

Developing a Model of The Impact of Situational Leadership on Instructors' Self-Efficacy in Universities in Shandong, China

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Abstract

In the evolving educational landscape, effective leadership styles and the development of instructors' self-efficacy are crucial for the success and advancement of academic institutions. This study aims to examine the multifaceted impact of situational leadership style on university instructors in Shandong, China. Specifically, it measures how situational leadership influences instructors' self-efficacy using a validated self-efficacy scale and analyzes its effect on instructional competence through quantitative evaluation tools. Furthermore, the study assesses the relationship between situational leadership and instructors' career planning as well as their levels of peer support, using quantitative data and survey methods. Ultimately, the research seeks to develop a comprehensive model illustrating the impact of situational leadership on instructors' self-efficacy within the higher education context. Paul Hersey, and Kenneth Blanchard, this research explores the complex relationships among leadership styles, instructor characteristics, situational contexts, and instructor self-efficacy. This study used a quantitative research design with purposive selection of 443 teachers from diverse academic backgrounds. The data collection instrument includes demographic information, a situational leadership style survey adapted and modified from Hersey and Blanchard's model, and a survey addressing instructor self-efficacy, competence, goal clarity, career planning, and peer support. The process entails obtaining approval and collaboration from university administrators, while ensuring transparent communication with participants to secure voluntary engagement. This study confirms that the Situational Leadership Style has a significant positive impact on instructor self-efficacy. Instructor competence, peer support, and career planning are mediators in this relationship. The findings highlight

the importance of combining external leadership strategies with internal capacity building to enhance instructor self-efficacy.

Keywords: Situational Leadership; Instructor; Self-Efficacy; University

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, effective leadership and the cultivation of instructors' self-efficacy have become critical to the success and advancement of institutions. Particularly in China, where educational reforms are accelerating to meet both societal expectations and international competitiveness, the limitations of traditional one-size-fits-all leadership models have become increasingly evident (Huang et al., 2020). These models often overlook educators' diverse needs, experiences, and motivations, resulting in a disconnect between leadership approaches and actual instructional challenges. Instructors working in various contexts, from urban to rural settings and from research-oriented universities to teaching-focused colleges, may face distinct pressures yet receive standardized guidance that fails to empower them. This can lead to disengagement, resistance to change, and a decline in professional confidence.

While previous studies have acknowledged the value of adaptive and personalized leadership in promoting teacher motivation and performance (Rais & Rubini, 2022), empirical research examining how these leadership styles influence instructors' self-efficacy in China's reform-driven educational environment remains limited. Moreover, there is a lack of in-depth qualitative insights into how instructors perceive leadership support during institutional transformation. Existing literature focuses on student outcomes or general institutional performance, often overlooking psychological and professional development needs (Leithwood et al., 2020). This creates a significant research gap: the need to explore how leadership styles can be strategically aligned with instructors' evolving needs, especially in environments characterized by reform, uncertainty, and increased accountability. Understanding this dynamic is essential for developing leadership models that respond to macro-level policy shifts and nurture the micro-level growth of individual educators.

Drawing from the researcher's experience at a private undergraduate university in Shandong Province, a recurring issue of low self-efficacy among instructors was noted, particularly in their

reluctance to engage in research or adopt innovative teaching practices. Interviews conducted with a focus group of faculty members confirmed this trend and highlighted contributing factors such as limited resources, heavy workloads, insufficient support, and unclear expectations. These findings emphasized the need for leadership responsive to individual educator needs, enhances peer collaboration, and fosters a culture of shared best practices. Ultimately, instructor competence is essential for student success. Leaders who adopt flexible, situational leadership styles can empower educators to believe in their ability to influence student outcomes, promoting resilience, motivation, and a commitment to continuous professional development.

Research Questions

1. How does situational leadership style impact the self-efficacy levels of instructors in universities in Shandong, China?
2. How does situational leadership style statistically influence instructor competence?
3. To what extent does situational leadership style correlate with career planning behaviors among instructors?
4. What is the statistical relationship between situational leadership style and peer support among instructors?
5. What recommendations are needed to develop a model of the impact of situational leadership on instructors' self-efficacy in universities in Shandong, China?

