Paternalistic leadership style's evolution in e-culture

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Abstract

In this paper, usage of paternalistic leadership styles in e-culture is evaluated. With abilities like being catalyst, performance raising, communicating, helping, guiding, caring, influencing, resource organizing, organizations representing and team loyalty developing; paternalism may survive in e-culture where there are diverse groups of individuals operating on joint tasks for limited periods of time. The expected form of paternalistic leadership style in e-culture is tried to be identified. Related propositions are provided.

Keywords: Paternalism, leadership, e-culture.

Paternalist liderlik tarzının e-kültürde evrimi

Özet

Bu makalede, e-kültürde paternalist liderlik tarzının kullanımı değerlendirilmiştir. Katalizör olma, performans yükseltme, iletişim, yardım, rehberlik, ilgi, etkileme, kaynak organizasyonu, organizasyon temsili ve sadakat artırıcılık yetenekleriyle paternalizm kısa sürelerde değişik birey gruplarının ortak iş yaptığı e-kültürde yaşayabilir. Çalışmada e-kültürde beklenen paternalist tarz biçimi belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. İlişkili önermeler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Paternalizm, liderlik, e-kültür.

## 1. Introduction

Cultural roots of paternalism are evident in the literature [1]. For example, in East cultures paternalism is more likely (Turkey and some other Asian countries) [2, 3, 4, 5]. However, it is a fact that what we observe is a product of culture and global trends that are transmitted via education and media like the Internet, i.e. cultures are not in vacuums. Thus, acculturation is an issue in paternalism, too.

Since paternalistic leadership style has roots in national cultures [1], it is hard to change expectations of employees and patrons in paternalistic cultures. However, the Internet and its associated technologies create a culture around and via themselves that can make some moderations on the paternalistic leadership styles. To be able to operate in the Internet dominated environments companies and working people should modify and accommodate themselves. Thus, the need for the analysis of appropriate leadership styles for survival in that environment is apparent.

The construct "e-culture" was coined to represent the new way of living and working enforced and enabled by the Internet and its associated technologies [6]. By adopting the general definition of culture; we can name the totality of what people learn, share, and transmit by means of their interaction within a social group via/ around the Internet as e-culture. In the new Internet world, self-managed gathering of diverse individuals engaged in a common task temporarily will be a model [7]. The fundamental unit of such

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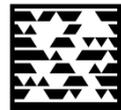
an economy is said to be the individual or the project group not the corporation. In such an economy, most of the tasks are not assigned and controlled through a stable chain of management but rather are carried out autonomously by independent contractors. These electronically connected free-lancers are said to "join together into fluid and temporary networks to produce and sell goods and services" [7, pp.146].

This study questions whether paternalistic leadership styles will be in use in e-culture. Moreover, if those leadership styles survive, existence of any change in their forms is analyzed. While doing that, several propositions are presented.

2. Paternalism

Paternalism indicates a more intricate relationship between the involved parties than what an organizational hierarchy requires [8]. In such a relationship there are two parties: one is a patron who protects, helps, cares and guides the other party who is a subordinate loyal and deferent to the patron. The parties act in reciprocity terms in their relationship. Paternalist relationships may develop within and also among organizations. This kind of relationships enables the involved parties to exchange certain monetary, social and other types of resources [8].

In the literature, there is a family metaphor about paternalism [2, 4]. In that metaphor, patron is like a father and treats his/ her employees as a father treats his children. That is he/ she cares for them and provides protection and other resources. However, there is a difference in that fathers in general treat their children almost equally while patrons may have preferences among their employees and spoil equality more often. As we do not want our parents to care for our sisters or brothers more than us, we do not want our patrons to develop better relations with our colleagues than with us. That is perceived fairness is important in patronage relations. Of course, if we are the most favorite, it may not cause a problem for us but for the others.

Aycan [2] showed that Turkish university students mostly preferred leadership styles in the following order: charismatic, participative, paternalistic and bureaucratic. It is likely that initially the charismatic ones are preferred and then paternalistic relations are developed in time with those charismatic leaders. Patrons may prefer the employees who show signs of better potentials of resource provision as candidates to develop patronage relations.

