to develop and implement the plan.

Cannella (2001) emphasizes two differences between leadership and strategic leadership. First, strategic leadership refers to people at the highest level of an organization, while leadership refers to leaders at all levels of an organization. Second, leadership focuses primarily on the relationship between leaders and followers, while strategic leadership does not deal with these relationship activities on a macro scale, but also focuses on strategic activities. Of course, the important role of senior managers in strategic leadership does not mean that managers at other levels are excluded from strategic leadership processes. Middle managers, in particular, are not only primarily responsible for implementing strategies, but can also help determine certain strategic directions (Swayne et al., 2006:201). Ülgen and Mirze (2004) also give strategic leadership an important place in the strategic management process and consider it one of the soft elements of the strategic management process. According to the authors, strategic analysis and rational decision-making constitute the hard elements of the process, while business opportunities, corporate culture and strategic leadership represent the soft elements of the strategic management process, which include human issues necessary for the success of the organization. Strategic leadership focuses on the characteristics and behaviors of managers and leaders who have strategic management knowledge and who know what is happening and how to act.

#### **4. Characteristics of a Strategic Leader**

Although there are different views in the literature on the characteristics that an effective strategic leader should have and the activities he/she should carry out, these views are often

similar. According to Wheelen et al. (2018), an important responsibility of senior managers who are accepted as strategic leaders is to determine the life climate of the entire organization. The employees of the organization see their strategic leaders as mentors and managers and want a vision that will show them the direction they should work. Strategic leaders will give this direction to the employees. Such leaders have three basic characteristics. First, they define the higher purpose of the organization. The vision put forward by the head of the organization transforms the activities and conflicts within the organization into a new perspective. This gives all employees the feeling that they are up-to-date about their work-related activities, while at the same time allowing them to see the impact of their work on the entire organization instead of getting stuck on the details of their work. The second characteristic of a strategic leader is that they are a role model for their followers. The leader sets an example with his/her behavior and clothing. The leader's attitude and values towards the goals and activities of the organization are expressed very clearly and are often revealed through speech and actions. The third characteristic is that the strategic leader sets high performance standards and trusts his followers to meet them. Here, the leader's coaching role is of great importance.

Swain et al. (2006) summarize the characteristics that a strategic leader should have as follows:

- Creates and communicates a compelling vision of the future.
- Ensures the participation of people from all levels of the organization and from different backgrounds in strategic management processes.
- Manages tomorrow, not today.
- Spends time with his people, tries to understand their problems and talks to them regularly (manages by walking around).
- Allows people to make mistakes. Products, Services and Management Innovations in process depend on people taking risks. People sometimes make mistakes, but success is achieved by trying.
- Trains leaders throughout the organization. Senior managers encourage their followers to take responsibility for managing the organization and motivating people.
- Trusts others in the organization to make the best decisions, rather than trying to control every detail.
- Gives time to solve cases.
- Sets an example with his behavior.
- Empowers employees to solve problems.

All these characteristics of the strategic leader can be grouped as follows (Ireland and Hitt, 2005: 68-72):

- Determining the purpose and vision of the organization.
- Determining and maintaining the core competencies of the organization.
- Developing human resources.
- Maintaining an effective organizational culture.
- Emphasize ethical standards.
- Establishing balanced organizational control.



Strategic leaders are also responsible for developing the organization's human resources. As a critical resource, human resources represent people's knowledge, skills and abilities and reflect people's education, experience and special distinctive talents (Hitt and Duane, 2002: 4-5). The most important investment that can be made in human resources is training programs that will enable them to reach their full potential and to raise a well-educated workforce (Ireland and Hitt, 2005: 70). Effective strategic leadership is also important for the development of human resources. Strategic leaders need to acquire the necessary skills to facilitate the development of human resources in their areas of responsibility (Hitt et al., 2007: 375). Another important characteristic of a strategic leader is to maintain an effective organizational culture. Organizational culture is the important beliefs and values that members of an organization generally share (Pearce and Robinson, 2007: 372). On the one hand, organizational culture affects leaders and their work, and on the other hand, the activities of strategic leaders shape organizational culture (Hitt et al., 2007: 24). A leader must express the basic values, beliefs and expectations that guide the organization more than many other people in the organization. In other words, he must shape the organizational culture. your leader

One of the basic tasks of an organization is to create a culture in which employees will live in relation to the organization's basic values and beliefs and to determine the climate of the organization. When the culture becomes institutionalized, it will guide all employees (Dessler, 1986: 361).

