Level 8 Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (L8DSML-QU)

UNIT 700 - LEADERSHIP QUALITIES AND PRACTICE

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TASK 1

1.1 Concept of managers as effective leaders at Amazon

In Amazon, managers have to run and drive performance, with vision and purpose. Amazon's 16 Leadership Principles are all around the concept of managers as capable leaders who ought to possess ownership, innovation, and long-term thinking (Jaqua and Jaqua, 2021). Therefore, these principles are blurring the boundaries between management and leadership in the sense, that managers should encourage the mobilization of the teams towards attaining operational targets.

Many Amazon managers are seen as excited to motivate their employees through the clear vision and innovation that is used within the ***Transformational Leadership Theory***. For example, managers set the example by "thinking big and diving deep." Despite this, the leadership skills of Amazon managers can be put into question due to a high-pressure work environment, sometimes at the expense of employee wellbeing (Solanki, 2019). This balance is analysed from models like ***Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid***. Most of the Amazon managers are high on task and low on concern for people, fitting into the 'produce or perish' quadrant. It indicates excellent leadership but poor management.
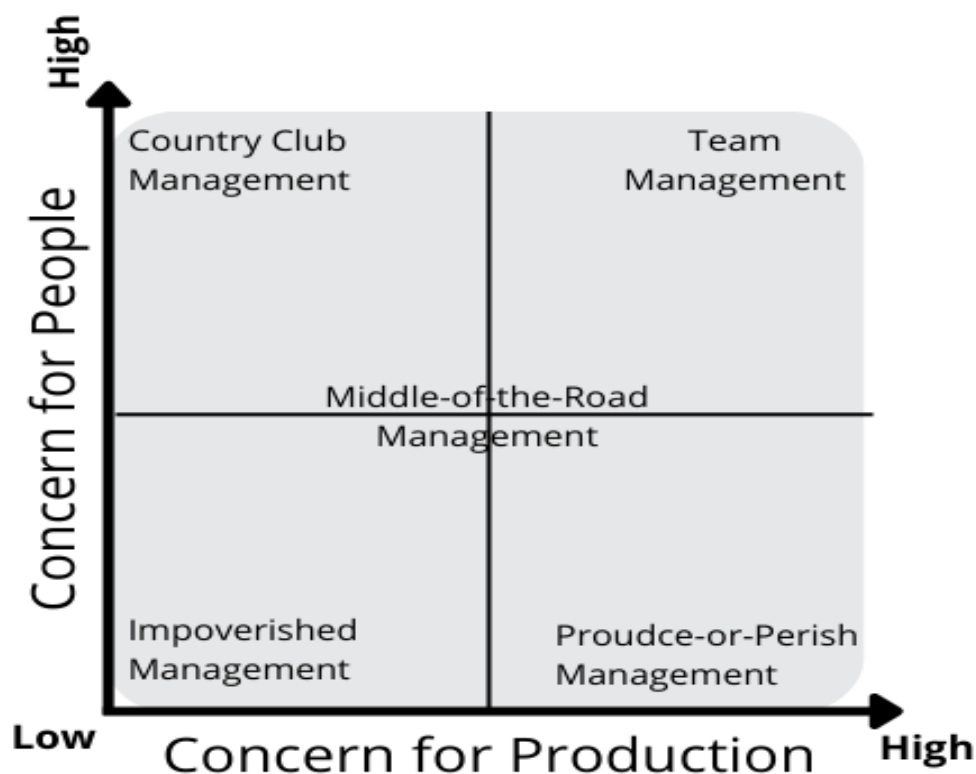

Figure 1: Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid

(Source: Solanki, 2019)

Furthermore, Amazon has a significantly performance-driven culture, which is consistent with some countries such as the US but will never sit well with cultures collectivist such as Japan, where hierarchy respect and group harmony are prioritized over individual performance. Amazon managers are tactically effective and outcome-oriented, but not necessarily effective in leading; the individual managerial style, team dynamics, and the cultural context within which they operate may vary the leadership effectiveness.

The idea of a leadership strategy is a way to present products to customers through various platforms that make it easy for them to learn about the company's goods and services. In a market where consumers can readily obtain information about a new product, it can aid in its promotion. According to Deng *et al*. (2023), there are some significant advantages to using a leadership strategy when making decisions about purchases and gathering market data. However, when the younger generation buys new things from the market, it negatively affects them.

