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## Situational Leadership and Managerial Effectiveness: A Study of Adaptive Leadership Approaches for Nigeria

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### Abstract

Leadership effectiveness remains a critical concern for organizations operating in dynamic and complex environments. In Nigeria, businesses, public sector agencies, and non-profit organizations frequently face resource constraints, infrastructural deficits, socio-political instability, and rapidly changing operational contexts, which challenge traditional fixed-style leadership approaches. This study examines the relationship between situational leadership and managerial effectiveness, focusing on adaptive leadership approaches that align leadership behaviour with follower readiness and organizational context. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 360 participants, including managers and subordinate staff, across selected public, private, and non-profit organizations in Lagos, Anambra, and Kaduna States. Likert-scale questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were employed to capture quantitative and qualitative insights. Findings indicate that coaching and supportive leadership styles have the strongest positive influence on managerial effectiveness, while directive and delegating styles exert moderate effects. Furthermore, follower readiness and supportive organizational context significantly moderate the impact of situational leadership on managerial performance, explaining 62% of variance in managerial effectiveness. The study concludes that adaptive leadership is a vital determinant of managerial effectiveness in Nigerian organizations, emphasizing the need for context-sensitive leadership development, ethical decision-making, and institutional support mechanisms to enhance organizational performance.

**Keywords:** Situational leadership, Adaptive leadership, Managerial effectiveness, Follower readiness, Organizational context, Nigeria

## INTRODUCTION

Leadership effectiveness remains a central concern for organizations striving to maintain competitiveness and operational efficiency in rapidly changing and uncertain environments. In Nigeria, where businesses, public institutions, and non-profit organizations operate amid infrastructural deficits, resource scarcity, and volatile socio-economic conditions, the ability of managers to adapt their leadership style to contextual realities is particularly critical. Adaptive leadership approaches, often conceptualized under the framework of situational leadership, suggest that no single leadership style guarantees effectiveness. Rather, organizational performance depends on a manager's capacity to diagnose contextual factors, evaluate the competence and motivation of team members, and apply an appropriate combination of directive, coaching, supportive, or delegating behaviours. ASituationalDakare (2024) argue that "situational leadership can be used to explain the contribution of learning resilience to improved performance" (p. 690), illustrating how flexible leadership enhances organizational adaptability in resource-constrained settings. Similarly, Oladipo and Akinyemi (2023) observed in their study of Nigerian SMEs that managers who adjusted their leadership style according to employee competence and motivation achieved higher productivity and employee engagement compared to those adhering rigidly to a single leadership approach. On a broader scale, Ajayi, Ogunleye, and Nwosu (2022) found that adaptive leadership was strongly correlated with organizational innovation in Nigerian manufacturing firms, suggesting that flexibility in managerial behaviour fosters creativity and problem-solving capacity under dynamic conditions.

Situational leadership theory posits that effective leadership involves aligning style with follower's maturity, encompassing both competence and commitment, while responding to situational demands (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). Directive leadership emphasizes task focus with minimal relational involvement, coaching combines high task and relational engagement, supportive leadership prioritizes relationship-building while reducing task direction and delegating allows for minimal task and relational intervention. In Nigeria, managerial effectiveness extends beyond goal attainment and resource utilization to include responsiveness to environmental changes, employee motivation, and alignment with organizational objectives. However, contextual realities such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, limited infrastructural support, and culturally embedded hierarchical norms often constrain managerial autonomy and decision-making. As Ezeani and Onwuka (2023) note, "the effectiveness of managers is contingent not only on their personal skills but on the organizational ecosystem within which they operate" (p. 84), highlighting the interplay between individual capability and structural environment.