In the literature, two types of paternalism are mentioned as benevolent and opportunistic (authoritative) [2, 4]. When the patron's paternalist behavior is for the benefit of the employees and the employees show loyalty and deference because of respect, then that paternalism is benevolent. On the other hand, when the patron's paternalist behavior is for the work implementation and the employees show loyalty and deference because of their self-interests, then that paternalism is opportunistic.

3. E-culture

In e-culture, we have a high number of employees willing to work at their homes and do their jobs at home via their connections to their company networks, i.e. telecommuting is very much desired [9, 10]. Most of those people also want to be working as free-lance and on a contract basis with possibly more than one company at a time. They want to work on a project basis. They want to be in contact with different clients and colleagues all the time. U. S. Coast Guard [11] reports state that the polls conducted among high-tech firm staffs show that flexibility and telecommuting are the most wanted things in the high-tech work environment, i.e. those people want to have control over their work environments. The employees in e-culture are not that committed to their work and work environments. In addition, they are mostly professionals.

Advances in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) helped alternative work arrangements and increased effectiveness of distant working arrangements [12]. Thus, it has become challenging to lead people when they are distant, mobile and independent. How and how often a leader communicates, controls, etc. together with loyalty and commitment expectations may be influenced by work arrangements of followers together with different leader perceptions of those followers [12].

Employees in e-culture are nonstandard in terms of administrative attachment (degree of organizational control), temporal attachment (short-term employment) and physical attachment (distant working) [13, 15]. Those employees have autonomy and freedom to choose when and how to work. Thus to control employees in e-culture is an issue. Emphasis in e-culture should be on the control of outcome rather than control of the employee and control of the employee's production process [14]. Employees in e-culture have weak temporal attachment. They have lower long-term employment expectations [15]. They also have weak physical attachment. Face-to-face interactions are very infrequent or in some cases do not exist at all. This may lead to anonymity and isolation feelings together with a salient self-identity and unknown presence of others [16].

### 3.1. Paternalistic Leadership Style in E-culture

If work is the most valued thing in organizations not endurance of the relationships and decision-making mechanisms are decentralized, then paternalism becomes more of facilitating which involves a guiding, helping and networking patron with temporarily loyal employees [5, 17]. In e-culture, we may find such facilitating type of paternalism mostly in third-party gathering organizations (subcontracting) and project type of works where work is most important and involved parties are together for a limited period of time.

Since consistency of team-oriented leadership with family and in-group orientation in societal culture is a fact, we should credit paternalism as a leadership style in e-culture where diverse teams of professionals are in existence [3]. Routines of e-culture such as free-lancing, professionalism, just-in-time employment, project organization and team works require some kind of paternalistic coordination.

When the parties involved in a paternalistic relationship are analyzed, it is seen that a need for reciprocal exchange is apparent for both parties together with social distance and opportunity to overcome this distance [8]. In e-culture, the employee (contract worker, project worker or telecommuter) feels some kind of isolation being remote from the company for which the employee is conducting business [16]. He/ she may feel anonymity since no body from the company sees him/ her while doing business [16]. A paternalistic leader in that company could solve those isolation and anonymity feelings by calling from time to time, by welcoming the employee to the company to make the employee feel as if he/ she is part of a "real" company, by bringing together the remote working employee with the standard employees, by opening the company databases and confidential resources to the employee. These expectations may make a nonstandard employee prefer paternalistic leadership style acting as a point of contact, guide and a bridge to the organization. In addition, those employees may want to be the preferred one among the other alternatives and so want the leader feel closer to themselves by giving respect and loyalty. In exchange for those resources, a paternalistic leader may want to be sure that the nonstandard and professional employee will be willing to take part in the next project and will not be part of the rival third-party arrangements. This will help the leader both plan for longer terms as if the nonstandard employee is part of his/ her firm and exert some kind of control over the nonstandard employee. Since in e-culture all of the perceptions of parties to enter into a paternalistic relation [8] are still valid, survival of some form of paternalism is expected with an emphasis on facilitation and opportunities.

