Contingency Theory

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

• Describe Contingency Theory
• Explain the 3 aspects of Contingency Theory
• Explain the implication Contingency theory
• Apply change contingency theory to Nursing
Description

• Developed by Fred Fiedler, the theory states that the effectiveness of the organization is dependent on two interacting or contingent factors
  – Personality of the leader who determines leadership
  – Amount of control and influence which the situation provides leaders over the group’s behaviour, task and the outcome (situational)
Description

• Contingency theory acknowledges that other factors in the environment influence outcomes as much as leadership style and behavior.
• Leadership must therefore match needs of the situation (flexibility).
• The interrelationships between the leader and employees are most influenced by the manager’s ability to be a good leader.
Three aspects of contingency theory

1) Leader-member relations or group atmosphere:

• These are feelings and attitudes of followers regarding acceptance, trust, and credibility of the leader.

• They can be classified as either good or bad according to the degree to which subordinates trust, respect and have confidence in the leader and vice versa.
Three aspects cont,

• Leader’s action or behaviour can change to meet the situation but basic personality may remain constant

• A better leader-member relationship creates a favorable situation and figures importantly into how well the leader’s ideas will be received
Three aspects cont,

2) Task structure

• Is the degree to which the structure of the group’s task is routine or complex
• Means the degree to which work is defined with specific procedures, explicit directions, and goals.
• A clearly delineated task structure is favorable for the group’s function.
Three aspects cont,

3) *Position power*

- This is the extent to which the leader can influence behaviour of team members through legitimate power to reward or coerce.
- It is favorable or high if the leader has adequate authority to assign work, to reward or punish employees and to recommend them for promotion or fire them or position power in the broader organization.
Implication to nursing

• The leader will have most influence and control when she uses a task-oriented leadership style under favourable conditions.

• Favourable conditions may imply that the leader is accepted by followers, the task is structured and the leader has strong position power.
Implication to nursing

• At the other end of the spectrum, it is assumed that the leader’s control and influence will be minimal when the leader is not accepted, where the task of the group is relatively complex and unstructured and when the leader has little position power
Assignment

• Review various literature (books and internet)
• Discuss how contingency theory is used in nursing
  – Introduction
  – Description
  – Application in nursing
  – References
• Submit at the end of course presentation.
References


• Booyens, S. W. (2002). Dimensions of Nursing Management Lansdowne Juta