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A Theoretical Evaluation on Traditional Leadership Approaches

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to examine the theoretical foundations of traditional leadership approaches, managerial leadership, bureaucratic leadership, authentic leadership, and team leadership, and to uncover the importance of these approaches for leadership literature and organizations. For this purpose, the study was conducted with the document analysis method, which is among the qualitative research methods. Domestic and foreign sources on these approaches, which constitute the starting point of traditional leadership approaches, were reviewed and the basic characteristics of these leadership approaches were explained. In this context, managerial leadership is a leadership approach aiming to preserve and maintain the present structure. Bureaucratic leadership, on the other hand, is a type of leadership that is performed in line with written rules such as laws, regulations, and directives. Authentic leadership includes characteristics such as establishing positive relationships with people based on trust, sincerity, transparency, and honesty. Team leadership, which is the last traditional leadership approach examined in the study, is a leadership approach aiming to manage a team and achieve its targets. In the conclusion part, as a result of the analysis of the data that were obtained by the document analysis method, the importance of the traditional leadership approaches, which are the subject of the study, in the management of management science, institutions and organizations is explained.

Keywords: Traditional Leadership, Managerial Leadership, Bureaucratic Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Team Leadership

1. Introduction

Leadership is among the most discussed topics in management. Many studies were conducted on this subject and theories were developed. The history of leadership is as old as human history. People have needed to manage and be managed in every period, in every society, and every business line and field from prehistoric hunter-gatherer societies to the stage of the information society. Economic, social, and cultural developments have necessitated the formation of the management system and the ruling class. The rapid scientific and technological change experienced with globalization also affected the science of management as well as many other disciplines; and,

starting from the classical management theories, the science of management continued its development based on efficiency and effectiveness, and then with a process that constantly completed its deficiencies.

In this process, leadership has become among the characteristic subjects studied by management science in subgroups such as organizational citizenship, motivation, and organizational culture. Over time, the “manager-leader” distinction emerged, and the difference between these concepts was explained by managerial behaviors in times of crisis. Among the classic debates on leadership, there is the discussion that leadership is an innate or acquired trait. Theorists on this subject put forward different opinions. In this respect, task-oriented or contemporary leadership theories based on human relations were also developed under the leadership of some universities, especially in the USA, such as Ohio and Michigan. The traditional leadership approaches, which are the subject of this study, still maintain their importance in the situational conditions faced by businesses.

2. Method

The present study was conducted with the document analysis method, which is among the qualitative research methods based on the analysis of written documents and resources related to research topics. Document review can be used together with other methods in qualitative studies or as a stand-alone method (Yildirim & Simsek, 2018). Written and digital documents on traditional leadership approaches, which are the subject of the present study, were examined in this respect. For this reason, the study had a qualitative study design based on theoretical knowledge about traditional leadership approaches.

3. Managerial Leadership

As a leadership approach applied by many managers, managerial leadership can be defined as making an effort to maintain the current order of an organization or community. Managerial leaders target to achieve their goals by focusing on short-term targets. Managerial leadership is very common in public institutions because of the need for strong financial systems (Rowe, 2001).

In managerial leadership, the leader and followers aim to preserve the current structure. For this reason, radical changes which might change the system are not desired. This is the basic characteristic of managerial leadership. In this sense, managerial leadership is a narrow-minded leadership style with a closed systemic structure, in which both the leader and his/her environment stand against changes favoring the continuation of the existing structure (Ilhan, 2017).

The perception of managerial leadership refers to adherence to traditions and rituals. In this regard, managerial leadership has three basic roles, which are personal, informational, and decision-related roles. For this reason, managerial leadership can be described as a system encouraging the leader to protect his/her organization with its current characteristics (Akyuz, 2002). Managerial leadership is a conservative and traditional leadership approach with these aspects.

4. Bureaucratic Leadership

The word bureaucracy consists of the words “bureau” and “cratie”, meaning “the system in which offices use their authority”. The word bureaucracy is used in three different senses. In the first, it refers to the entire state organization and its personnel, in the second, a certain form of administration, and thirdly, it refers to stationery (Tortop, Isbir & Aykac, 1993).