Research Objectives

1. To measure the impact of situational leadership style on instructor self-efficacy using a validated self-efficacy scale.
2. To analyze the effect of situational leadership on instructor competence using quantitative evaluation tools.
3. To assess the impact of situational leadership style on career planning among instructors through quantitative data analysis.
4. To assess the impact of situational leadership style on peer support levels among instructors through quantitative survey methods.

5. To develop a model of the impact of situational leadership on Instructors' self-efficacy in universities in Shandong, China.

Literature Review

The Uniqueness and Importance of Situational Leadership

Situational leadership theory is particularly valuable in educational contexts due to its emphasis on adaptability and recognizing the dynamic nature of teaching and learning environments. Situational leadership offers a flexible framework that enables leaders to adjust their style based on an individual's developmental level, ensuring that the support provided is both appropriate and effective. This responsiveness is especially relevant in higher education, where instructors progress through stages of professional growth—from novices to seasoned experts. By aligning leadership strategies with these stages, leaders can enhance instructors' confidence, competence, and overall self-efficacy (Northouse, 2018, pp.102–103).

Empirical studies have shown that situational leadership positively influences instructor development and student achievement. Its relevance extends beyond education. The broader leadership literature also reflects the complexity and multifaceted nature of the concept. As Gubanova (2020) observed, no universal definition of leadership exists, and its interpretation has evolved alongside managerial thinking. Leadership styles are shaped by cultural contexts, with differences noted between Western and Eastern models

Contemporary research continues to explore how leadership adapts to specific situational factors. Introduced a conceptual framework showing how situational and transitional leadership approaches can shape inclusive evaluation strategies responsive to disability and cultural diversity. The role of emotional intelligence and contextual adaptability in student leadership asserts that no fixed traits guarantee leadership effectiveness.

Instructor Self-Efficacy

Instructor self-efficacy is a pivotal factor influencing educators' effectiveness and job satisfaction, making it crucial to examine its connection to the specific challenges instructors face (Liu et al., 2020). Burić and Moè (2020) investigated the interplay of motivational (instructor self-efficacy), affective (positive emotions), and well-being (job satisfaction) factors that shape instructors' enthusiasm,

highlighting the significance of self-efficacy as a motivational characteristic impacting instructional quality and students' motivational beliefs (Burić & Kim, 2020). Hidayat et al. (2020) researched the effects of situational leadership and self-efficacy on teachers' work productivity. They tested a structural model of instructor reflection, self-efficacy, burnout, and emotion regulation among Iranian EFL instructors. Lazarides et al. (2021) examined how instructors' self-efficacy and enthusiasm predict changes. Viewed self-efficacy as an indicator of instructor motivation at both the individual and school levels. The role of instructor identity in the development of self-efficacy during initial instructor education, emphasizing how a strong student-instructor identity can negatively impact pre-service instructors' self-efficacy appraisals while instructor identity arising through autonomous role enactment and social verification fosters self-efficacy development.

Effective leadership practices encompass a variety of strategies and behaviors rather than relying on a single style. They play a vital role in shaping educators' thoughts and actions, particularly their efforts to improve students' learning outcomes. By articulating an appealing vision, setting clear expectations, inspiring innovation, and fostering a collaborative learning environment, leaders enhance instructor self-efficacy—an educator's belief in their ability to effect positive change in the classroom (Bandura, 1977). Instructors with high self-efficacy are more likely to seek professional growth, adopt innovative teaching methods, and remain dedicated to student success. Several studies, including Vilorio (2019), Flores et al. (2020), Karim et al. (2020), Liu et al. (2020), Engin (2020), Huang et al. (2020), Luo et al. (2020), Sudrajat et al. (2020), and Çoban et al. (2020), have examined various aspects of this relationship, underscoring the importance of leadership in influencing instructor self-efficacy and, in turn, student achievement and professional development. Effective leadership and instructor self-efficacy are closely intertwined, with leadership fostering self-efficacy through guidance, inspiration, and collaboration. Conversely, self-efficacy encourages educators' proactive engagement in professional development and commitment to student success, promoting educational excellence.