A key idea in leadership strategy is to adequately target customers, accomplish organizational objectives, and optimize customer demands and purchase satisfaction. Conversely, leadership strategy is defined as the ability to help achieve competitive advantages and me*et al*l client needs for the acquisition of goods and services (Islam *et al*. 2021). It can have an impact on a company's product sales, allowing them to maximize profits through the use of social leadership. Being a manager of a company it is necessary to maintain proper leadership style to motivate employees towards their work. In addition to that, Effective managers are outstanding communicators who can clearly state objectives, offer constructive criticism and encourage candid discussion among team members.

1.2 Concept of leaders as effective managers at Amazon

Visionary leadership should always be backed up by sound management capabilities and we have Jeff Bezos and Andy Jassy at Amazon who prove the point. In an environment where Amazon is growing and extremely complex, the idea that leaders are effective managers is critical. Innovation will require the leadership to act as an inspiration, but also at the same time judiciously manage resources, logistics, and data-driven decision-making.

Situational Leadership Theory applies in particular. Depending on maturity, Amazon leaders will vary their management approach. For example, in high autonomy such as in AWS (Amazon Web Services), leadership is less directive and more participative. On the other hand, leaders in fulfilment centres are apt to adopt a directive approach since this work is repetitive and oriented toward tasks (Li, 2020).

Further, Amazon exhibits characteristics of some of the ***Managerial Roles of Mintzberg***, in particular the decisional and informational roles. In such a scenario, leaders need to make data-driven decisions constantly and make sure that the information is flowing seamlessly in all departments (Tongkachok *et al.* 2022). Amazon operating 'excellently' is that this crossover from leadership to effective management.

However, a key criticism of Amazon's leadership culture consists of its transactional elements. Considerably high-performance metrics are established for employees that can create a fear culture instead of a welcoming, collaborative culture. This transactional focus may help deliver a short-term result, but it also deteriorates long-term morale and innovation. The leaders, those functioning as good managers, have to manage the teams from diverse global locations. Such an approach may work in the United States but might not in egalitarian such as Scandinavia where participative decision-making is preferred.

Successful managers use their leadership abilities to encourage, mentor, and inspire their people to accomplish shared objectives. This entails encouraging a healthy work atmosphere, communicating clearly, and giving team members the freedom to assume accountability and ownership. According to Ali and Anwar (2021), in order to foster team development, effective managers also place a high priority on fostering connections, settling disputes, and providing constructive criticism. This entails fostering diversity, establishing trust, and making sure that each team member feels appreciated and respected.

In addition to that, good managers make sure that team members are aware of their roles and responsibilities by clearly and consistently communicating goals, expectations, and feedback. As per the knowledge of Kwiotkowska *et al*. (2022), team members should be given liberty, duties should be assigned appropriately, and managers should support them in taking responsibility for their jobs. An organization can gain the market orientation necessary to compete with other businesses in leadership mechanisms with the aid of social leadership. This notion of social leadership strategy for the corporation can help an organization establish its tasks, customer needs, and achievable targets (Zaim *et al*. 2021). In order for rivals to follow the business and make a significant profit in a market, it can effectively and efficiently provide satisfaction.

1.3 Balance needed between the demands of strategic management and leadership

Amazon's success and such tension are central to balancing strategic management and leadership. This is done by strategic management to ensure that the organization's strategic goals such as market expansion, technological innovation as well as cost leadership are achieved (Wu *et al.* 2023). Strategy, however, can only propel corporate objectives forward as

a means of enabling the leadership vision, motivating leaders to act, and the adaptability required to realize the strategy within the existing environment.

In fact, at Amazon, this balance is traditionally tipped in the favour of strategic management data, metrics and efficiency are, for example, very important there. ***Porter's Generic Strategies*** are tools that explain the end of how Amazon is always chasing after cost leadership through operational efficiencies, scale, and even innovation (Clifton and Harter, 2019). Based on ***Kotter's distinction of Management vs Leadership*** it is evident that while management is about planning & budgeting, leadership entails setting the direction and motivating people (Hamid, 2019). For Amazon, the challenge is to avoid so many employees being too focused on metrics that they forget about employee engagement and innovation.

