Exploring Paternalistic Leadership and its Application to the Indonesian Context

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Abstract

Paternalistic Leadership (PL) is characterised by a patriarchal and hierarchical authoritarian style of management. It is strongly characterised by absolute guidance, the protection of subordinates, harmony building and moral leadership. This thesis sets out a framework of enquiry that comprehensively answers the following three important questions. First, to what extent is Indonesian leadership paternalistic? Second, how is the leader-employee relationship constructed in Indonesia? Finally, to what extent is this relationship influenced by Javanese culture?

Javanese is Indonesia’s dominant ethnicity and culture in the socio-political arena, colouring the socio-economic and political climate and affecting the way people perceive “leadership”. Generally speaking, Indonesia’s leadership and governmental style is paternalistic. For this study, the total population of civil servants was invited to answer a survey about their perceptions on leaders-leadership style, and eight hundred and seven (81%) respondents responded.

The research study was based on the assumption that current “top-down” leadership should be augmented by a more complex view of leadership as relationship. The study was operationalised within the concept of Paternalistic leadership described by Cheng et al.’s (2004) 10 variables, which were validated using explanatory factor analysis. Additionally, the construction of relationship between leaders and employees was examined by relating employee demographic characteristics to Paternalistic leadership.

Survey questionnaires were sent to civil servants in two provinces and returned directly to the researcher. Data analysis methods included descriptive statistics to examine how the respondents answered questions, explanatory factor analysis to examine suitability of paternalistic leadership, and one- and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine how the respondents’ demographic information corresponds to Paternalistic leadership.

Study results show that civil servants agree that leaders demonstrate Paternalistic leadership. Instead of Cheng et al ‘s (2004)10 leadership factors, this study confirms that seven leadership styles are important aspects,
highlighting “visible leadership” as the most important. Further, the most significant effect of employee demographic information to Paternalistic leadership is found in Visible leadership. Two-way ANOVA analysis suggest that Indonesian civil servants expect to “ride on the coattails” of their superiors.

These results, supplemented by the literature, suggest that there should be an emphasis on the synergistic nature of the relationship between leaders and employees. It is also strongly recommended that further research replicate this study in other Indonesian provinces. Confirmation factor analysis and others variable measuring leaders-employees relationship in similar future research was also recommended.

Keywords: Paternalistic leadership, Javanese, Indonesia, Factor analysis
Papers

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