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Exploring Paternalistic Leadership and its Application to the Indonesian Context

A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

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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

The following papers and publications have been produced from the research reported in this thesis:

1. Irawanto, D. W. (2007). *National Culture and Leadership: Lesson from Indonesia*. Journal of Business and Management Executives, Vol. 4 No. 3
2. Irawanto, D. W. (2009). *An Analysis of National Culture and Leadership Practices in Indonesia*. Journal of Diversity Management, Vol. 4 No. 2, p.41-48.
3. Irawanto, D. W., Ramsey, P., and Ryan, J. (2011). *Challenge of Leading in Javanese Culture*. Journal of Asian Ethnicity, in print.
4. Irawanto, D. W., Ramsey, P., and Ryan, J. (2011). *Tailoring Leadership Theory to Indonesian Culture*. Global Business Review, Vol. 12 No. 3, in print.
5. Irawanto, D. W., Ramsey, P., and Tweed, D. (2010). *Exploring Paternalistic Leadership and its Application to the Indonesian Public Sector*. Unpublished manuscript. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Massey University
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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Paper	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	xi
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Research Rationale	2
1.3 Significance of the Study	6
1.4 Statement of the Problem	7
1.5 Research Objectives	8
1.6 Structure of the Dissertation	8
CHAPTER 2. INDONESIA CULTURE, JAVANESE CULTURE AND THE JAVANESE VIEW OF LEADERSHIP	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Indonesia: Historical Background	12
2.2.1 The National Era (1945-1965)	13
2.2.2 New Order Era: (1965-1997)	14
2.2.3 The New Era (1998 – present)	15
2.3 The People of Java: the Javanese	16
2.3.1 Javanese	17
2.3.2 Javanese Cultural Values	18
2.3.3 Javanese Cultural Values: Evidence over Time	22
2.4 Traditional Patterns of Leadership in Indonesia: Javanese Views	26
2.5 Summary	31
CHAPTER 3. LEADERSHIP THEORY	32
3.1 Introduction	32
3.2 Concepts of Leadership	33
3.3 Leadership Theory	34
3.3.1 Early Attempts at Leadership Theorization	35
3.3.2 Leadership Schools of Thought	37
3.4 The Applicability of Western Leadership Models Across Cultures	48
3.4.1 Supporting Evidence	48
3.4.2 Evidence That Is Less Supporting	51
3.5 The Culturally Based Leadership Model	53
3.5.1 The Underlying Concept of Culture	54
3.5.2 Bridging Culture and Leadership	56
3.5.3 A Collectivist Culture Based Leadership Model: Paternalistic Leadership	58
3.5.4 Similarities between Confucian and Javanese Values	61
3.6 Recent Leadership Research	64
3.7 Conclusion of Leadership Theory Review	69

CHAPTER 4. VIEWS OF INDONESIA: LESSON FROM GLOBE PROJECT	71
4.1 Introduction	71
4.2 National Culture of Indonesia	72
4.3 Leadership of Indonesia	78
4.4 Putting it together: The old and the challenge	81
CHAPTER 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	84
5.1 Introduction	84
5.2 Research Design	85
5.3 Consideration of the Participating Organisations	86
5.4 Instrumentation	88
5.4.1 The Questionnaire	88
5.4.2 Working with the Instrument	91
5.5 Ethical Issues and Data Collection	95
5.5.1 Ethical Issues	96
5.5.2 Data Collection	96
5.6 Data Analysis Method	101
5.7 Conclusion	107
CHAPTER 6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	110
6.1 Introduction	110
6.2 Survey Responses	110
6.3 Internal Consistency Reliability of the Instrument	113
6.4 Descriptive Statistics	115
6.5 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)	123
6.5.1 The Elements of Paternalistic Leadership in Indonesia	128
6.5.2 The Answers of Research Question Number One	136
6.6 Reliability and Descriptive Statistics for the Adjusted Scale	137
6.7 Analysis of Variance (General Linear Model – GLM)	145
6.7.1 Step 1: General Linear Model (one-way ANOVA) for All Paternalistic Leadership Components	146
6.7.2 Step 2: General Linear Model for Visible Leadership	161
6.7.3 Summary of Research Findings on “How is the leader-employee relationship constructed in the Indonesian context?”	165
6.8 Summary	169
CHAPTER 7. STUDY CONCLUSIONS IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS	171
7.1 Introduction	171
7.2 Study Conclusion	172
7.2.1 PL in the Eyes of Indonesians	175
7.3 Implications for Theory and Practices	185
7.3.1 Implications for Theory	188
7.3.2 Implications for Practice	190
7.3.3 Implications for Future Research	199
7.4 Concluding Remarks	203
REFERENCES	204

APPENDICES.....	219
Appendix 1 : Challenge of Leading in Javanese Culture	219
Appendix 2 : Tailoring Leadership Theory to Indonesian Culture	238
Appendix 3 : Up-dated Paternalistic Leadership Questionnaires.....	258
Appendix 4 : <i>Bahasa</i> Indonesian Version of the Paternalistic Leadership Questionnaire.....	260
Appendix 5 : Ethical Approval Letter	265
Appendix 6: Statement Regarding Ethics.....	266
Appendix 7: Permit for Conducting Research in Indonesia.....	267
Appendix 8: Statistics for One-way ANOVA.....	268
Appendix 9: Statistics for Two-way ANOVA.....	275
Appendix 10: The Paternalistic Relationship: Authenticity and credibility as a source of healthy relationships	276
Appendix 11: National Culture and Leadership: Lesson from Indonesia	290
Appendix 12: An Analysis of National Culture and Leadership Practices in Indonesia	308
Appendix 13: Exploring Paternalistic Leadership and its Application to the Indonesian Public Sector	317