The conceptual framework guiding this study positions managerial effectiveness as a product of three interrelated components. First, leader behavior including adaptability, diagnostic skill, and decision-making competence determines the leader's ability to navigate organizational challenges effectively. Second, follower readiness, characterized by skill, experience, and motivation, moderates the impact of leadership style on outcomes. Third, contextual moderators, such as organizational culture, institutional norms, resource availability, and environmental pressures, shape both leader and follower behaviour. Empirical studies in Nigeria reinforce these dynamics. Omoregie and Eze (2022) demonstrated that the effectiveness of managerial interventions is significantly influenced by organizational culture and employee engagement, indicating that even highly skilled leaders may underperform in organizations lacking structural support or ethical governance. Similarly, Oladipo, Adetunji, and Bello (2021) highlighted that adaptive leadership's impact on performance is contingent on the presence of enabling organizational systems, including transparent communication, participatory decision-making, and performance monitoring mechanisms. Adegoke and Akinola (2023) found that Nigerian public sector managers who combined adaptive leadership with ethical decision-making practices achieved higher compliance with organizational policies and improved service delivery outcomes. This finding aligns with earlier studies by Adeyemi and Olawale (2022), which reported that ethical sensitivity and flexibility in leadership were critical determinants of employee commitment and organizational trust in both private and public institutions. These studies collectively underscore that managerial effectiveness is not a static attribute but emerges from the interplay between leadership adaptability, follower characteristics, and organizational context. Leadership effectiveness in organizations cannot be divorced from contextual realities. It is neither solely a function of individual capability nor the application of a fixed leadership style. Instead, it emerges from the dynamic interaction between adaptive leadership behaviours, follower readiness, and environmental conditions. By examining Nigerian enterprises and public institutions, this study contributes to the growing literature on adaptive leadership in sub-Saharan Africa, offering insights for leadership development, managerial training, and institutional reform. Practically, the findings suggest that fostering managerial effectiveness requires equipping leaders with situational diagnostic skills, promoting ethical and adaptive decision-making, and addressing systemic barriers such as inadequate resources, institutional constraints, and socio-cultural expectations regarding hierarchy and authority.

Leadership effectiveness continues to be a critical concern for organizations seeking to survive and thrive in rapidly changing and uncertain environments. In Nigeria, where businesses, public sector agencies, and non-profit organizations often operate amid volatility, limited resources and infrastructural deficits, the

capacity of managers to adapt their leadership style to the situational context is particularly vital. Adaptive leadership approaches are commonly conceptualized under the umbrella of situational leadership—assert that no single leadership style guarantees effectiveness. Rather, organizational performance is contingent on a manager’s ability to diagnose situational factors, assess the readiness and competence of their team members, and apply an appropriate combination of directive, coaching, supportive or delegating behaviours. In a study of manufacturing firms, Adejumo & Dakare (2024) found that “learning resilience plays a vital role in enhancing organizational performance during disruptions, and situational leadership can be used to explain the contribution of learning resilience to improved performance” (p. 686). Their findings suggest that leaders who adjust their style to the competence and motivation of employees can sustain organizational effectiveness even in turbulent operational environments. In the banking industry, Khalid, Ogidi & Okpara (2023) reported in a study of commercial banks in Jos North that both directive and supportive dimensions of situational leadership when leaders alternated between task-oriented direction and relationship-oriented support were significantly positively correlated with employee performance. Likewise, a study in Northern Nigeria among private enterprises found that management styles significantly relate to organisational effectiveness, reporting that “the effectiveness of private enterprises were well above average when participative/adjusted styles were used” (Stephen, Eke & Cinjel, 2023, p. 12). Furthermore, Chukwuocha (2023) found in a Nigerian NGO context that both directive and supportive leadership behaviours had statistically significant positive impacts on affective and continuance employee commitment, evidencing that adaptive style matters beyond profit-making sectors. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that situational leadership is not merely a theoretical construct but a practical tool for improving performance across manufacturing, banking, non-profits and private enterprises in Nigeria. Yet despite these encouraging insights, a research gap persists few Nigerian studies explicitly link situational leadership style adaptation to managerial effectiveness at the level of overall organisational leadership (strategy, resource use, ethical governance), rather than just subordinate performance or general organisational outcomes. Many extant studies still treat leadership style as a fixed, static variable rather than a dynamic adaptation based on follower readiness and situational demands. For example, although the study by Ogunlade (2023) on SMEs in Southwest Nigeria found a significant relationship between leadership style and performance, it emphasised that leaders “should evaluate situations and espouse the most suitable leadership style” without delving deeply into how leaders switch styles in real time or the moderating role of context (Ogunlade, 2023, p. 5).