Figure 2: Distinction of management and leadership

(Source: Clifton and Harter, 2019)

This balance is further thrown off when we consider cultural differences. Strategic decisions need to be communicated with an emphasis on the group's benefit and inclusivity in collectivist countries. The Goleman Emotional Intelligence also shows a possibility of a gap. There is reason to believe that with high performance comes a lack of empathy or social skills which is required for managing change and fostering innovation in the Amazonian culture.

According to Tan *et al.* (2023), for a company to succeed, the demands of leadership and strategic management must be balanced. The framework and plans for accomplishing long-term objectives are provided by strategic management, and teams are inspired and motivated

to carry out those plans successfully by leadership. Coordination between these two roles is necessary for a successful balance, guaranteeing that human capital and strategic direction are both utilized efficiently. Moreover, strategic management and leadership are interconnected to each other. In order to improve management practices of any organisation a proper leadership skill is required.

In addition to that, a proper strategic management also needed suitable leadership that could manage the company activity properly. As per the knowledge of Kwiotkowska *et al*. (2022), a corporation can implement several leadership techniques to increase its competitiveness in a market by adhering to five leadership concepts. In the following year, an organization's brand and profitability can be enhanced by maximizing long-term social welfare through the use of the social leadership strategy.

TASK 2

2.1 Role of the leader in the creation of the vision, mission, and values of Amazon

Jeff Bezos played a great role in the operation of Amazon's vision, mission, and values, which have directed its approach from a bookstore that sells books online to becoming a world-leading tech company globally (Bolden *et al.* 2023). Bezos's strong belief in long-term customer value is seen in the company's mission and that of "to be Earth's most customer-centric company." The culture of Amazon is deeply ingrained with his vision of a seamless, scalable, and efficient digital marketplace where every aspect from logistics to product innovation is felt.

Amazon's strategy formulation process was thoughtful, with Bezos creating Amazon's mission and objectives early and consistently matching the operation to this overarching vision (Akdere and Egan, 2020). His style of leadership is ***visionary*** such as considering the longer term while maintaining the operational discipline. Additionally, Amazon's Leadership Principles including "Customer Obsession," "Bias for Action," and "Invent and Simplify" form cultural anchors to ensure that values are not simply statements of what Amazon wants to be but what it does.

Figure 3: Visionary Leadership Style

(Source: Akdere and Egan, 2020)

To a degree, the relentless pursuit of the most efficient path for the customer, while still meeting the most demands has at times risen above the well-being of the internal stakeholders.

However, it is a barrier between the company values and the lived experiences of the stakeholders who are internal to the organization. This emphasizes the need to appraise not only the production but the true assimilation of the vision and values in everyday ways of doing. Regarding the external stakeholders, Amazon has a mission that is compatible with the investor's expectations and customer satisfaction metrics (Mor Barak *et al.* 2022). Though there are concerns regarding sustainability, and labour practices, although the leadership's vision seems inspiring, its ethical delivery is still one ongoing area of development.

As both creators and implementers, leaders play a critical role in forming an organization's vision, mission, and values. They inspire and motivate staff members by defining the direction, expressing the goal, and integrating these components into the company culture. As stated by Tan *et al*. (2023), by defining the organization's goals and intended impact, leaders establish the long-term course. The objective of the organization is established by its leaders, who also describe how it will benefit its stakeholders. Different leadership styles and structures are effective for any company from different perspectives.

All stakeholders are given clear communication of the organization's vision, purpose, and values by leaders, who make sure that everyone is aware of and supportive of its objectives. As per the knowledge of Stuber *et al*. (2021), to make the vision, mission, and values a reality, leaders make sure they are incorporated into day-to-day operations, procedures, and policies. In order to improve a company's mission and vision a proper leadership strategy is always needed. On the other hand, it showed that poor leadership could hamper the organisation's effectiveness and its working culture. Lastly, it could be said that an improved leadership pattern or strategy is always better to manage a company's mission and vision in the target business market.

2.2 Impact of Personal Energy, Self-Belief, and Responsibility on Leadership styles and their Relative Success

Jeff Bezos's leadership is a good case study about how personal energy, self-belief, and responsibility help create a leader's style and effectiveness. His innovation and long-term thinking show a strong resemblance to Transformational and Strategic Leadership theories. High personal energy from Bezos translated into a culture that was demanding but inspiring in its approach to innovation and scale at an unprecedented rate. Amazon was able to take big risks with Amazon AWS and Kindle, for which first there was scepticism but later they turned into a different and better industry. This fits with Bezos's *Theory X and Y* style of management, where he assumed a Theory Y stance regarding people's ability for creativity and motivation

but remained a highly disciplined deliverer of performance accountability (Miller and Miller, 2020).