Instructor Competence, Peer Support, and Career Planning

An in-depth analysis of instructor competence, peer support, and career planning ability in Shandong universities is essential due to the unique challenges faced, as these factors significantly impact the interaction between leadership, context, and instructor self-efficacy. The lack of institutional support for career planning among Israeli instructor educators, advocating collective institutional efforts. May et al. (2020) underscored the importance of principal managerial competence in enhancing

instructor performance, emphasizing the role of effective leadership in education quality. Saiko (2020) stressed the significance of self-confidence in shaping future instructors' career planning and development. Campbell et al. (2020) called for detailed frameworks in initial instructor education to support multifaceted responsibilities. Wong et al. (2020) emphasized career guidance in students' decision-making. Novitasari et al. (2021) revealed the positive impact of social support on instructor performance. Chan et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of instructional behaviors in pre-service instructors' motivation and self-efficacy. König et al. (2021) proposed the CODE-PLAN model to advance research on instructor planning competence and curriculum design.

Effective career planning aligns with institutional strategies for talent retention and succession planning, while situational leadership, by adapting to instructors' readiness levels, can enhance their self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and instructional effectiveness (Bolden et al., 2003; Grossman & Sharf, 2018). Leadership management practices, including effective communication, recognition of achievements, support for professional development, and a supportive learning environment, further strengthen instructors' self-efficacy and effectiveness. Adaptive leadership, organizational support, and effective management practices are crucial for fostering innovation, work engagement, and positive workplace outcomes. Understanding the interplay among these elements is essential for educational leaders to develop targeted strategies that empower instructors, boost their self-efficacy, and contribute to a vibrant and compelling educational institution.

The Hypotheses

- H1: Situational leadership style has a significant effect on instructors' self-efficacy.
- H2: The Situational Leadership Style significantly affects instructor competence.
- H3: The Situational Leadership Style significantly affects Instructor Peer Support.
- H4: Instructor competence significantly affects instructor self-efficacy.
- H5: Instructor peer support significantly affects instructor self-efficacy.
- H6: Instructor career planning significantly affects instructor self-efficacy.
- H7: Situational leadership style indirectly influences instructors' self-efficacy through mediating factors such as competence, career planning, and peer support.
- H8: Instructor Competence for Self-efficacy mediates Situational Leadership Style.
- H9: Instructor Peer Support for Self-Efficacy Mediates Situational Leadership Style.
- H10: Instructor Career Planning for Self-Efficacy Mediates Situational Leadership Style.