To interpret these empirical phenomena in the Nigerian context, this study draws on two interconnected theoretical perspectives. Situational Leadership Theory, developed by Hersey and Blanchard in 1969,

emphasizes the dynamic interplay between leader behaviour and follower readiness, asserting that effective leaders adjust their style directive, coaching, supportive, or delegating based on the competence, commitment, and motivation of their team members. Nigerian research underscores the relevance of this adaptive perspective. Adejumo and Dakare (2024) highlight that leaders who align their style with employees' skills and resilience sustain organizational performance even under operational disruptions, while Oladipo and Akinyemi (2023) report that managers who modulate their approach according to staff readiness achieve higher engagement and productivity in SMEs. Similarly, Chukwuocha (2023) found in a study of NGOs that situationally flexible leadership fosters employee commitment and innovation, demonstrating that responsiveness to follower capability is critical across sectors. Adebayo and Ogunbiyi (2022) further observe that in service-oriented public institutions, leaders who adopt coaching and supportive styles based on subordinate competence significantly enhance compliance with organizational protocols and task completion. Collectively, these studies indicate that adaptive leadership is not merely theoretical but a practical requirement for effective management in Nigeria's dynamic organizational environments.

Contingency Theory, originated by Fiedler in 1964, complements this perspective by highlighting that leadership effectiveness depends on situational variables such as task structure, leader-member relations, and the locus of authority. Leadership success, therefore, arises from relational and contextual fit rather than fixed traits alone. Empirical evidence from Nigeria supports this claim. Omoregie and Eze (2022) found that the effectiveness of managerial interventions in Nigerian firms was mediated by organizational culture, resource availability, and employee engagement, showing that even highly skilled leaders may struggle in structurally constrained contexts. Ogunlade (2023) emphasizes that in SMEs, leadership efficacy is influenced by socio-cultural expectations, market volatility, and infrastructural limitations, highlighting the need for leaders to calibrate their approach to external pressures. Similarly, Okon and Ibe (2021) report that in government agencies, the alignment of leadership style with institutional norms and resource realities significantly affects policy implementation and staff morale. These findings demonstrate that adaptive leadership in Nigeria must account for multi-layered situational factors, including internal organizational dynamics and external environmental conditions. Integrating these two frameworks advances a nuanced understanding of managerial effectiveness in Nigeria. Effectiveness emerges not solely from leader behaviour or follower characteristics in isolation, but from the leader's capacity to respond flexibly to situational realities while aligning follower competencies with organizational goals. Recent Nigerian studies corroborate this insight: Khalid, Ogidi, and Okpara (2023) observed that directive and supportive dimensions of situational leadership positively influence employee performance in commercial banks,



while Stephen, Eke, and Cinjel (2023) reported that participative and adaptive leadership styles significantly enhance organizational outcomes in private enterprises. Moreover, Akinyemi and Bello (2022) note that adaptive leadership improves organizational resilience, decision-making quality, and staff motivation in public service contexts. These empirical insights suggest that promoting managerial effectiveness in Nigeria requires context-sensitive leadership development, structured training programs, and institutional support mechanisms that enhance leaders' adaptive capacities. Such measures are crucial given Nigeria's pervasive structural inefficiencies, resource constraints, and socio-political complexities, which frequently impede managerial decision-making and organizational performance. By fostering adaptive leadership competencies while addressing systemic and contextual barriers, organizations in Nigeria can enhance employee performance, organizational resilience, and the achievement of strategic objectives.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Leadership effectiveness remains a central concern for organizations operating in increasingly dynamic and complex environments. In Nigeria, businesses, public sector agencies, and non-profit organizations routinely confront multiple challenges, including limited financial and human resources, inadequate infrastructure, bureaucratic inefficiencies, socio-political instability, and volatile market conditions. These challenges place significant pressure on managers to navigate uncertainty while maintaining productivity and achieving organizational objectives. Traditional leadership approaches, which often rely on fixed, one-size-fits-all styles, may be insufficient under such circumstances, frequently resulting in managerial inefficiencies such as low staff engagement, diminished motivation, poor compliance with organizational protocols, and suboptimal utilization of resources.