Bureaucracy is an important organizational structure considered as the management system implementing the decisions made by elected managers (Demir, 2011). There are two opposing views towards bureaucracy, positive and negative. According to the positive view, it is an organizational model that clearly states the job description to eliminate role ambiguity, providing guidance-personal development, and satisfaction. According to the negative view, it refers to bureaucracy, discipline, autocratic management, and monotonous business life (Adler & Borys, 1996; Hoy & Sweetland, 2001).

The history of bureaucracy goes back to ancient times. It is known that bureaucratic organizations were highly developed in the Roman Empire, and ancient Egyptian and Chinese civilizations compared to the conditions of that time (Gerth & Mills, 1958). In this context, bureaucratic organizations have two basic characteristics, which are formality and centralization (Buluc, 2009).

Formality: The organization has written rules and regulations. Formality is described in two ways as effective and compelling (Adler & Borys, 1996). Effective formality is assisting employees in solving work-related problems, which is ensured by effective rules and procedures. Compelling formality is based on authoritarian and one-way communication as an approach that expects unquestioned obedience, punishes mistakes, and creates distrust in employees with these aspects (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001).

Centralization: Another important characteristic of bureaucratic organizations is centralization, or hierarchy, which can be extreme or low. In extreme centralization, decisions are concentrated among a few people, and decision powers are distributed in low centralization (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001).

Bureaucratic leadership, which is the subject of the present study, is a leadership approach in which power and authority are distributed according to position, in which jobs are managed from “offices”. In such an organization, jobs are distributed among employees in the form of official duties. It is a leadership style in which higher units are effective in decision-making processes (Clawson, 2014).

5. Authentic Leadership

The word “authentic” means “original, not imitated” (Kesken & Ayyildiz, 2008) and is based on the ancient Greek expression “Know thyself!” and “Be honest to yourself!” (Harter, 2002). The authenticity concept is expressed by virtue and ethics based on a philosophical point of view, and by individual characteristics based on a psychological point of view (Novicevic et al., 2006). According to another definition, authenticity is knowing and expressing oneself well and correctly (Avolio et al., 2004).

Authentic leaders, on the other hand, are honest and respected people who know themselves, know what they believe, have consistent and transparent attitudes, and focus on developing a positive mood based on trust in themselves and their colleagues (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). As seen, authentic leadership and the concept of authenticity on which it is based is a unique leadership type with aspects such as self-knowledge, knowing what one wants, establishing positive relationships with people based on trust, sincerity, and honesty, and for this reason, gaining the respect of other people.

Authentic leaders use their natural talents to influence audiences and are aware of their shortcomings and work hard to complete these. They lead with purpose, meaning, and values and form lasting relationships with people. They are consistent and self-disciplined and do not compromise their principles. They also improve themselves constantly because they know that being a leader requires lifelong personal development (George, 2003).

The need for authentic leaders has increased in recent years. Among the most important reasons for this is that the leadership approaches developed since the Industrial Revolution are insufficient in our present day’s conditions. Leadership approaches are focused on increasing efficiency and speed in industrial organizations based on mass production in large factories. Employees are considered machines by ignoring their individual characteristics. For this reason, authentic leadership comes to the forefront as a different alternative leadership approach among leadership approaches, with the idea of developing others in its nature, motivating employees, and human values that it focuses on (Hollis, 2018).

6. Team Leadership

Teamwork is a reflection of collaborative management practice. Many organizational activities are performed by teams in our present day. Teamwork started with the birth of the concept of organization. Teams are created to

achieve certain targets. Teamwork can be defined as the whole of cooperation and contributions made by employees to achieve organizational targets by creating a team (Elma, 2004).

In institutions, teamwork is a result of the increased desire of employees for autonomy. The lack of employee autonomy reduces the efficiency of organizational activities preventing the emergence of original ideas (Guzelcik, 1999). Teamwork must be expanded and used for organizational effectiveness at all levels. In this sense, teams can also be useful in the realization of some special projects (Ensari, 1999).

Group and team are different concepts. Not every group of people can be qualified as a team. For a group to become a team, they must come together in line with a common purpose and vision and work in this direction (Brestrich, 2000).

Team building occurs in four stages. The characteristics of these stages can be summarized as follows (Penner, 2002):

Forming: It is the starting stage of the team. Team members have positive expectations. However, there is a high level of task anxiety that stems from meeting the members for the first time and not knowing each other well.

Storming: The structure and targets of the team are clarified. The success of the mission increases and team skills improve. At this stage, failure to meet the expectations of the members can lead to frustration and a resulting loss of motivation.