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Outlines of Javanese Values that Shape the Leader-Follower Relationship.....	31
Table 4.1 National Cultural Dimensions and Definitions.....	73
Table 5.1 Descriptive Information on Paternalistic Leadership Scales	90
Table 5.2 The Changes to the Questions	93
Table 5.3 Levene's Test for Equality of Variances.....	104
Table 5.4 Data Analysis of Research Results.....	106
Table 6.1 Respondent Demography	112
Table 6.2 Comparison of Sample to the Civil Servant Populations for Gender and Position Status.....	113
Table 6.3 Cronbach's Alpha Scores for Paternalistic Leadership Scales (Original).....	114
Table 6.4 Descriptive Statistics for Authoritarian Leadership.....	116
Table 6.5 Descriptive Statistics for Authoritative Leadership	117
Table 6.6 Descriptive Statistics for Benevolent Leadership (person oriented consideration)	118
Table 6.7 Descriptive Statistics for Benevolent Leadership (task oriented consideration)	119
Table 6.8 Descriptive Statistics for Moral Leadership (courage).....	119
Table 6.9 Descriptive Statistics for Moral Leadership (magnanimity)	120
Table 6.10 Descriptive Statistics for Moral Leadership (incorruptness)	121
Table 6.11 Descriptive Statistics for Moral Leadership(responsibility).....	121
Table 6.12 Descriptive Statistics for Moral Leadership (impartialness).....	122
Table 6.13 Descriptive Statistics for Moral Leadership (lead by example).....	123
Table 6.14 Item listings,factor loadings 1-3 for the seven-factor PCFsolution	125
Item listings, factor loadings 4-7 for the seven-factor PCF solutions	125
Table 6.15 Framework of Visible Leadership.....	131
Table 6.16 Sketch Map of Authoritarian Leadership	133
Table 6.17 Reliability and Descriptive Statistics for Visible Leadership	138
Table 6.18 Reliability and Descriptive Statistics for Authoritarian Leadership	139
Table 6.19 Reliability and Descriptive Statistics for Benevolent Leadership...	140
Table 6.20 Reliability and Descriptive Statistics for Incorruptness (Moral leadership).....	141
Table 6.21 Reliability and Descriptive Statistics for Courage (Moral Leadership).....	142

Table 6.22 Reliability and Descriptive Statistics for Impartialness (Moral leadership).....	141
Table 6.23 Reliability and Descriptive Statistics for Magnanimity (Moral leadership).....	142
Table 6.24 Summary of the Number of the Cases for Each Demographic Variable	145
Table 6.24 General Linear Model test for Benevolent leadership by demographic variables.....	146
Table 6.25 General Linear Model test for Incorruptness (Moral leadership) by demographic variables.....	146
Table 6.26 General Linear Model test for Authoritarian leadership by demographic variables.....	147
Table 6.27 General Linear Model test for Courage (Moral leadership) by demographic variables.....	148
Table 6.28 General Linear Model test for Impartialness (Moral leadership) by demographic variables.....	150
Table 6.29 General Linear Model test for Magnanimity (Moral leadership) by demographic variables.....	152
Table 6.30 General Linear Model test for Visible Leadership by Demographic Variables.....	154
Table 6.31 General Linear Model test for Visible Leadership by the interactions of demographic variables.....	160
Table 7.1 Findings Related to National Cultural Values.....	180

List of Figures

Figure 3. 1 Path-Goal Theory.	41
Figure 3. 2 Normative Model Leadership Styles.	42
Figure 3. 3 Comparison of Paternalistic Leadership Model between Chinese values and Javanese values	62
Figure 3.4 Leadership CLT Definitions and Dimensions.....	65
Figure 3.5 Polar Graph of Leadership Scores of the Confucian Cluster and the Southern Asia Cluster.....	67
Figure 4.1 Polar Graph of Indonesian National Culture Dimensions.....	74
Figure 4.2 The ratings of Indonesian managers on each of Globe's leadership dimensions	79
Figure 5.1 Research design used in the study.....	85
Figure 5.2 The Selection of cities/regencies for the Study.....	99
Figure 6.1 Estimated Marginal Means of Authoritarian Leadership (by gender)	150
Figure 6.2 Estimated Marginal Means of Courage(Moral leadership) (by gender)	151
Figure 6.3 Estimated Marginal Means of Impartialness (Moral leadership) (by education).....	153
Figure 6.4 Estimated Marginal Means of Magnanimity (Moral leadership) (by gender)	154
Figure 6.5 Estimated Marginal Means of Magnanimity (Moral leadership) (by position)	155
Figure 6.6 Estimated Marginal Means of Visible Leadership (by Gender).....	157
Figure 6.7 Estimated Marginal Means of Visible Leadership (by position).....	158
Figure 6.8 Estimated Marginal Means of Visible Leadership (by education) ..	159
Figure 6.9 Estimated Marginal Means of Visible Leadership (by training attended).	160
Figure 6.10 Estimated Marginal Means of Visible Leadership (by frequency of meeting with supervisors)	161
Figure 6. 11 Estimated Marginal Means of Visible Leadership (by position and education).....	164
Figure 7.1 PL Re-visited: Comparison between Taiwan model and Indonesian model.....	187