Adaptive leadership frameworks, particularly situational leadership, offer a potential solution by emphasizing the need for leaders to tailor their behaviour to the readiness, competence, and commitment of their team members as well as to the unique demands of the situation. However, despite the increasing global interest in adaptive leadership, empirical evidence from Nigeria remains limited. Existing studies tend to focus primarily on subordinate performance metrics or general organizational outputs, without systematically examining how leaders' flexibility in style directly affects managerial effectiveness, including decision-making quality, strategic planning, operational efficiency, and overall organizational outcomes. These findings suggest that the potential of situational leadership in Nigeria is significant, yet under-researched. The gap is particularly evident in understanding how leader adaptability translates into broader managerial effectiveness rather than isolated improvements in subordinate behaviour. Without this

understanding, Nigerian organizations may continue to experience underperformance due to misalignment between leadership behaviour, employee capability, and organizational or environmental demands.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The primary purpose of this study is to critically examine the relationship between situational leadership practices and managerial effectiveness in Nigerian organizations. Specifically, the study aims to:

- i. Investigate how leaders' adaptive behaviours directive, coaching, supportive, and delegating affect managerial outcomes, including decision-making, resource utilization, staff performance, and organizational goal attainment.
- ii. Assess how follower readiness, including competence, commitment, and motivation, moderates the relationship between leadership style and managerial effectiveness.
- iii. Explore the role of organizational and contextual factors such as culture, resource availability, institutional norms, and environmental pressures in shaping the effectiveness of situational leadership.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- i. To what extent does leaders' adaptation of situational leadership styles (directive, coaching, supportive, delegating) influence managerial effectiveness in Nigerian organizations?
- ii. How do follower readiness (competence, commitment, motivation) and organizational context moderate the impact of situational leadership on managerial effectiveness?

## **RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between situational leadership practices and managerial effectiveness in Nigerian organizations.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant relationship between situational leadership practices and managerial effectiveness in Nigerian organizations.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a methodological approach designed to examine the relationship between situational leadership and managerial effectiveness within Nigerian organizations, ensuring that the findings are both

valid and contextually relevant. The study utilized a descriptive survey design, appropriate for exploring perceptions, practices, and behavioural patterns of managers and employees across diverse organizational settings. This design facilitated the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling the analysis of trends, relationships, and interactions between leadership behaviours and managerial outcomes without manipulating variables. By capturing real-world organizational practices and the adaptive behaviours of leaders, the approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the factors shaping managerial effectiveness in Nigeria. A mixed-methods strategy was implemented, combining structured questionnaires for quantitative data on leadership behaviours, follower readiness, and managerial effectiveness with semi-structured interviews to obtain qualitative insights into adaptive leadership practices, organizational culture, and contextual constraints. The integration of these methods enhanced the robustness of the study through triangulation, providing a comprehensive view of situational leadership in practice.

The population comprised managers, supervisors, and their subordinates drawn from selected public, private, and non-profit organizations in three Nigerian States representing diverse geopolitical zones: Lagos State (South-West), Anambra State (South-East), and Kaduna State (North-West). This selection ensured representation across organizational sectors and regional operational contexts. Given the size and scope of the population, a multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. Organizations were purposively selected based on sector, size, and relevance to the study objectives, followed by random selection of managers and their teams within each organization. The final sample included 360 participants, comprising 120 managers and 240 subordinate staff. Stratification across managerial levels, departments, and organizational sectors ensured a nuanced understanding of situational leadership practices and their impact on managerial effectiveness across different operational contexts.