A high-pressure environment has also been widely reported in the media about this type of leadership style. *Authoritative Leadership* crops up in Bezos, who became very responsible for Amazon's success due to his sense of responsibility, which often led to top-down control and less tolerance for failure (Pellegrini *et al.* 2020). That is how Amazon has grown, up to a point, but the flip side of that kind of growth has been huge turnover and burnout, especially in warehouses.

This leadership style is demonstrable by its imposition on customers as market dominance, innovation, and customer satisfaction. As Amazon grows and diversifies, Andy Jassy seems to be starting to work together with a leadership approach, meaning that the leadership energy and style double exceptional need to vary with organizational advancement.

Leadership is the ability of an individual or organization to effectively influence, guide, or lead another organization or team. It is a blend of practical skills and research areas. According to Klebe *et al.* (2021), effective leadership enhances a variety of aspects of the workplace, including the mission and vision of the business, organizational culture, performance, and working conditions to inspire staff. In addition, it demonstrates how crucial it is for leaders to develop their strategic thinking skills, which in turn boost organizational services and business efficiency. In order to gain a competitive edge in the intended company market, leaders also oversee particular organizational goals.

Furthermore, by fulfilling the joint commitments of that specific organization, an effective leadership approach and style encourage each employee to collaborate realistically. According to Angtud (2023), effective leadership fosters each employee's communication abilities and instils confidence in them when speaking with others. According to Boateng (2023), a leader's optimistic outlook is crucial for striking a balance between their personal and professional lives, which helps them solve organizational and personal issues and succeed in their business and career. In addition, the most successful leadership behaviours and skills include problem-solving, learning and understanding others, decision-making, a positive outlook, teamwork, and handling conflict.

2.3 The Role of Ethical Leadership in Fostering Empowerment, Trust, and Fostering Organisational Practice

The relationship between Amazon's leadership and ethics has been complex; many are empowered, trusted, and not very ethical at Amazon. Due to its tech and product teams, Jeff Bezos promoted empowerment in the form of decentralized decision-making. The other one is

the 'two-pizza team' rule, which is the antithesis of empowered leadership practice and agile management practices (Chaithanapat *et al.* 2022). It thus enabled this empowered innovation, fast experimentation, and product development. Leaders trusted teams enough that they could carry out ideas but the performance was closely watched. However, this trust has limits. In the warehouse, micromanagement through surveillance and perpetual targets – leads to a transactional model rather than a real empowering one. The fact that trust is unequally distributed across organizational levels is revealed in this dichotomy between empowerment at the top and control at the operational level.

Amazon has been up to its ethical standards in having failed with its treatment of workers, tax, and environmental impact. The Ethical Leadership Model holds that ethical leadership is transparent, fair, and appreciates stakeholders, all areas in which Amazon's leadership has fallen short. While Amazon's ethics have improved in recent years, with an increased effort on sustainability, diversity, and community engagement, it is still fighting an uphill battle among other people in the tech industry who have similar business models (Burawat, 2019). Andy Jassy has taken leadership to appear a bit more inclusive, perhaps pointing to a cultural shift toward servant leadership, as servant leadership is about considering the welfare of employees and stakeholder value.

Therefore, by placing a high value on moral behaviour, openness, and transparency, leadership may promote empowerment and trust. Since it fosters trust, increases employee engagement, and draws in talent, ethical leadership is essential for improving organizational practice. According to Son *et al*. (2022), employee empowerment and a sense of ownership are fostered by a culture of respect, honesty, and accountability that results from a strong ethical position. Setting a good example for their teams, ethical leaders place a high value on honesty, integrity, and fairness in both their decisions and actions.

Employee trust is increased by leaders who are open and honest about their principles and decision-making procedures. Building a culture where workers are at ease voicing their thoughts and ideas encourages cooperation and trust. Therefore, an ethical position fosters a culture of accountability, honesty, and respect where workers feel appreciated and empowered (Bellibaş *et al*. 2022). Employees are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and dedicated to the company's objectives when they feel that their employer places a high priority on moral principles.