Proposition 1: Since in e-culture there are mostly third-party gathering (subcontracting) organizations and project type of works where the work is most important and the involved parties are together for a limited period of time, the type of paternalism in e-culture is facilitating and opportunistic.

In e-culture different parties may deserve different kinds of paternalistic approaches as shown in the Figure 1. While the telecommuting ones and the changing (temporary) partners may prefer a facilitating type of paternalism (moderated patronage) easing their telecommuting, providing connections with the other involved parties, motivating the commitment to the work done via the patron at least during the current project, enabling their access to partner resources and appreciating their temporary loyalty; the ones who work in the office and the core partners may prefer traditional paternalism (patronage).
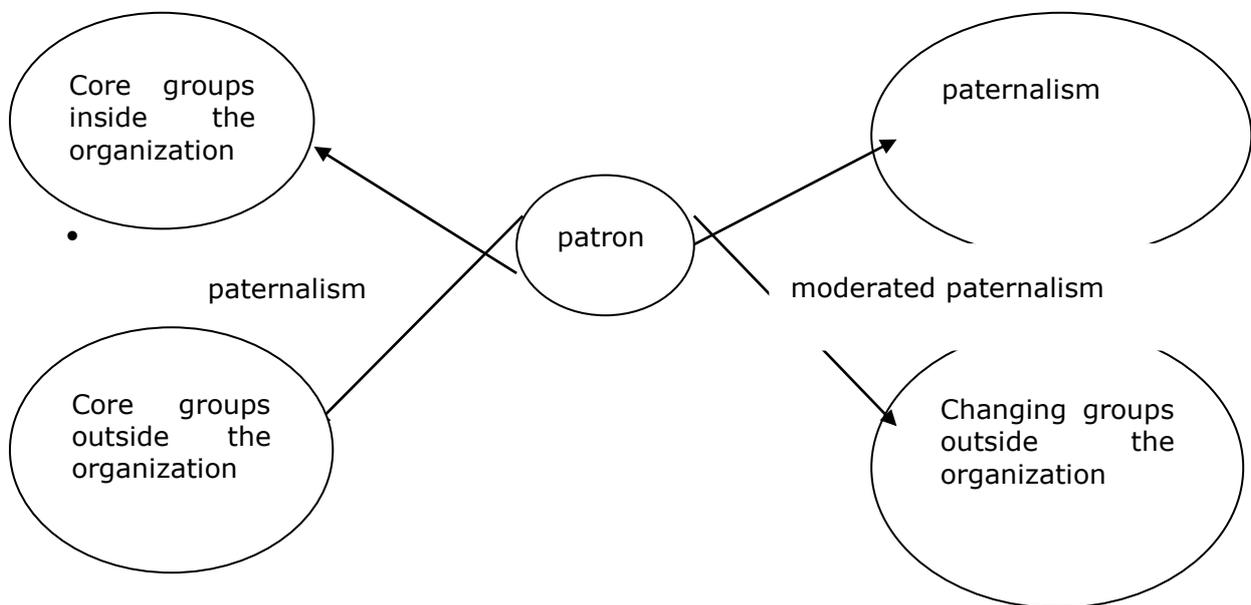
Figure 1. Paternalistic relationships in e-culture

Proposition 2: We may find differing patronage approaches to the core groups inside and outside the organizations and the changing groups inside and outside the organizations in e-culture. That is traditional patronage relationships continue with the core office workers and partners. However, a moderated form (facilitating, networking) is deserved in the relations with the telecommuting workers and the changing partners worked together.

According to Mead [8] building trust is necessary for a patronage relationship. However, in e-culture time restrictions, distances and changing parties may not let trust building up. When time passes by and number of repeated contacts increases and so trust is built in several patronage relationships, then we can talk about networks of those relationships like consortiums for tender openings. Via the virtual networks it is possible to reach a very widespread paternalism. Mead [8] mentions exchange of expectations of support and loyalty among the network partners. The firms in the networks open up most of their information layers to the partner firms.

Proposition 3a: Since e-culture favors short term project type of works, there is not enough time to develop trust required for patronage relationships in such projects. That

is, if the third parties are changed frequently, then patronage is not so strong due to lack of trust building.