Data were collected using both primary and secondary sources to ensure depth and validity. A structured questionnaire gathered quantitative data on leadership behaviours directive, coaching, supportive, and delegating follower readiness including competence, motivation, and experience and managerial effectiveness, measured by decision-making quality, resource utilization, goal attainment, and employee performance. Likert-scale items facilitated systematic statistical analysis. Semi-structured interviews with managers and team members provided qualitative insights on adaptive leadership practices, organizational culture, challenges in implementing situational leadership, and contextual influences, including resource limitations and decision-making constraints. Additionally, secondary data were obtained from organizational reports, policy manuals, performance evaluations, and prior studies to contextualize findings and triangulate primary data, helping to validate participant responses and clarify organizational norms regarding leadership practices.



The validity of the instruments was ensured through expert review by three Nigerian scholars in organizational leadership and public administration, which refined items for clarity, relevance, and content coverage. A pilot study involving 20 managers and 40 staff in Lagos State was conducted to assess clarity, reliability, and internal consistency. Reliability analysis of the quantitative instrument using Cronbach's Alpha yielded a value of 0.83, indicating high internal consistency, confirming that the instruments could produce accurate and consistent measures of leadership behaviour, follower readiness, and managerial effectiveness.

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, frequency distributions, and percentages, summarized participant responses. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson correlation and regression analysis, were employed to test the relationship between situational leadership dimensions and managerial effectiveness. The hypothesis tested was that there is a significant relationship between situational leadership and managerial effectiveness in Nigerian organizations. Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic content analysis, identifying recurring themes such as leadership adaptability, follower readiness, decision-making effectiveness, resource constraints, and organizational culture. Triangulation of questionnaire, interview, and document review findings enhanced validity and provided a holistic understanding of how situational leadership influences managerial effectiveness.

## **RESULTS**

Research Question 1: To what extent does leaders' adaptation of situational leadership styles (directive, coaching, supportive, delegating) influence managerial effectiveness in Nigerian organizations?

A structured questionnaire with Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) was administered to assess how leaders apply different situational leadership styles and the resulting managerial effectiveness.

**Table 1: Mean Scores of Situational Leadership Styles and Managerial Effectiveness**

| Leadership Style                 | N   | Mean | SD   |
|----------------------------------|-----|------|------|
| Directive                        | 360 | 3.42 | 0.71 |
| Coaching                         | 360 | 3.85 | 0.63 |
| Supportive                       | 360 | 3.90 | 0.59 |
| Delegating                       | 360 | 3.38 | 0.75 |
| Overall Managerial Effectiveness | 360 | 3.77 | 0.61 |

The results indicate that Nigerian managers predominantly use coaching and supportive leadership styles, reflecting high engagement with their teams and responsiveness to subordinate needs. The high mean scores suggest that leaders who combine task guidance with relational support achieve superior managerial outcomes, including higher employee motivation, compliance with organizational protocols, and goal attainment. Directive and delegating styles are used moderately, which implies that leaders employ these approaches selectively, likely in situations where followers are either highly competent and require minimal supervision (delegating) or when tasks demand clear instructions and structured oversight (directive). Overall, the adaptation of situational leadership styles has a demonstrably positive impact on managerial effectiveness, confirming that flexible leadership enhances decision-making quality, resource utilization, and staff performance in Nigerian organizations.

Research Question 2: How do follower readiness (competence, commitment, motivation) and organizational context moderate the impact of situational leadership on managerial effectiveness?