Conceptual Framework

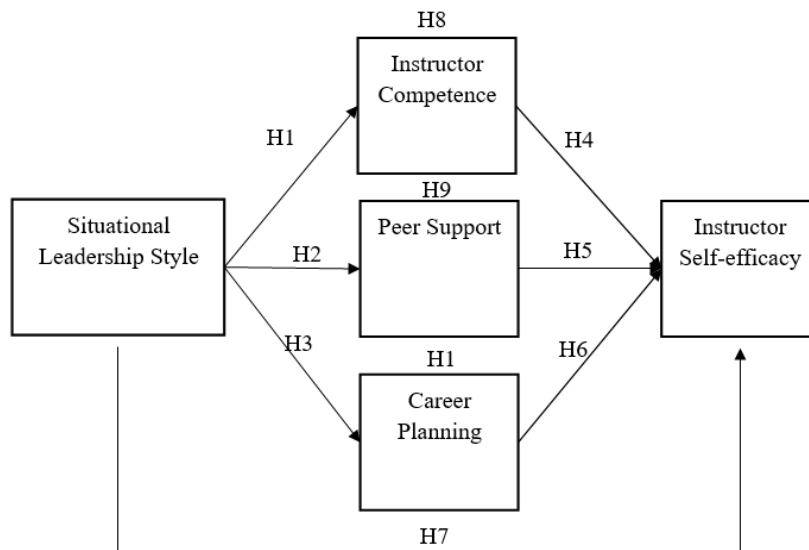


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

The study's conceptual framework outlines situational leadership, characterized by adaptability, as the independent variable mediating the link between leadership styles and instructor self-efficacy. University leaders modify their approaches to align with instructors' readiness and needs, providing more guidance to novices and greater autonomy to veterans (Bolden et al., 2003). Instructor Competence, Peer Support, and Career Planning are proposed to impact instructor development and job satisfaction. Instructor Competence, essential for effective teaching, is enhanced by situational leadership's personalized support (Ruslan et al., 2020). Peer Support, which fosters collaboration and growth, is strengthened by a leadership style that promotes teamwork (Mustofa & Muafi, 2021). Career Planning, critical for talent retention and institutional stability, is positively influenced by situational leadership's alignment with instructors' aspirations. These mediators, shaped by situational leadership, ultimately influence instructor self-efficacy, affecting teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design to systematically investigate and measure the effect of situational leadership style on instructors' self-efficacy across five distinct universities. The primary objective is to gather numerical data and utilize statistical analyses to explore the relationships

between variables, contributing to a deeper understanding of the dynamics within educational leadership. The research design strategically involves a diverse sample of 443 instructors from the following universities: Qingdao Institute of Technology, Qingdao Huanghai University, Qilu Institute of Technology, Shandong Xiehe University, and Weifang University of Science and Technology. This multiversity approach ensures a comprehensive exploration of the research questions while considering potential variations across different institutional settings.

The survey, an essential element of this quantitative research design, will be the primary data collection instrument. It was crafted to gather relevant information about situational leadership styles, instructor self-efficacy beliefs, and other important factors. A Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5, will quantify the participants' responses, allowing for a nuanced understanding of their perspectives. The selected research design supports the study's overall aim of quantifying the impact of situational leadership style on instructor self-efficacy. This approach offers a structured and systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting numerical data. Employing a quantitative method enables the measurement of variables on a predetermined scale, facilitating statistical analysis to derive meaningful conclusions.

Research Results

Reliability and Validity

The results of the scale reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients indicate that all variables demonstrate good internal consistency, with values exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. Specifically, the scale for Situational Leadership Styles shows excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.890$), indicating strong consistency among the items. Self-Efficacy ($\alpha=0.819$), Career Planning ($\alpha=0.878$), and Instructor Competence ($\alpha=0.877$) also exhibit high reliability. Peer Support, while slightly lower ($\alpha= 0.788$), still meets acceptable standards. These results suggest that the measurement instruments used in the study are reliable for assessing the targeted constructs.

Table 1 Scale Reliability Analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Situational Leadership Styles	0.890
Self-Efficacy	0.819

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Career Planning	0.878
Instructor Competence	0.877
Peer Support	0.788

The AVE (Average Variance Extracted) and CR (Composite Reliability) metrics provide crucial information for assessing the model's reliability and validity. AVE quantifies the proportion of variance explained by each latent variable, with higher values being preferable. The AVE values for most dimensions exceed 0.5, indicating they account for a substantial portion of the variance in their corresponding items. The AVE for the Directing dimension is 0.674, while that for the Peer Support dimension is 0.500, which is approaching the threshold of 0.5, suggesting a relatively weaker explanatory power for the latter dimension, although still within an acceptable range. Composite Reliability (CR) is used to evaluate the reliability of latent variables, with a typical requirement of CR values exceeding 0.7. The CR values for most dimensions surpass 0.8, signifying a high level of reliability. The CR for the Competence dimension is 0.879, and for the Peer Support dimension, it is 0.790, indicating an acceptable reliability level. Table 15 shows that the path relationships, factor loadings, AVE, and CR values for all dimensions meet rigorous standards, suggesting a high degree of validity and reliability for the measurement model.

Table 2 AVE and CR

Path Relationship			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Factor Loading	AVE	CR
DI1	<---	DI	1.000				0.831	0.674	0.861
DI2	<---	DI	0.990	0.056	17.593	***	0.820		
DI3	<---	DI	0.937	0.054	17.256	***	0.811		
CO1	<---	CO	1.000				0.689	0.611	0.820
CO2	<---	CO	0.980	0.080	12.203	***	0.654		
CO3	<---	CO	1.488	0.107	13.850	***	0.965		
SU1	<---	SU	1.000				0.796	0.583	0.807
SU2	<---	SU	0.948	0.065	14.553	***	0.770		
SU3	<---	SU	0.857	0.062	13.820	***	0.722		
DE1	<---	DE	1.000				0.762	0.581	0.806
DE2	<---	DE	0.931	0.067	13.911	***	0.753		
DE3	<---	DE	1.032	0.073	14.210	***	0.771		