TASK 3

3.1 Impact of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Strategy

Driven by *transformational leadership* under Jeff Bezos, Amazon has enjoyed great strategic agility and long-term success by transforming itself into a unique model. Bass and Avolio define this leadership style as an idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. This reflects Bezos's bold vision for Amazon to be 'Earth's most customer-centric company' and an inspiration to innovation as well as calculated risk-taking (Clegg *et al.* 2019).
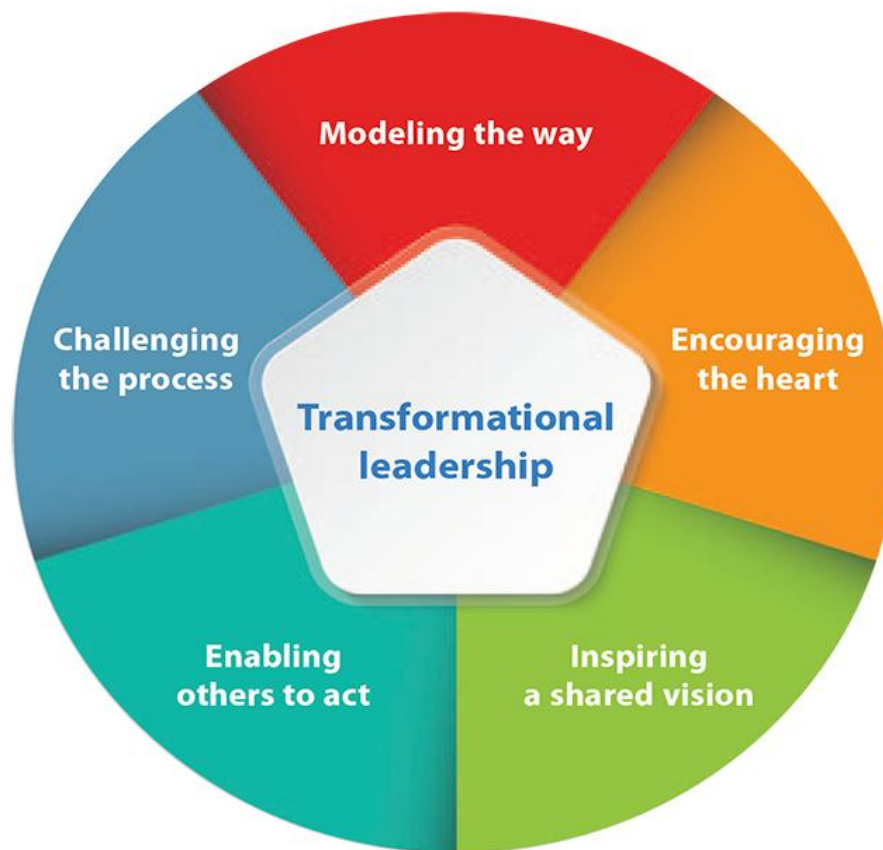

Figure 4: Transformational leadership theory

(Source: Clegg *et al.* 2019)

This leadership style has a huge impact on the strategy. Amazon's more strategic drift in the early part of its growth parallels some emergent strategy models (Mintzberg) where the strategic game is played by experimentation and innovation instead of the more boring but predictable games of planning (DeLay and Clark, 2020). Initiatives like the 'two pizza team' model, encouraging autonomy, and the activities that are carried out in compliance with the *resource-based view* (RBV) of strategy are some ways by which Bezos encouraged innovation.