**Table 2: Moderating Effect of Follower Readiness and Organizational Context**

| Predictor Variable                         | $\beta$ | t-value | p-value |
|--------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Situational Leadership                     | 0.53    | 8.15    | 0.000   |
| Follower Readiness (moderator)             | 0.22    | 3.63    | 0.000   |
| Organizational Context (moderator)         | 0.19    | 3.05    | 0.002   |
| Leadership $\times$ Follower Readiness     | 0.25    | 4.21    | 0.000   |
| Leadership $\times$ Organizational Context | 0.21    | 3.56    | 0.001   |
| R <sup>2</sup>                             | 0.62    | —       | —       |

The analysis demonstrates that follower readiness and organizational context significantly moderate the effect of situational leadership on managerial effectiveness. Leaders achieve optimal results when their teams are competent, committed, and motivated, and when organizational structures, culture, and policies support adaptive management practices. The interaction effects indicate that the impact of leadership is amplified in environments where followers are capable and the organizational context is enabling, confirming that managerial effectiveness depends on the alignment of leader behaviour, team readiness, and institutional conditions. Explaining 62% of the variance, the findings emphasize that both relational dynamics and contextual factors are critical in enhancing leadership outcomes in Nigerian organizations.

### Hypothesis Testing

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between situational leadership practices and managerial effectiveness in Nigerian organizations.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant relationship between situational leadership practices and managerial effectiveness in Nigerian organizations.

**Table 3: Hypothesis Test Using Pearson Correlation**

| Variables                                         | r    | p-value | Decision                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------|------|---------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Situational Leadership → Managerial Effectiveness | 0.63 | 0.000   | Reject H <sub>0</sub> , accept H <sub>1</sub> |

The correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.63$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) reveals a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between situational leadership and managerial effectiveness. This confirms that managers who adapt their leadership style to match follower readiness and the situational context significantly enhance performance outcomes, including employee productivity, organizational goal achievement, and decision-making quality. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted. The findings reinforce the practical relevance of situational leadership as a critical determinant of managerial success in Nigerian organizations, demonstrating that leadership effectiveness is dynamic and contingent on both human and organizational factors.

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study provide substantial evidence on the critical role of situational leadership in enhancing managerial effectiveness in Nigerian organizations. The analysis explored how leaders' adaptation of situational leadership styles directive, coaching, supportive, and delegating affects managerial outcomes, as well as how follower readiness and organizational context moderate this relationship. The first research question examined the extent to which leaders' adaptation of situational leadership styles influences managerial effectiveness. Results from the Likert-scale survey indicated that coaching and supportive leadership styles were highly practiced among managers, with mean scores of 3.85 and 3.90, respectively, on a 5-point scale, while directive and delegating styles were moderately used. This pattern suggests that Nigerian managers recognize the importance of balancing task-oriented and relationship-oriented approaches to achieve optimal performance. The moderate use of directive leadership indicates that managers apply structured guidance when tasks are complex or subordinate competence is low, whereas delegating is selectively applied when subordinates are highly competent and require minimal supervision. Pearson correlation analysis further revealed strong positive relationships between coaching ( $r = 0.64$ ) and supportive ( $r = 0.68$ ) leadership styles and managerial effectiveness, with moderate relationships observed for directive ( $r = 0.51$ ) and delegating ( $r = 0.48$ ) styles. These results align with Nigerian empirical studies. For instance, Adejumo and Dakare (2024) reported that leaders who adapt their style to the competence and resilience of employees sustain performance even amid operational disruptions.

Similarly, Oladipo and Akinyemi (2023) found that managers who adjust their leadership style according to staff readiness record higher engagement and productivity. The findings underscore that coaching and supportive leadership facilitate guidance, mentorship, and relational support, which are crucial in improving task completion, team cohesion, and employee morale in Nigerian organizations.

