THE TRANSFORMATION OF PATERNALISM IN THE TURKISH CONTEXT: A CONCEPTUAL EXAMINATION OF TURKISH-STYLE LEADERSHIP

Türkiye Bağlamında Paternalizmin Dönüşümü: Türk Tipi Liderliğin Kavramsal Bir İncelemesi

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ABSTRACT

Leadership cannot be considered independently of cultural codes; it is a phenomenon shaped by the historical, social, and institutional characteristics of the region in which it exists. Turkish-style leadership has evolved as a result of the interaction between the traditional paternalistic understanding brought from Central Asia and the multicultural social fabric of Anatolia. This study aims to examine how Turkish-style leadership was shaped in relation to the paternalism found in its historical origins and to identify the dimensions in which Turkish-style leadership differs from paternalistic leadership. A literature review was conducted for this purpose. According to the findings, Turkish-style leadership carries the protective aspect of paternalism and differs in terms of strong assertiveness, respect for hierarchy, a relationship-based approach, emotional intelligence, and adaptability to changing conditions (flexibility). This study theoretically clarifies Turkish-style leadership, moving it away from being a local version of paternalism and establishing it as a unique leadership model that is a product of cultural transformation.

ÖZ

Liderlik, kültürel kodlardan bağımsız düşünülemeyecek, bulunduğu coğrafyanın tarihsel, toplumsal ve kurumsal özellikleriyle biçimlenen bir olgudur. Türk tipi liderlik, Orta Asya'dan taşınan geleneksel paternalist anlayışın Anadolu'nun çok-kültürlü sosyal dokusuyla etkileşimi sonucu dönüşmüştür. Bu çalışma, Türk tipi liderliğin tarihsel kökenlerinde yer alan paternalizmle nasıl bir ilişki içinde şekillendiğini incelemeyi, Türk tipi liderliğin paternalist liderlikten ayrıştığı boyutları belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda literatür taraması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Elde edilen bulgulara göre, Türk tipi liderliğin paternalizmin koruyucu yönünü taşıdığını, güçlü atılganlık, hiyerarşiye saygı, kişisel ilişkiler temeli yaklaşım odaklı, duygusal zeka, değişen koşullara uyumlanma (esneklik) boyutlarıyla farklılaştığı tespit edilmiştir. Bu çalışma, Türk tipi liderliği paternalizmin yerel versiyonu olmaktan çıkarıp, kültürel dönüşüm ürünü özgün bir liderlik modeli olarak teorik olarak netleştirmektedir.

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is not a culturally neutral phenomenon; rather, it is shaped by a society's historical experience, social structure, and shared norms. In today's globalized organizational environment, managers increasingly interact with employees and stakeholders from diverse cultural backgrounds, making it necessary to understand leadership styles within their cultural contexts (House et al., 2004). Although paternalistic leadership has been widely discussed as a dominant leadership pattern in collectivist and high power-distance societies, the Turkish context has often been treated either as a direct extension of paternalism or as an indistinct combination of "Eastern" leadership tendencies (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). This creates an important conceptual problem: What differentiates Turkish style leadership from paternalistic leadership, even though both may coexist in similar cultural settings? Turkish-style leadership is a multifaceted leadership style that is influenced predominantly by Turkish culture, as Anatolia is home to many communities. Anatolia, a region that has hosted and interacted with many civilizations, has significantly contributed to the formation and development of Turkish-style leadership. For example, the Silk Road has been a route to Anatolia. On the Silk Road, merchants from various cultures sold their goods, and as a result of this trade, the fusion and interaction of cultures caused behavioural changes in some communities. Through these trading routes, leaders have been able to develop the qualities of reconciliation and effective communication. Throughout history, Turks have had a culture with strong warrior characteristics and a culture that can manage military activities effectively. Based on all these, the Turkish style of leadership is a leadership style obtained as a result of the blending of the tradition of military administrators from the past and the collective behaviours formed by the cultural interactions in Anatolia. As a result of the blending of the culture coming from Central Asia and the culture in Anatolia, the Turkish style of leadership has the characteristics of being personal relations oriented, highly sociable, respectful to the hierarchical order, having emotional intelligence, and adapting to the conditions. The Turks, who engaged with the societies in Anatolia, made an effort to understand their ways of life and approached their collective behavior with empathy. Consequently, by building and nurturing strong relationships, they gained the sympathy of Anatolian societies towards Turkish style leaders (Ataoğlu,2024). This tolerant approach showed that Turkish-style leaders have emotional intelligence and realise the importance of building trust (Tabak et al., 2010). Building trust in leadership is important because it increases the tolerance level of communities and increases loyalty and commitment (Sağbaş et al., 2021). As a matter of fact, the fact that many communities lived under the patronage of the Turks in Anatolia for many years is an indication that the Turks were in good communication with these communities.