The organization's core competitive advantage in this case was based on the technological and human capital of the organization's internal capabilities.
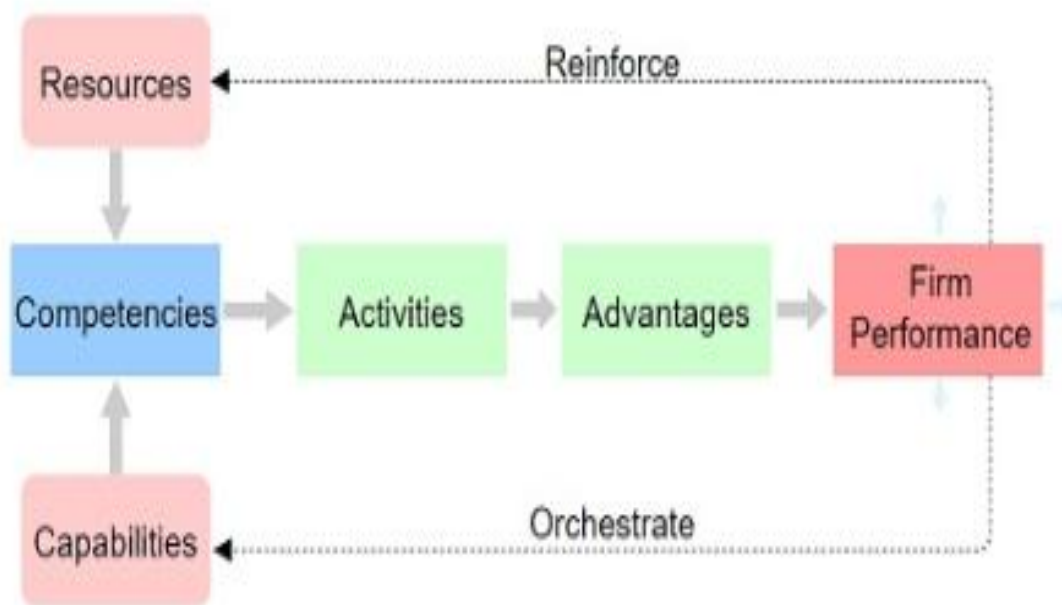

Figure 5: Resource-based View Model

(Source: Quinn *et al.* 2020)

These transformations also enabled employees at the higher levels to innovate without approvals at the layers hence making strategy deployment remain at a fast and flexible pace. However, top-tier teams face a lot of power but do not advance warehouse operations since employees often work under a great deal of pressure with little autonomy, which might be lacking inclusivity and consistency of leadership impact (Quinn *et al.* 2020).

Transformational leadership has also established a good level of customer trust and investor confidence from a stakeholder's view. However, this has been pushed back by internal stakeholders (employees) as well as external stakeholders (governments, labour unions) as there were perceived ethical shortcomings.

In operational management, a transformational leadership style is shown in novel approaches to staff motivation, product expansion, providing excellent customer service, and carrying out business operations. According to Greimel *et al*. (2023), in order to survive in the fiercely competitive global market, one must do something different in this day and age. Through motivating staff, creating a common vision, and encouraging creativity, transformational leadership has a big impact on organizational strategy. In the end, this improves organizational

performance and flexibility (Deng *et al*. 2023). Transformational leaders encourage their staff to go above and beyond, welcome change, and help shape a more successful strategic course. Apart from that, a transformational leadership always helps to mitigate employee's roadblocks by motivating them towards their work. As per the knowledge of Saad Alessa (2021), the use of transformational leadership is always helpful for the company in its organisational strategy by motivating its employees towards their work. In addition, increased motivation and dedication to organizational objectives result from transformational leaders' ability to inspire their staff, communicate a compelling vision, and cultivate a sense of purpose (Ystaas *et al*. 2023). Transformational leaders foster an atmosphere that empowers staff members to investigate novel concepts and produce creative solutions by promoting intellectual stimulation and questioning their current status system.

3.2 Impact of Transactional Leadership on Organizational Strategy

Amazon is laced with *transactional leadership*, much more than we see in its strategic narrative, and it is especially ingrained in its nonstrategic operational structures, primarily among the logistics and warehouse departments. This theory of Burns is transactional leadership which incorporates rewards and punishments; performance monitoring; and hierarchy defined clearly (Shamim *et al*. 2019). At Amazon, the application of these principles manifests in the use of KPIs, surveillance systems, and performance metrics to multiply productivity and efficiency.

Figure 6: Transactional Leadership

(Source: Shamim *et al.* 2019)

It is consistent with Amazon's deliberate strategy formation with well-defined objectives including delivery speed, supply chain efficiency, and cost reduction. Measurable outputs and monitored with advanced algorithms and data systems, these objectives are in line with. At the operational level, the strategy deployment is based on a command and control mode following top-down expectations, where managers execute the decisions (Rosenhead *et al.* 2019). Such as, warehouse employees are evaluated by pick rates and delivery speed based on *Taylor's Scientific Management* principles. Although transactional leadership is effective in preserving consistency, predictability, and saving costs, it has been criticized as being too over-reliant. Employee burnout, high turnover, and labour disputes are all generated by the high-pressure environment, a consequence whereby short-term productivity gains may destroy long-term sustainability and employee trust (Wu *et al.* 2023).