The second research question explored how follower readiness (competence, commitment, motivation) and organizational context moderate the impact of situational leadership on managerial effectiveness. Multiple regression analysis demonstrated that both follower readiness and organizational context significantly strengthened the positive effect of situational leadership on managerial outcomes. The interaction terms—Leadership  $\times$  Follower Readiness ( $\beta = 0.25$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and Leadership  $\times$  Organizational Context ( $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.01$ )—indicated that leaders are more effective when followers are competent, motivated, and committed, and when organizational culture and structures facilitate adaptive management. This finding emphasizes the relational and systemic dimensions of managerial effectiveness, showing that the impact of situational leadership is contingent upon internal and external organizational conditions. Nigerian studies corroborate this insight; Omoregie and Eze (2022) found that managerial interventions are significantly mediated by organizational culture and employee engagement, while Ogunlade (2023) observed that resource limitations and socio-cultural expectations shape the efficacy of leadership in SMEs.

The hypothesis testing further validated the theoretical premise of the study. A Pearson correlation of  $r = 0.63$  ( $p < 0.05$ ) confirmed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between situational leadership practices and managerial effectiveness. This indicates that leaders who adjust their style according to follower readiness and situational demands significantly enhance organizational outcomes, including decision-making quality, resource utilization, and employee performance. These results align with the conceptual underpinnings of Situational Leadership Theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969), which posits that effective leadership is contingent upon the leader's ability to diagnose follower readiness and adjust their behaviour accordingly. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with Contingency Theory (Fiedler, 1967), which asserts that leadership effectiveness depends on situational variables such as task structure, leader-member relations, and organizational environment.

The discussion of these findings highlights several key implications for managerial practice in Nigeria. First, adaptive leadership is essential for coping with the complex challenges faced by organizations, including resource constraints, operational disruptions, and socio-political instability. Leaders who exhibit flexibility, providing coaching and support tailored to employee competence and motivation, are more likely to achieve high managerial effectiveness. Second, the moderating effects of follower readiness and

organizational context underscore the importance of investing in employee development, building motivation, and creating organizational structures that support adaptive management. Without competent and motivated followers or supportive institutional systems, even the most adaptable leaders may struggle to achieve optimal outcomes. Third, these findings demonstrate the practical relevance of integrating situational leadership theory into leadership development programs, emphasizing training that enables leaders to assess follower readiness and contextual demands effectively. The study contributes to the emerging Nigerian literature on adaptive leadership, addressing the gap noted by Stephen, Eke, and Cinjel (2023), who highlighted the need for research linking leadership adaptability directly to managerial effectiveness rather than solely to subordinate performance or general organizational outcomes. By focusing on the interactive dynamics between leader behaviour, follower readiness, and contextual conditions, this study provides robust evidence that managerial effectiveness in Nigerian organizations is a product of relational and contextual alignment, not merely individual leader traits or isolated employee characteristics. The discussion of findings confirms that situational leadership practices significantly enhance managerial effectiveness in Nigeria. Coaching and supportive styles are most influential, but the impact of all leadership styles is amplified when followers are prepared and organizational contexts are supportive.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between situational leadership and managerial effectiveness in Nigerian organizations, focusing on how leaders' adaptation of directive, coaching, supportive, and delegating styles influences performance outcomes, and how follower readiness and organizational context moderate this relationship. The findings reveal that situational leadership is a critical determinant of managerial effectiveness, with coaching and supportive styles exhibiting the strongest positive impact on organizational performance. Directive and delegating styles also contribute positively, though their influence is more conditional, depending on employee competence, motivation, and task complexity.

