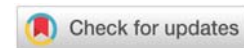**Short Communication**

Leaders and Leadership

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Leaders give others a sense of direction and represent them in various forums. Leadership has existed for decades, and different authors have tried to define the term. One such definition is that "Leadership is a relationship that involves the mobilizing, influencing and guiding of others toward desired goals" [1]. To help leaders, scholars have developed different models to identify the best leadership style tailored to different situations. There is no single best style, and a leader must consider their personality, task, and group makeup to be effective. This paper narrates my leadership experience and examines how contingency theory and power sources can be applied to this experience.

My leadership journey began in elementary school when I was elected class president. It progressed into high school, where I was the captain of the girls' volleyball team for two years. However, I feel that my leadership skills were tested when I was made an assistant manager of a fast-food restaurant in my home town. I worked in this post for more than a year before joining college. As an assistant manager, I worked under the general manager, and in his absence, I took up his roles. My primary duties were balancing cash receipts, supervising the staff, and assigning them tasks where necessary, place orders, assessing inventory delivered by the suppliers. The biggest challenge in performing my duties as an assistant manager was that I was in charge of people older than me. In my previous leadership roles, I led individuals who were my peers; hence communication with them was accessible. My challenge was how I would make the staff respect me and, at the same time, maintain a good working relationship. I had the necessary experience to conduct my duties well, having worked in the restaurant kitchen and as a cashier during my summer breaks in high school. However, I felt that the staff would intimidate me due to my age.

My first strategy during my first two weeks was to try to prove myself. I felt a need to show the staff that I was qualified to win their respect. To achieve this, I thought that I needed to show them how to perform their various duties effectively.

This way, they would know that I have experience in how their tasks were completed. However, this strategy had a negative result because rather than proving I was qualified for the role, other employees started feeling that I was looking down on them. Also, in an attempt to seek their approval, I felt the need to make them like me. So, whenever they would make mistakes like coming late to work, I would let it pass. Soon it started seeming like they were in charge and could do whatever they liked. The efficiency of the staff began going down; hence I had to change my leadership strategy. First, I decided to clearly communicate what was expected of each worker and that there were consequences if they neglect to complete their duties. I no longer felt the need to be liked so long as they were effective. Second, I made a point of appreciating every extra effort that an employee made. Together with the manager, we made a point to be rewarding bonuses to one employee each month for exemplary work. My subordinates did not have to follow my ideas on how I thought they should perform their duties so long as they delivered the desired results. Slowly but surely, I was able to earn their respect and create a pleasant working environment.

The study of leadership has helped me to understand better my experience as a leader and the behavior of the staff I supervised at the time. For instance, contingency theories show that there is no single style of leadership that can be considered the most appropriate, and the nature of people being led, the leader, and the challenges a group faces are different [2]. As a class president, volleyball captain, and assistant manager, I had to adopt different leadership styles mainly because, in the three instants, the makeup of those I was leading was different, and there were various tasks. PathGoal theory of leadership is an example of contingency theory and could be used to explain my leadership experience. The approach builds on two motivation theories Goal-setting and Expectancy theory. The goal-setting theory states that workers are motivated when realistic, but challenging goals are set, and rewards are offered for achieving the goal. Expectancy theory suggests that people work towards

achieving goals when they feel they will reward something they value. According to Pathgoal theory, leaders should adopt a style that matches or meets the needs of the people they lead. The theory gives four types of leadership behavior; Supportive, directive, participative, and achievement-oriented leadership [3]. At first, I feel I adopted a directive leadership style where I always told my subordinate what to do. However, this style was not practical since every worker knew how to perform their duties. Eventually, a Supportive leadership style was the most effective as it entails creating the right work environment and considering subordinates' needs. Dealing with many clients each day can be tedious and stressful for fast-food employees. However, a supportive leadership style reduces work pressure and gives the workers confidence.

Power is needed in leadership to influence and motivate subordinates. Leaders have power for various reasons like the ability to reward, fire, assign tasks, and because they are experts. A scholar named Bertram Raven identified five bases of power: legitimate, reward, coercive, referent, and expert [4]. As an assistant manager, I feel my power source was my ability to reward the subordinates with bonuses or simple compliments.

I have learned that for a leader to be effective; they have to adopt various styles in a different situation. A leadership style that may work with a given group of subordinates may not be effective with the other. The right leadership style should motivate other employees and promote a good work relationship. Given an opportunity to lead another group, I would first take time to study the group dynamics; they use the contingency theories models to identify the most effective leadership style.

In conclusion, the study of leadership has existed for years. However, no single leadership style can be considered the best and applicable in every situation. Effective leadership is tailors to every situation, and issues like tasks performed and the dynamics of the subordinates must be considered. Power is tied to leadership, and every leader needs the ability to influence and motivate his subordinate.

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