

An Experimental Study on the Relationship between Adult Attachment Styles and Paternalistic Leadership Preferences

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Abstract

Recently, focus of leadership studies is on the characteristics of followers rather than leaders'. Even though the attitudes, competencies and the interaction of environmental features are among the subjects of the studies, there are limited researches which study the psychological factors of followers. In this study, "Adult Attachment Theory" is taken as a basic theoretical framework in order to explain attitudes towards leaders. Adult Attachment Theory asserts that the relations established with mother and neighborhoods during childhood are strong determinants for the future relationships. It is observed that while, the child who receives unconditional love, trust, mercy and share from his/her mother define these emotions as social needs, establish healthy relationships and define himself/herself as an autonomous individual, the children who do not possess these emotions –or experience them conditionally- tend to be marginally avoidant or preoccupied (dependent). In this study, the affects of adult attachment styles on the attitudes towards paternalism -as the most common leadership style in Turkey)- is tested with an experimental model. Results have shown the assumed differences.

Keywords: Adult attachment styles, paternalistic leadership, experimental design.

1. Paternalism as a Cultural Characteristic and as a Leadership Style.

Paternalism is not only a leadership style but also a cultural characteristic of countries like Pakistan, China, Turkey and India (Aycan, 2011). As a cultural characteristic, Paternalism has been criticized by developed and industrialized countries in the West such as , "Benevolent dictatorship" (Northouse,1997), "legitimated authority"(Padavic&Earnest,1994), "no coercive exploitation(Goodell, 1985), the sweetest persuasion" (Jackman), "strategic flexibility" (Padavic&Earnest,1994), "paternalism vs autonomy"(Cohen, 1985), "paternalism vs. benevolence (Jackman,1994). If we address the issue from the dichotomic perspective of modern Western thought, we have to decide whether paternalism is something "something to endorse or to avoid, moral or immoral, effective or ineffective, empowering or repressing, exploitative or benevolent. While, the developed part of the world has created a critical distance to paternalism by looking behind their Orientalistic goggles, as Said does not underline, (Said, 1977, Orientalism) Orient nor Occident is an inert fact or nature. In this stance, paternalism should not be studied within the narrow patterns, instead, this cultural feature should be understood in relation with the historical, economic, religious and societal and even psychological facts.

Paternalism is a prevalent cultural characteristic of societies such as China, Japan, India, and Korea (Aycan, 2001). In these societies, family and state formations are rather feudal and patriarchal. It is the responsibility of the state to protect and care for its community/people. Paternalistic cultural assumptions are mostly seen in societies whose economy depends upon agricultural production. In feudal societies, the social rights of the public are not protected by laws but by respectful families and dynasty.

The infrastructure relations (production) in the feudal structure affected the socio-cultural world until the industrialization movements which emerged in the 1950s. Kim (1994, p.253) asserted that the basis for paternalism in Asian cultures was the traditional value of familism with a strong emphasis on patriarchal, patrilocal, and patrilineal relationships within the family unit. There are some cultural assumptions that are compatible with paternalism. These are collectivism, high-power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, (Hofstede, 1980) assertiveness, and diffuse culture. According to research conducted by Aycan among 10 countries, paternalistic characteristics are mostly observed in India, Pakistan, China, and Turkey.

Paternalism has also been studied as a leadership style. This leadership style had been experienced in nineteenth century at America. *“The American mill owners of the nineteenth century and the bourgeois entrepreneurs of the twentieth century were concerned with the physical, moral and spiritual well being of their workers, and promoted social and moral welfare of workers based on the principle of “ industrial betterment” (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993). However, severe criticisms was up against paternalism due to its association with racism in labor relations (e.g. Black Detroit workers of the Ford Motor Company between “1937-1941, Meier & Rudwick, 1979), worker exploitation (Blumer, 1951), slavery in the American South (Genovese, 1972) and rural labor relation in Britain (Newby, 1977)”*. Although paternalism has gained severe criticism during the years 1940-1980’s, in recent years, Western countries started to embrace paternalism in their national welfare programs and in organizational context (Aycan, 2006). *“According to the recent polls about welfare and poverty, paternalism is the social policy that is preferred by the majority of Americans (Mead, 1997)”*. In the organizational context, as Aycan stated, *“new paternalism is developed to humanize and remoralize the workplace as well as establish more flexible management systems instead of rigid and contractual relationships between employers and workers” (Aycan, 2006).*