For an internal well-being point of emphasis, Amazon's top executives have traditionally focused more on efficiency and customer obsession rather than internal well-being. This has ensured that Amazon is the poster child for logistics blanketing the world but raises ethical and

cultural sustainability concerns that build into the future. While still operating in a very transactional firm cape where Amazon's stake is large, there are early signs of starting to shift this balance as Andy Jassy attempts to pull more employee-centric strategies into the balance. Among different leadership strategies or systems, this transactional leadership style is effective for the company to improve its strategy by increasing productivity as well as efficiency. According to the view of Dong (2023), by establishing a disciplined, performance-driven workplace, transactional leadership which emphasizes rewards and penalties for compliance could have a big impact on company strategy. In some situations, this can result in increased productivity and efficiency, however, if misused, it may also inhibit creativity and innovation. It works well in stable environments, has defined roles and goals, and is centred on reaching particular results.

The necessary advancements in potentiality that provide a margin of comparison among competitors of the same level industry are reflected in the advantage in a competitive market. One of the primary motivations for putting transactional leadership ideas into practice is the opportunity to outperform a firm (Jaqua and Jaqua, 2021). Every successful and creative business may continue to operate, provide services, and produce goods in response to consumer demand and shifts in the competitive market environment. In order to find more beneficial chances and expand the possibilities for adapting to changes, innovation is crucial. This theory of Burns is transactional leadership which incorporates rewards and punishments; performance monitoring; and hierarchy defined clearly (Aljumah, 2023). At Amazon, the application of these principles manifests in the use of KPIs, surveillance systems, and performance metrics to multiply productivity and efficiency.

3.3 Impact of Situational Leadership on Organizational Strategy

The *situational leadership* approach suggests that there is no single leadership style used for all situations (Bhaduri, 2019). However, leaders must adapt to the task, the maturity of the followers, and the organizational environment.

The size and reach of Amazon's organization and territory require a flexible leadership model (Pellegrini *et al.* 2020). When the lead is R&D or Cloud Service (AWS), it leads with a delegating style where experts initiate and innovate by themselves without any involvement from the lead. This has helped such new business verticals as Alexa, Prime Video and Amazon Go succeed. In other words, a more directive or coaching style from the HR in implication within the logistics and retail divisions can be observed for specifically less experienced employees or where operational goals may necessitate a tighter adherence to processes.

Figure 7: Situational Leadership

(Source: Bhaduri, 2019)

Dynamic market environments are highly conducive environments in which situational leadership theory, especially emergent strategy, can be suitably aligned. For instance, Amazon had to reallocate resources and adjust delivery models during the pandemic of COVID 19. Different levels of leaders were apt to use adaptive styles to deal with customer expectations and employee safety issues.

The impact on stakeholders varies. This agile leadership style helps customers and investors as innovation and market adaptation are quickly induced. However, working for employees dealing with inconsistency in leadership in terms of empowering tech teams and controlling warehouses can make employees confused and disengaged (Bolden *et al.* 2023). To fully leverage situational leadership, Amazon cannot be limited to only providing the capability for adaptability but rather should couple with a coherent ethical and strategic framework that would resonate with all stakeholders.

As per the knowledge of Wuryania *et al*. (2021), organizational strategy is greatly impacted by situational leadership, which fosters adaptation, improves decision-making, and raises employee engagement and performance by allowing leaders to modify their approach according to the demands of the team and the circumstances. It enables businesses to make use

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of the distinctive skills of their employees and react to changing conditions with effectiveness. According to the Situational Leadership Model, there is no superior leadership style. According to the approach, managers should adapt their strategies to the skills of their staff rather than concentrating on workplace variables (Mustofa, 2021). Moreover, as per this concept, connections and tasks are equally important for effective leadership.

It has also shown that the use of situational leadership strategy could help any particular company to manage difficult situations perfectly. As per the view of Collier (2023), situational leadership is always essential for companies to increase their productivity in the target business market. This particular leadership style is also effective in providing acceptability and flexibility in the business culture. As an example during the COVID-19 pandemic most of the company leaders have focused on situational leadership to improve its organisational culture and flexible working pattern.

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