Path Relationship			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Factor Loading	AVE	CR
SE1	<---	SE	1.000				0.741	0.582	0.848
SE2	<---	SE	1.086	0.077	14.119	***	0.771		
SE3	<---	SE	0.932	0.068	13.715	***	0.762		
SE4	<---	SE	0.983	0.071	13.818	***	0.777		
COM1	<---	COM	1.000				0.780	0.644	0.879
COM2	<---	COM	1.055	0.062	17.006	***	0.835		
COM3	<---	COM	1.002	0.062	16.102	***	0.792		
COM4	<---	COM	1.099	0.069	15.911	***	0.803		
CP1	<---	CP	1.000				0.795	0.650	0.881
CP2	<---	CP	1.074	0.058	18.396	***	0.861		
CP3	<---	CP	0.930	0.062	15.094	***	0.737		
CP4	<---	CP	1.179	0.070	16.939	***	0.826		
PS1	<---	PS	1.000				0.692	0.500	0.790
PS2	<---	PS	0.971	0.087	11.193	***	0.670		
PS3	<---	PS	1.240	0.104	11.867	***	0.710		
PS4	<---	PS	1.099	0.092	11.952	***	0.714		

Note: DI stands for Directing, CO stands for Coaching, SU stands for Supporting, DE stands for Delegating, SE stands for Self-Efficacy, COM stands for Competence, CP stands for Career Planning, and PS stands for Peer Support.

Correlation analysis

The correlation analysis results among various dimensions illustrate each variable's correlation and statistical significance with others. The $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ column indicates the square root of the Average Variance Extracted for each dimension, reflecting the latent variables' convergent validity. All dimensions have $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ values greater than 0.7, demonstrating good convergent validity.

Table 3 Results of Correlation Analysis for Each Dimension

Variables	$\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$	DI	CO	SU	DE	PS	COM	CP	SE
DI	0.821	0.821							
CO	0.782	.446**	0.782						
SU	0.764	.460**	.455**	0.764					
DE	0.762	.542**	.403**	.572**	0.762				
PS	0.763	.361**	.325**	.376**	.464**	0.763			

Variables	√AVE	DI	CO	SU	DE	PS	COM	CP	SE
COM	0.802	.390**	.346**	.394**	.443**	.270**	0.802		
CP	0.806	.411**	.360**	.454**	.445**	.230**	.350**	0.806	
SE	0.707	.439**	.396**	.445**	.498**	.415**	.513**	.490**	0.707

NOTE: * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

The Structural Equation Models and Hypothesis Testing

The data outline the outcomes of the model fit indices. One can determine whether the model demonstrates a satisfactory fit by comparing the observed values of various fit indices against their ideal benchmarks. Regarding the CMIN/DF (Chi-square to Degrees of Freedom Ratio), the observed value is 1.209, below the threshold of 5 and approaching 1, aligning with the criteria for a well-fitting model. The GFI (Goodness-of-Fit Index) and AGFI (Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index) are recorded at 0.933 and 0.919, respectively, surpassing the 0.9 mark and confirming a favorable model fit that meets the acceptance criteria. The RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) is noted at 0.023, significantly lower than the 0.08 cutoff, suggesting an exceedingly small fitting error and an exemplary fitting effect. Other fit indices, including the IFI (Incremental Fit Index), NFI (Normed Fit Index), TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index), and CFI (Comparative Fit Index), reach values of 0.987, 0.928, 0.985, and 0.987, respectively, all exceeding the 0.9 threshold. These values support the model's excellent fit.

Table 4 Results of Structural Equation Modeling

Path Relationship			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
COM	<---	SIS	0.40	0.08	6.12	***
PS	<---	SIS	0.63	0.08	9.06	***
CP	<---	SIS	0.59	0.08	8.72	***
SE	<---	COM	0.13	0.04	2.38	0.017
SE	<---	PS	0.23	0.05	3.46	***
SE	<---	CP	0.28	0.05	4.35	***
SE	<---	SIS	0.35	0.08	3.78	***

NOTE: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, SIS means Situational Leadership Styles.