Strategic leaders should also pay particular attention to ethical practices, the moral filters that help distinguish right from wrong and guide actions within the organizational culture. Senior managers are generally thought to have a significant impact on the ethical practices and performance of the organization (Ireland and Hitt, 2005: 71). Organizational members observe the work styles of their leaders and then reflect these styles in their own work and in their values and beliefs within the organization. This increases the value of leaders and places an important role on the leader in determining and organizing the ethical standards of the organization (Pearce and Robinson, 2007: 366). Strategic leaders also need to establish a balanced organizational control mechanism within their own organizations. Organizational control is the formal and informal processes that strategic leaders use to establish, maintain, and change the boundaries of organizational action (Ireland and Hitt, 2005: 72). Control is necessary for organizations to achieve desired results. They help strategic leaders build trust, demonstrate the importance and value of their strategies to corporate stakeholders, and support strategic change. Controlling not only defines the necessary corrective actions, but also defines the parameters within which strategies should be implemented (Hitt et al., 2007: 382).

## **5. Conclusion**

In recent years, there has been renewed interest in leadership studies. In addition to investigating the personality traits of leaders, the literature also investigates their physical, social, and work-related characteristics. However, these characteristics do not exist alone. Effective leaders usually have a variety of characteristics, but no leader has all the characteristics that enable them to turn every challenge or problem into an opportunity. In addition, characteristics that are generally considered positive can sometimes lead to negative outcomes, while characteristics that are generally considered negative can also lead to positive outcomes. For example, optimism is a highly desirable trait in a leader. Research has shown that optimism is the most common trait among senior executives. Leaders must be able to see opportunities

where others see problems and instill hope in others for a better future. However, optimism can silence leaders, causing them to miss danger signs and underestimate risks. The financial services crisis of 2007-08 has been attributed in part to leaders who were overconfident and led their organizations astray. Optimism, another characteristic of successful leaders, always demands that reality be tested and honesty be emphasized. So the best leaders recognize and develop their strengths rather than simply understanding their own characteristics. Strengths are natural skills and talents, supported and enhanced by acquired knowledge and skills, that provide each individual with the best tools for success and fulfillment.

Around the same time, research at the University of Michigan compared the behaviors of effective and ineffective leaders by examining task- and people-oriented behaviors. The most effective leaders were those who set high performance goals and displayed supportive behaviors toward their subordinates. They were called employee-centered leaders. Less effective leaders were called task-oriented leaders; they were more concerned with meeting schedules, keeping costs low, and achieving production efficiency than with meeting goals and human needs. University of Chicago researchers observed CEOs in restructuring situations, where companies typically had high debt and pressure to improve results quickly, and found that hard, task-oriented traits, such as analytical skills, a focus on efficiency, and setting high standards, were more common. Leadership skills are valued more highly than relational skills, such as good communication, listening, and teamwork. A relationship-oriented leader performs better in moderately favorable situations because interpersonal skills are essential to achieving high group performance. In these cases, the leader may be moderately liked, have some power, and be able to manage tasks that involve some uncertainty. A leader with good interpersonal skills can create a positive group atmosphere that improves relationships, clarifies task structure, and establishes positional authority. Therefore, in order to use Fiedler's contingency theory, a leader must know two things. First, he must know whether a leader has an attitude-oriented or task-oriented style. Second, the leader must diagnose the situation and determine whether the leader's relationship with members, position structure, and position authority are positive or negative. Fiedler believed that adapting a leader's style to the situation could yield great benefits in terms of profit and productivity.

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