Proposition 3b: When the same parties are together in consecutive projects, tenders etc. more, patronage in e-culture increases due to trust accumulation.

Since in e-culture more informal links such as e-mails exists, it may be possible for an employee to reach upper level managers bypassing middle managers and colleagues building a path to develop paternalistic relations. Of course, this may be a threat to the patronage of the middle managers.

Proposition 4a: In e-culture there are more direct contacts between employees and upper level managers enabling more paternalistic relationships (information exchange and further communication is possible without taking the attention of the others).

At this point it is worthy to question the difference between knowing that a leader is paternalistic towards everybody or some people involving oneself or some people not involving oneself. By using the Internet as the medium one may not reveal his/ her patronage relationships. Furthermore, one may not learn others', too. The Internet makes it easier to distribute resources such as training opportunities in a paternalistic way without disturbing the other parties.

Proposition 4b: Both an employee and his/ her patron can develop parallel patronage relationships that are not known by others. In this way, both parties can be more powerful.

In terms of the opportunities for social and physical mobility, Internet provides an enabling platform. As Mead [8] states this is a cultural factor leading to less patronage relationship. People who do not plan to change their company and see their current company as their final one tend to be more paternalistic. This is true for both the patron and the employee. If there are several other alternatives like a foreign firm or ones own company, then patronage inclination decreases.

 Proposition 5: Due to high social and physical mobility opportunities whether they are imaginary or real, patronage relationship in e-culture is less than that in traditional culture.

In e-culture, patronage relations between different organizations also change form. Traditionally, purchasing manager of a company may be patron of sales managers of other companies (buyers' patronage). Market places and on-line tenders may eliminate or decrease this. Those on-line operations on the Internet bring transparency to business environment. When all employees can prepare purchasing requisitions determining where to buy information on-line and there exist automatic purchase order preparation processes enabled by contracts, then buyers' functions become less as compared to the traditional purchasing processes. On the other hand, this time contract preparation process may involve patronage relationships.

Proposition 6: In e-culture, existence of e-market places, B2B operations and on-line tenders reduce patronage relationships between buyers and sellers.

Paternalistic practices can spoil some applications that were originally planned to be objective in e-culture. For example, an online performance approval system can be subject to paternalism when a mentor/coach assesses an employee before that on-line performance sheet reach to a higher position in the hierarchy.

Proposition 7: In e-culture, paternalistic practices can survive if the non-paternalist applications are implemented by paternalist people.

Whether there exist sex differences in paternalist practices in the work places is another issue [4]. If there exists, then the Internet may disguise those differences in the distant working conditions. It may be the case that woman become more assertive and less shy when they approach to their patrons via the Internet. In addition, the form of patronage relationships for distant working environments may be interesting to investigate because certain sexual stereotypes may also vanish. One may question whether women who telecommute are more prone to diminished influence of paternalism [18]. Whether patrons think that telecommuting women deals more with their house chores while telecommuting men concentrates easily to their works in their houses is another issue. Do women want to telecommute more than men want? On the other hand, the Internet may hide sex differences in the patronage relations if they exist like developing patronage more easily with the same sex.

Proposition 8: In e-culture, sex differences in paternalistic practices may be diminished.

4. Discussion

In this paper, several propositions are presented about the moderation of paternalistic leadership style in e-culture. It is expected that the form of paternalism in e-culture becomes more of a facilitating type and that moderated paternalism will enable the leaders to lead their teams of professionals and virtual organizations more effectively. In e-culture loyalty and commitment to patron is temporary and weak while in traditional one they are in general lifelong and very strong. The employees are not committed to the patron but to their work and they are loyal as long as the project duration and they have several other patrons. They associate their careers with their firms in traditional culture while in e-culture they treat their current work opportunity as a reference for their future careers. Trust is there in e-culture but it is either for the current project only or for the future connections and possible references. In addition, in e-culture exchanges of resources and initiating patronage relationships are easier and perceived fairness is higher than those in traditional culture. As a summary, we can assess the paternalism in e-culture as more opportunistic (authoritative) than that in traditional culture.

Kaynakça

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