The direct effects derived from the structural equation model examine the direct influences of Situational Leadership Style (SIS) on Perceived Competence (COM), Peer Support (PS), Career Planning (CP), and Self-Efficacy (SE). The impact of SIS on each variable is both significant and positive. The standardized path coefficients for the effects of SIS on Perceived Competence (COM), Peer Support

(PS), and Career Planning (CP) are 0.40, 0.63, and 0.59, respectively. The critical ratios (C.R.) for these paths are all statistically significant, indicating a strong influence of SIS on these three factors. The direct effect of SIS on Self-Efficacy (SE) is 0.35, with a C.R. of 3.78, also suggesting a substantial and positive impact. The direct effect of Perceived Competence on Self-Efficacy is 0.13 (C.R. = 2.38, $p < 0.05$), that of Peer Support is 0.23 (C.R. = 3.46, $p < 0.001$), and that of Career Planning is 0.28 (C.R. = 4.35, $p < 0.001$). All these paths are statistically significant. The influences of Peer Support and Career Planning on Self-Efficacy are particularly pronounced, highlighting their pivotal roles in enhancing Self-Efficacy.

Table 5 Results of Indirect Effects Tests

Path	Effect	SE	Bias Corrected (95%)		%
			LLCI	ULCI	
SIS---> SE Direct Effect	0.216	0.05	0.111	0.320	39.0%
SIS---> COM ---> SE Indirect Effect	0.088	0.02	0.045	0.138	15.9%
SIS---> PS ---> SE Indirect Effect	0.132	0.03	0.084	0.186	23.8%
SIS---> CP ---> SE Indirect Effect	0.118	0.03	0.069	0.173	21.3%
DL---> IP Total Indirect Effect	0.338	0.04	0.277	0.434	61.0%
SIS ---> SE Total Effect	0.554	0.04	0.4845	0.650	100.0%

The direct effect of SIS on SE is 0.216, with a confidence interval (LLCI = 0.111, ULCI = 0.320) that does not encompass zero, indicating a significant direct enhancement of SE by SIS. In terms of indirect effects, the influence of SIS on SE through different mediating variables also achieved statistical significance. SIS indirectly affects SE through Perceived Competence (COM), with an indirect effect of 0.088 and a confidence interval (LLCI = 0.045, ULCI = 0.138) excluding zero, contributing 15.9% to the total effect. The indirect effect of SIS on SE through Peer Support (PS) is 0.132, with a confidence interval ranging from 0.084 to 0.186, accounting for 23.8% of the total effect. The indirect effect through Career Planning (CP) is 0.118, with a confidence interval from 0.069 to 0.173, contributing 21.3%.

The total effect of SIS on SE is 0.554, with a confidence interval ranging from 0.4845 to 0.650, indicating a highly significant combined impact across all direct and indirect pathways. The indirect effects constitute 61% of the total effect, highlighting the crucial role of mediating variables in the transmission process between SIS and SE. SIS affects SE through direct pathways while enhancing its impact on SE via mediating pathways such as Perceived Competence, Peer Support, and Career Planning. These findings support the complex mechanism by which SIS functions to enhance SE.

Discussion

This research integrates quantitative and qualitative data to reveal the internal mechanisms underlying the formation of entrepreneurial capabilities. It highlights the mediating role of market analysis and networking collaboration capability between individual qualities and business planning. Problem-solving and decision-making capabilities show the most decisive influence across various pathways, emphasizing the pivotal role of higher-order cognitive abilities in developing entrepreneurial strategies. Although opportunity recognition capability is effective in market analysis, it indicates a disconnect between internal cognition and external integration in entrepreneurial capabilities.

Qualitative analysis further indicates a significant cognitive disparity between educational provision and industrial demand. Students prioritize practical experience, teachers emphasize teaching methodologies, and enterprises focus on capability alignment, validating the weak link in the "capability transformation chain" within the structural model. Respondents universally advocate for a "project-driven + enterprise collaboration" teaching approach, emphasizing the need to cultivate individual qualities within authentic contexts. Consequently, the crux of entrepreneurial education lies not in isolated capabilities but in constructing a holistic pathway "from cognition to application," achieving effective alignment between education and industrial demands.