Paternalistic leadership emphasises the importance of valuing and protecting followers by focusing on individual and collective welfare. Paternalistic leadership is a style of leadership in which a leader provides guidance, support and protection to followers or subordinates by acting as a father figure (Kuz & Sağbaş, 2022). This style of leadership is characterised by a paternalistic attitude in which the leader assumes responsibility for the welfare and success of followers. Paternalistic leaders create a supportive and nurturing work environment that emphasises teamwork, cooperation and empathy. They can be protective of team members, provide them with opportunities for growth and development, and may be more likely to offer personal advice or guidance. When employees receive adequate leader support, they take more responsibility and are not afraid of making mistakes (Sağbaş, 2022). However, this style of leadership can also be associated with a lack of autonomy for subordinates, because the Paternalistic leader can be overly controlling or oppressive. The paternalistic leadership approach may encourage subordinates to rely on their leaders in decision-making processes and direction rather than developing their own skills and independence and thus become dependent on their leaders. This leadership style may

cause the relationship between the leader and subordinates to be shaped by a certain level of dependency.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the conceptual interaction between paternalistic leadership and Turkish style leadership through a literature-based comparison of their sub-dimensions. The study specifically addresses the following research question: Which characteristics of Turkish style leadership differ from paternalism and in what ways can these differences be explained through cultural and historical transformation? By offering a structured comparison, this study contributes to the cross-cultural leadership literature and provides a more context-sensitive framework for understanding leadership behaviors in Türkiye.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Paternalistic Leadership

In the context of leadership, paternalism is defined as a leadership style that combines both paternalistic benevolence and authoritarianism (Farh, Cheng, 2000). In this type of leadership, paternalistic leaders show individual attention and care in the organisation, offer personal support to their employees, and at the same time manage this process in a centralized manner by keeping control over decision-making processes (Martinez, 2003). Paternalistic leaders, similar to a father figure, are both authoritarian and demanding as well as compassionate, supportive and trustworthy, which enables employees to show obedience and compliance. This leadership style has its origins in Chinese culture where the family plays a central role and is based on this cultural foundation. However, it has been proven that the paternalistic leadership approach is not limited to Chinese culture and is also found in other countries and regions with similar or different cultural characteristics (Gelfand, Erez, Aycan, 2007). This situation reveals how paternalistic leadership is applied and differs in various geographies and social contexts despite cultural differences.

Paternalistic leadership, which is common in cultures that attach high importance to family ties, is a leadership style that expresses motivating, guiding and supporting subordinates with a fatherly, protective attitude (Cheng et al., 2004). Paternalistic leadership can be considered as the reflection of the classical protective role of men in the family to businesses. It can also be seen as a leadership based on supporting subordinates and providing solutions to problems (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). However, the role of the father in traditional families should never be forgotten. In such traditional communities, the father is the final decision maker and has a strong authoritarian aspect. Therefore, paternalistic leadership has characteristics such as an authoritarian father's love, moral honesty, and strong discipline, which are especially common in Far Eastern countries (Sürücü et al., 2023). This type of leadership both provides a strong management and control mechanism and creates a supportive environment by caring about the personal needs and emotional needs of employees. Thus, paternalistic leadership aims to provide a balance between employees by combining both discipline and compassion.

In paternalistic leadership, leaders may genuinely care about the welfare of their subordinates and offer them guidance, support and protection (Huang & Lin, 2021). This leadership style tends to set rewards and punishments, often based on their own assessments about individuals and the overall good of the organization. Paternalistic leadership is more common in cultural or organizational contexts that place a high value on hierarchical relationships and authority (Chen et al., 2021). Such leaders exercise a high degree of control in decision-making processes and closely monitor their subordinates (Mansur et al., 2017). They usually clearly define what needs to be done and expect these instructions to be strictly followed (Chen & Kao, 2009). They care about the welfare of their subordinates and consider their personal needs and interests (Zhang et al., 2015). They may consult their subordinates in the decision-making process, but they retain

the ultimate control and authority. These leaders provide moral guidance to their subordinates and act as role models (Pellegrini et al., 2010). Paternalistic leaders have a prescriptive structure and design their rules ethically and value-oriented. They care about playing a role in the career development of their subordinates and keeping their subordinates away from negative situations (Wu et al., 2012). However, sometimes this structure may be perceived as too restrictive for subordinates (Yao & Hao, 2023). Therefore, paternalistic leadership may not be suitable for jobs that require creativity. Paternalistic leaders need to balance between taking responsibility and supporting individual development and mentoring (Chaudhary et al., 2023).

2.1.1. Moral Dimension of Paternalistic Leadership

The moral dimension of paternalistic leadership emphasises that the leader should focus on virtues such as honesty, self-sacrifice, self-discipline, foresight and justice (Cerit, 2013). In this dimension, the leader feels responsible towards his/her subordinate due to his/her moral qualities and makes efforts to improve the subordinate's self-development and increase his/her commitment to the organisation. A moral leader puts aside his/her personal interests and prioritises the interests of subordinates and the organisation. Thus, a social power of the leader emerges, which enables him/her to be perceived as a trustworthy, moral and caring individual in the eyes of subordinates (Yaldız, 2017).