Norming: Productivity increases steadily at this stage and the structure of the team is reinforced. Cooperation develops. Expectations are balanced with reality.

Performing: The team is at the highest level in terms of efficiency and relationship. The leader has no special status. Members can work autonomously.

The team leader is the person who undertakes to manage the team and reach its targets (Hardingham, 1997). In summary, the main responsibilities of a team leader are establishing the team, determining the targets, ensuring its continuity, developing the team members, and reaching targets (Adair, 2003).

7. Conclusion

Leadership is an important operational characteristic in the formation of organizational success and failure with varying leadership styles among cultures. A leadership approach that is implemented in a country or an institution and gives successful results might not give the same results in another country or institution (Luthans & Doh, 2011). In this context, leadership is a complex performance area requiring the ability to solve organizational and individual problems (Mumford et al., 2000). The traditional leadership approaches, which were the subject of the present study, can be defined as leadership styles that are generally assumed to have a hierarchical structure and the leader is the person who knows the job best. Participation in management is limited and the influence of employees on managerial decisions is not high in this respect (Inan & Serinkan, 2020).

Managerial leadership, which is among the traditional leadership approaches, is defined as a system encouraging a leader to protect his/her organization with its current characteristics (Rowe, 2001). The focus of administrative leadership on preserving the current order, while ignoring the change elements around it, can be perceived as a repulsive and negative characteristic. In our present day, rapidly developing technology and environmental conditions have revealed change as an inevitable phenomenon. However, it must not be forgotten that no matter how desirable it is to monitor and keep up with change, in extraordinary conditions such as wars, and economic and social crises, maintaining order and a stable structure can be a desired situation for an institution or society in which successful and talented managerial leaders are needed.

Bureaucracy is “the management by the officials working in the offices or the authority and sovereignty of the offices based on non-arbitrary rules” (Sat, 2009). Bureaucratic leadership, on the other hand, can be defined as the leadership style performed in line with written rules such as laws, regulations, and directives. Bureaucracy and bureaucratic organizations have continued their existence effectively since the early ages. The theorizing of the concept was made by Max Weber, who was a German sociologist, in the twentieth century.

Many criticisms were directed at bureaucratic leadership, which can be listed as strict rules and negative consequences caused by the characteristics of bureaucracy just like the side effects of a drug (a division of labor and specialization cause boredom, objective orientation leads to low morale, etc.) (Aydin, 2007). Weber defined bureaucracy as “the most effective organizational model” (Aydin, 2007). Bureaucracy is a management theory that continues to be effective in our present day, although it has many shortcomings as a management system when faced with scientific and technological developments. It must be noted that the word “bureaucrat” still refers to a positive and desirable situation for many people in our society. The public personnel regime has a large bureaucratic structure in our country and administration is centralized. State institutions perform all their work in line with laws, statutes, and regulations called legislation. Bureaucracy is still an effective form of organization not only in our country but also in many countries of the world. Scientific and technological developments have both weakened and strengthened the bureaucracy.

Among the criticisms regarding bureaucratic organizations is that bureaucracy causes various communication bottlenecks (Aydin, 2007). However, in our present day, many bureaucratic organizations, including official institutions, use automated correspondence and communication systems. A letter sent from a district can be received in a provincial organization and then can be sent to the central organization or the Ministry in a few minutes. These developments showed that bureaucracy and bureaucratic leadership should not be ignored as a management style and leadership approach.

Authentic leadership includes characteristics such as self-knowledge, knowing what one wants, establishing positive relationships with people based on trust, sincerity, and honesty, and for this reason, gaining the respect of people. For this reason, it is an extraordinary leadership approach that also has an idealistic aspect. The increase in the need for authentic leadership is a natural outcome of authentic leadership prioritizing communication with employees by highlighting employee characteristics, which are not given sufficient importance in other leadership approaches (Hollis, 2018). Authentic leadership has a special place in all traditional-contemporary leadership approaches with these aspects.

Team leadership is the final of the traditional leadership approaches studied as a type of leadership that potentially and strongly influences group think (Leithwood, Steinbach & Ryan, 1997). In our present day, organizations perform a lot of work through the teams they create. Although team leadership was examined among traditional leadership approaches in this study, it can also be evaluated within modern leadership approaches since it adopts collaborative management techniques.

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