Conclusion

The results enhance understanding of leadership dynamics in higher education by examining how situational leadership styles affect instructor self-efficacy. The thorough analysis of data reveals significant relationships among situational leadership, mediating variables (Instructor Competence, Peer Support, Career Planning), and instructor self-efficacy. These findings offer a roadmap for utilizing

leadership practices to improve teaching outcomes and foster professional growth in universities in Shandong, China.

The results underscore the importance of situational leadership style as an independent variable significantly influencing instructor self-efficacy (H1a). Leadership styles that are adaptable to situational contexts prove to be essential for motivating and empowering instructors. Leaders who adjust their approach based on the developmental readiness of individual instructors, as outlined in Situational Leadership Theory (SLT), create a more conducive environment for success. For example, instructors at earlier stages of professional development benefit from directive leadership approaches, which provide clarity, structure, and immediate guidance.

Situational leadership's adaptability makes it a robust approach for addressing diverse challenges faced by university instructors. By tailoring leadership strategies to individual needs, situational leadership ensures alignment between organizational goals and instructors' personal growth trajectories.

The mediating variables in this study Instructor Competence, Peer Support, and Career Planning serve as essential pathways through which situational leadership impacts self-efficacy. The data show that instructor competence significantly influences self-efficacy (H4a) and mediates the relationship between situational leadership and self-efficacy (H8a). Leaders who prioritize professional development, such as training and skill-building, directly enhance instructors' confidence in their teaching abilities. Competence fosters the belief that instructors can effectively manage complex tasks and challenges. For instance, providing structured feedback and opportunities for skill refinement empowers instructors to view themselves as capable professionals.

Peer support emerges as another critical mediator, significantly influencing self-efficacy (H5a) and mediating situational leadership (H9a). A collaborative environment, fostered by situational leaders, allows instructors to share best practices, seek advice, and collectively overcome challenges. This aligns with Self-Efficacy Theory (SET), which emphasizes that social persuasion and peer modeling are key in building confidence. Peer support alleviates feelings of isolation and nurtures a sense of community, essential in high-pressure academic environments.

Career planning significantly impacts self-efficacy (H6a) and mediates situational leadership (H10a). Instructors with precise career trajectories feel more motivated and capable of achieving professional milestones. Situational leaders who provide individualized career guidance ensure that

instructors have a sense of direction and purpose in their roles. This variable highlights the importance of aligning instructors' personal goals with institutional objectives, fostering long-term engagement and confidence.

The study's findings align with Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) and Self-Efficacy Theory (SET). The core premise of SLT is that effective leadership depends on a leader's ability to adapt their style to meet the needs of their followers. This study validates that situational leadership can directly influence instructor competence, peer support, and career planning, ultimately boosting self-efficacy. As Bandura proposed, self-efficacy is influenced by mastery experiences, social persuasion, and psychological states. This study demonstrates how situational leadership fosters the necessary conditions for these influences to take effect, enhancing instructors' belief in their abilities.

The study effectively validates the hypotheses (H1a–H10a), confirming that situational leadership, through its influence on mediating variables, significantly impacts instructor self-efficacy. Situational leadership affects self-efficacy by adapting to instructors' needs and fostering supportive environments. Instructor competence, peer support, and career planning serve as mediators, enhancing the effects of situational leadership on self-efficacy. These findings emphasize the interconnectedness of leadership styles, mediating variables, and self-efficacy, providing a comprehensive view of instructor development.

This study employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the effect of Situational Leadership Style (SIS) on teachers' Self-Efficacy (SE) and its underlying mechanisms. The findings reveal that SIS significantly influences teachers' SE, Perceived Competence (COM), Peer Support (PS), and Career Planning (CP). COM, PS, and CP are important mediators in the SIS and teachers' SE relationship. All hypotheses proposed in this research have been supported, indicating that SIS directly impacts teachers' SE and indirectly enhances this influence through various mediating variables. This outcome further validates the effectiveness and scientific rigor of the research model.

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