Cultural dichotomies which Hofstede had developed help us to understand the cultural context of paternalism. In collectivistic cultures paternalism is viewed positively due to the high conformity, more responsibility taking for others and more interdependence. However, in individualistic cultures, leaders’ involvement in personal lives/issues can be seen as a violation of private life. Moreover, paternalism is accepted and observed more frequently in hierarchical societies. Since respecting the authority and status of the leader is one of the important features of a paternalistic relation, societies in where, inequality in the distribution of power is approved, paternalist leaders are more likely to survive. () The basic assumption that lies behind the accepted inequality between the leaders and their followers, is that superior knows what best is for subordinate (Aycan, 2006). Paternalism is also pervasive in cultures with high affectivity (Trompenaars, 1993 akt. Aycan), particularism (Trompenaars, 1992) and diffuseness (Trompenaars, 1993). Emotions are important component of the relationship between a paternalistic leader and his/her follower. What more, relationships between paternalistic leaders and their followers are not directed by rigid rules. All the rules can bended depending on the situation. There are several theoretical and empirical studies which outline paternalistic leaders’ and their followers’ behaviors (Aycan, Kanungo et.al, 2000; Kim, 1994; Padavic and Earnst, 1994; Redding& Hsiao, 1990; Sinha, 1990; Aycan, 1990; Fikret-Paşa, 1999; Padavic&Earnst, 1994). According to these studies, paternalist leaders;

- a- Create a family atmosphere in the workplace,
- b- Establish close and individualized relationships with subordinates
- c- Get involved in the non-work domain of his employees
- d- Expect loyalty
- e- Maintain authority and status

On the other hand, results of some limited studies on the reactions and behaviors of employees in a paternalistic relation show that employees;

- a- Consider the workplace as a family
- b- Be loyal and deferential
- c- Get involve in non-work domains
- d- Accept authority.

2. Adult Attachment Styles

Developmental psychology explores the relationships of individuals primarily with their parents and after with the close environment during babyhood, childhood and adolescence.

There are so many theories in the social psychology literature asserting that the relationships in the development stage have a decisive influence on the individuals' interactions with their environment at the stage of adulthood. Adult attachment theory is one of these theories. Adult attachment theory underlines the importance of the relationship of children at their early childhoods with the one/ones –mostly mother- who look after him/her on the affect of the relations that will be established in the future. Emotions such as love and sacrifice, which are experienced by the child unconditionally in the relationship with his/her mother, are structured as social needs for the child. As a result, the child will demonstrate and require these emotions in both his/her close relationships and social environment. According to the attachment theory, one of the most important antecedents of positive affections is the intimacy and unconditional love that is developed in the early childhood of the individual. However, in cases when there is no emotional tie between mother and the child or in lack of mother's presence, relational and communicational problems might be observed at the adulthood of that child who was raised up without positive affections.

Proximity has a real importance in the process of attachment. According to Bowlby (1969), proximity provides both a secure basis to the child which he/she could use while exploring the environment, and a secure shelter which he/she could get in and be protected in cases of danger. Factors that provide the child the capability of staying calm –without preventing the motive for curiosity- under cases of danger are consistent reactions of mother, her sensitiveness and ability to stay calm in situations of danger. If the mother elicits inconsistent, insensitive and extreme interventionist reactions, the child will elicit fearful behaviors. On the other hand, when the mother is careless and rejective, the child's motivation for independency will be fostered and he/she will be more likely to elicit alone and dismissing behaviors in the future.

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) developed a comprehensive, four-category model of adult attachment (which may also be inferred by similar classifications of infant attachment). Their model is based upon the positive or negative evaluation of self and others regarding self-esteem and self-efficacy. As a result, four types of attachment styles were stated which are; secure, preoccupied, fearful and dismissive.

Securely attached individuals have an internal working model with positive views of both self and others and are comfortable with either intimacy or autonomy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). These individuals have no problem with trusting others meanwhile letting others create intimate relations with them. Once an individual has developed the capacity for secure attachments, he or she will likely continue the pattern throughout his or her life time. The preoccupied attachment style is characterized by an internal working model with a negative view of self and a positive view of others. These individuals feel anxious in their relationships, demonstrate a high level of dependence on others, and invest a significant amount of energy in relationships that are not necessarily in their best interest to maintain (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The fearful and dismissing attachment styles were undifferentiated in earlier research by Hazan and Shaver (1987), who referred to both styles as avoidant. However, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) identified distinct differences between the two categories.