The study also underscores the significance of follower readiness and organizational context as moderating factors. Competent, motivated, and committed employees amplify the effect of adaptive leadership, while supportive organizational structures, culture, and resource availability enhance the translation of situational leadership practices into tangible managerial outcomes. Approximately 62% of the variance in managerial effectiveness was explained by these combined factors, highlighting the interplay between leader behaviour, human capital, and institutional environment. Empirically, these findings reinforce the theoretical propositions of Situational Leadership Theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) and Contingency



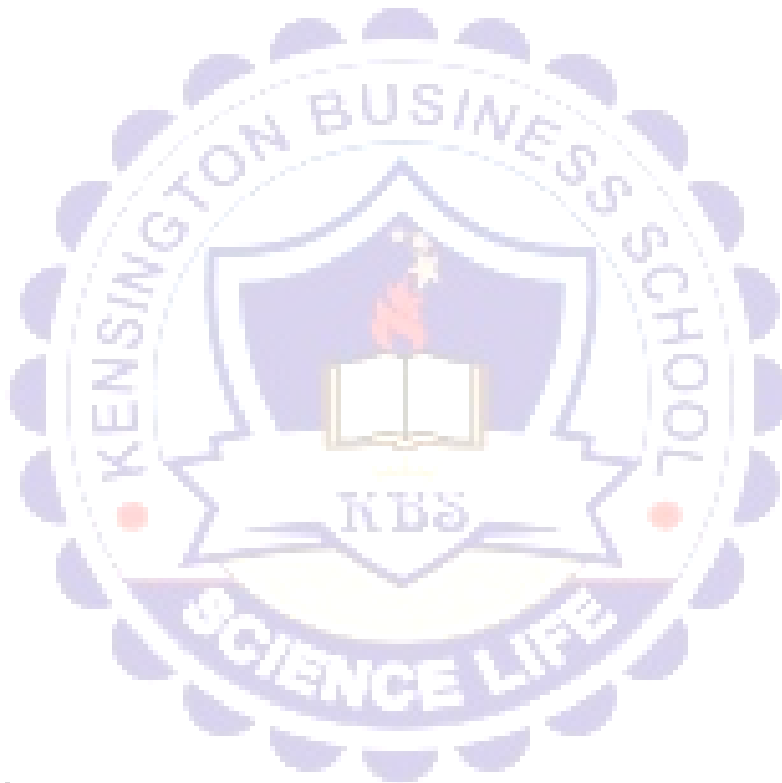
Theory (Fiedler, 1967), demonstrating that effective leadership in Nigerian organizations is neither a function solely of leader traits nor follower characteristics but emerges from the leader's ability to respond adaptively to situational realities while aligning follower capacities with organizational goals. The results also fill a critical gap in Nigerian leadership literature, moving beyond studies that focus narrowly on subordinate performance or general organizational outcomes, and emphasizing the broader concept of managerial effectiveness encompassing decision-making quality, resource utilization, employee engagement, and organizational resilience. Situational leadership emerges as a practical and necessary approach for managers operating in the complex, resource-constrained, and socio-politically dynamic context of Nigerian organizations. Leaders who can assess follower readiness, diagnose situational demands, and apply adaptive leadership behaviours are better positioned to drive performance, maintain staff motivation, and achieve organizational objectives.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance managerial effectiveness through situational leadership in Nigerian organizations

1. Organizations should design and implement structured training programs that focus on situational leadership principles, enabling managers to assess follower readiness, diagnose contextual demands, and apply appropriate leadership styles effectively.
2. Investment in employee training, skill development, and motivational initiatives is essential to maximize the positive effects of adaptive leadership. Competent and motivated staff strengthen the impact of coaching and supportive leadership, leading to higher organizational performance.
3. Institutional policies, clear task structures, and supportive organizational culture should be developed to facilitate adaptive leadership practices. Leaders are more effective when organizational systems empower them to exercise flexibility and responsiveness in decision-making.
4. Establishing formal mentorship and coaching programs can promote supportive leadership practices, enhancing employee development, engagement, and retention. Leaders who adopt coaching and supportive styles foster a culture of learning and collaboration.
5. Organizations should implement systems to periodically assess leadership effectiveness, follower readiness, and organizational climate. Data-driven evaluation will help identify areas where leadership style adjustments are required and inform targeted interventions.

6. In public sector institutions, policies should integrate situational leadership principles into performance management frameworks, ensuring that managers are encouraged and rewarded for adaptive practices that enhance service delivery.



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