The fearful attachment style is characterized by an internal working model with negative views of both self and others. Observation suggests that these persons are socially avoidant because they are fearful of their own vulnerability in intimacy. They anticipate that others will be hurtful and believe that they do not deserve to be treated well due to perceived personal shortcomings. Although the dismissing attachment style is also characterized by social avoidance, its intrapersonal dynamics are quite different from those of the fearful attachment style. Persons with a dismissing attachment style have an internal working model with a positive view of self and a negative view of others. They place little, if any, value in intimacy and are consequently counter-dependent in their relationships, choosing independence and autonomy over relational interdependence (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Theory of adult attachment styles have been linked to diverse theories and variables in the field of psychology. However, only a few researchers have extended attachment theory into the work-related line of inquiry (e. g., Game, 2008; Hardy & Barkham, 1994; Hazan & Shaver, 1990; Schirmer & Lopez, 1998). The aim of this study is; to understand the relationship between adult attachment styles and leadership preferences. The most pervasive leadership style in Turkey is "Paternalistic Leadership" (Canbolat, Beraha, Çeliksoy and Turker, 2010). In the relevant literature, antecedents of paternalistic leadership preference are mostly explained by the cultural values, however, there has not been a single study exploring the affects of psychological factors which can predict paternalistic leader preference of the employees.

Since paternalistic leadership relation consists some emotional and rule bending features, investigation of some psychological factors that might lie behind employees' preference for paternalistic leaders might open new doors to the conceptualization and understanding of paternalism. From this perspective, this study aims to understand the effects of adult attachment styles on the leadership preferences of the individuals regarding paternalistic leadership. Due to the significant contrast in the two interpersonal attachment styles, our first two hypotheses were generated regarding the relationships between workers with preoccupied and dismissive attachment styles and their preferences for paternalistic leadership behaviors.

Referring to the theoretical framework of the model, it was assumed that adults with preoccupied attachment styles have high levels of social desirability, will demand affiliation and social acceptance from their leaders. Thus, paternalistic leaders' protective and concerned attitudes will get much attention from the employees with preoccupied adult attachment styles. On the other hand, employees with dismissive and fearful adult attachment styles will feel restricted by the close and intimate attitudes of the paternalistic leaders due to the lack of autonomy and sense of freedom.

Based on these assumptions below hypothesizes are generated;

H¹. Individuals with preoccupied attachment styles will be more likely to work with paternalistic leaders, compared to other attachment styles.

H². Individuals with dismissing attachment styles will be less likely to work with paternalistic leaders when compared to other attachment styles.

H³. Individuals with secure attachment styles will score higher than dismissing attachment styles with respect to paternalistic leadership preference; while having lower scores than individuals with preoccupied attachment styles.

3. Methodology

In this section, features of the empirical study such as research design, sampling, measures and statistical analysis will be explained.

3.1 Research Design

In order to test the research hypothesizes, an experimental design is structured. At the first stage, Adult Attachment Styles scale was applied to senior university students (Social sciences) who have job experiences. Proceeding from the results obtained, students are divided into 4 groups based on their attachment styles (Secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful). In the second stage, a video film of a leadership portray which was shot within the framework of dominant characteristics of paternalistic leader was screened to 4 groups. In order to provide the control variable of the experimental design, all the groups are gathered with the same number of students (which is 20) and the movie was screened synchronized. Following the video display, a questionnaire was applied to the students which were grouped into four. The questionnaire consists of items related with paternalistic leadership preferences. Sample items are; "I would find opportunity to develop myself if I work with this type of leader", or I would have autonomy if I work with this type of leader". Participants who have secure attachment styles are treated as a control group while participants with preoccupied, dismissing and fearful were evaluated as the experimental group

3.2 Sample

Convenience sampling is used as the sampling technique. 80 students were gathered into 4 groups based on several criteria, with 20 in each of the group.

3.3 Measures

Paternalistic leadership is measured by introducing a short film to the experiment group. In the film, a paternalistic leader figure is conducting a job interview with a candidate. The script of the film was prepared based on the 5 dimensions of paternalistic leaders. The short film's script was prepared regarding the operational definitions of the dimensions of paternalistic leadership (to build close relationships with employees, to create a family atmosphere at work, to get involved in non-work domain of the employees, to maintain authority and status, to expect loyalty from the employees).

"The Relationship Survey" which was developed by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), is consisting of four short paragraphs that measure four different adult attachment styles.

Participants were asked to choose the paragraph that explains those best. Later on, attachment groups are established regarding the paragraph preferences of the participants. 4 groups consisting of 20 participants were established based on the results of “the relationship survey”. Studies that were conducted in Western cultures have proven that “TRS that is based on measuring 4 attachment styles with a single paragraph” has acceptable level reliability and validity. Moreover, in one of Sümer’s (2006) research, he had found that “TRS” has similar construct validity with the other scales in the literature. Participants’ preference for paternalistic leadership was measured with the dimensions of “preference”, “trust”, “comfort”, “oppression”, “career development”, “initiative taking” and “innovativeness” on 6 point Likert scale ranging from “I totally disagree” to “I totally agree”.

3.4. Statistical Analysis

One way variance analysis was conducted in order to understand whether there is a significant difference between attachment styles regarding paternalistic leadership preference attitudes. One- way ANOVA analysis helps us to see if there is a significant difference between different attachment groups in terms of paternalistic leader preference. Following the one-way ANOVA analysis, Fischer analysis was conducted as a post-hoc multiple comparison analysis.

3.5. Findings

Groups that were established according to participants ‘attachment styles were compared with each other regarding their paternalistic leader preferences and attitudes’ scores and significant differences were found (Table 1).

Participants with secure attachment styles have the mean score of 2, 82 for general attitudes (whether they would like to work with a paternalistic leader) towards paternalistic leaders. When compared to participants with secure attachment style, participants with dismissing attachment style have lower mean score (2, 15) regarding general attitudes towards paternalistic leaders. Participants with preoccupied attachment style had higher means scores (3, 71) than participants with secure attachment styles. According to the findings, all of the hypotheses are accepted. When a more detailed analyze is conducted, we have seen that there is a significant differences between groups. Participants with dismissing attachment style had significantly lower score (2, 10) than the group with secure attachment style (3, 33) regarding the preference to work with a paternalistic leader. However participants with preoccupied attachment style had significantly higher score (3, 95) than the group with secure attachment style regarding their preference to work with a paternalistic leader

When the participants are asked whether they would trust to a paternalistic leader there is significant difference between dismissing attachment style (2,47)and secure attachment style(3,33). Moreover, when the participants are asked whether they would feel comfort to work with a paternalistic leader, participants with preoccupied attachment style (3, 90) had significantly higher score than the group with secure attachment style (2, 90).

There were no significant difference between groups regarding the pressure, initiative and innovative characteristics of paternalistic leader.

Table 1. One-Way Variance Analysis –Comparison of Attitudes towards Paternalstic Leaders on the basis of attachment styles groups

Attitudes towards Paternalistic Leader	Inter group Difference	p	Mean– Std. Deviation	F
General attitude	Yes	.000	Secure: 2,82 (0,91)	10,013
			Dismissing: 2,15 (0,70)	
			Preoccupied: 3,71 (0,95)	
Preference	Yes	.000	Secure: 3,00 (1,22)	9,872
			Dismissing: 2,10 (0,87)	
			Preoccupied: 3,95 (0,99)	
Trust	Yes	.001	Secure: 3,33 (1,19)	6,089
			Dismissing: 2,47 (1,02)	
			Secure: 2,90 (0,94)	
Comfort	Yes	.003	Preoccupied: 3,90 (1,11)	5,192
			Secure: 2,52 (0,98)	
Career Development	Yes	.001	Preoccupied: 3,40 (1,09)	5,860
			Secure: 2,52 (0,98)	

4. Result and Discussion

In this research, it is concluded that adult attachment styles are antecedents of paternalistic leadership preference. According to the findings of the study, secure and preoccupied attachment styles have positive attitudes towards paternalistic leaders. It is quite consistent and meaningful that the individuals who have positive perception of self and others would be satisfied and happy with the intimate and concerned attitudes of the paternalistic leader. On the other hand, individuals who have negative self perception and who do not have self-confidence would feel themselves safe when the other parties have concern for them. Individuals who have high needs to be loved and to be in relationship with others are the ones with preoccupied attachment styles and they fell safe and secure as a result of paternalistic leader's close and concerned attitudes.

Adult attachment styles have been subject to developmental psychology for a long time. However, studies that focus on the consequences/outputs of adult attachment styles at workplace context do not root back and are very few in quantities (Harms, 2011). Even though there are researches that investigate individuals' adult attachment styles and their leadership style, (Vansloten, 2011; Mikulincer, Izsak et al., 2007,) there are not any study that explore the relationship between adult attachment style and paternalistic leadership. There are few studies that focus on the relationship between adult attachment styles and relational and transformational leadership (Popper, 2000; Boatwright et al., 2010). In this sense, we believe that this study would make a remarkable contribution to the related literature.

5. References

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