The concept of morality refers to the sum of a leader's personal virtues and behaviours that reflect these virtues. In order for a leader to be accepted as a moral leader, he/she should lead a virtuous life, present these virtuous behaviours as an example to his/her followers, and use his/her authority in a collective way by considering the welfare of group members (Farh & Cheng, 2000). Moral leaders are those who can control their individual impulses and at the same time have the ability to transform abstract ideas into concrete goals necessary for the success of the organisation (Silin, 1976). The virtuous behaviours of these leaders arouse deep respect in their followers and cause them to develop a strong sense of identification with their leaders (Farh & Cheng, 2000).

The moral dimension of paternalistic leadership is generally considered to be a more complex and multifaceted area, as it includes important elements such as personal integrity, continuous self-development and selflessness. Morally strong leaders should behave in accordance with social norms and virtues and guide others through their behaviour. In this context, the paternalistic leader is expected to adopt an approach that not only looks after individual interests but also social benefits. Thus, the purpose of the paternalistic leader is not only limited to providing individual benefits, but also serves the general interests of the society (Westwood, 1997). This leadership style aims to have a broad impact on both personal and societal levels, so the leader's actions and decisions should be shaped by taking into account not only individual gain but also societal welfare.

2.1.2. Authoritarian Dimension of Paternalistic Leadership

Authoritarian leadership is a style of leadership that aims to ensure absolute authority and strict control over subordinates. This approach expects indifferent and complete compliance from subordinates and usually includes five key elements aimed at creating fear in subordinates: exerting strong pressure, exercising strict authority and control, concealing the leader's intentions, and setting strict criteria and rules. Authoritarian leaders have little desire to empower subordinates or take their suggestions into account; on the contrary, they usually prefer to withhold information from subordinates. In this leadership style, the leader's behaviour in the organisation resembles the authority of a father in the family. Subordinates are expected to comply with this authoritarian behaviour and show loyalty. In this case, subordinates do not have the right to negotiate with the leader or to oppose the leader's decisions. Moreover, leaders largely control

resources and information within the organisation and subordinates have limited opportunity to communicate with their leaders in decision-making, performance evaluation and rewarding processes (Cheng et al., 2004).

In the study conducted by Farh and Cheng (2000), the behaviours of authoritarian leaders and the attitudes of subordinates towards these behaviours were examined in detail. In the study, the behaviours of authoritarian leaders were defined as follows: "asserting authority and control", "underestimating the competence of subordinates", "creating a high image" and "acting in a didactic manner". The reactions of subordinates to these behaviours were stated as "compliance", "obedience", "respect", "fear" and "sense of shame". Furthermore, Cheng et al. (2004) stated that authoritarian leadership consists of five main types of "li-wei" (awe-inspiring) behaviours and defined these behaviours as "strong subjugation", "exercising authority and control", "concealing intentions", "rigidity" and "doctrine".

Authoritarianism is generally defined as a leader's strong authority and control over subordinates and demanding absolute obedience (Cheng et al., 2004). An authoritarian paternalistic leader applies controlling methods to maintain his/her power status and therefore does not allow subordinates to use initiative. These leaders are reluctant to delegate their authority and share information, therefore they keep all the initiative in their hands and do not give the necessary importance to subordinates' opinions (Farh & Cheng, 2000). Authoritarian leaders expect a high level of performance from their subordinates and demand that they fully comply with the leader's decisions while performing this performance.

2.1.3. Benevolence Dimension of Paternalistic Leadership

Benevolence can be defined as a leader's personal or familial sensitivity and care towards subordinates (Farh & Cheng, 2000). In this leadership style, the leader's behavior and approach towards subordinates covers not only the work life but also the non-work life of the employees. Helpful leaders are especially prominent in environments where power distance is high. These leaders show a tolerant attitude towards their subordinates' mistakes and protect them (Cheng et al., 2004). They are sensitive to the needs or emergencies of their subordinates whom they regard as family members and support them in these matters (Cheng et al., 2004). In response to this benevolent attitude of the leader, subordinates are expected to feel gratitude towards their leaders. As a response to the benevolence of their leaders, subordinates tend to pay attention to their work and work more carefully (Dedahanov et al., 2016).

Benevolent leadership has its origins in the Confucian ideal of the five cardinal relationships and the principle of reciprocity. These five cardinal relationships include: a benevolent rule-maker and an obedient deputy, a compassionate father and a respectful son, an upright husband and a docile wife, a tolerant elder brother and an obedient brother, and a deferential younger brother to a compassionate elder. Within the framework of these ideal relationships, a father should be compassionate towards his children and children should respect the father (Cheng et al., 2004: 92).

Benevolent leadership has an important place among paternalistic leadership characteristics because it includes behaviors such as special attention, understanding and forgiveness. Special attention can be defined as the leader's approach to his/her followers as a member of a family and also as being encouraging and supportive when they need help. Understanding and forgiveness means that when followers or subordinates make mistakes, the leader forgives them without demotivating them and gives them the opportunity to correct their mistakes. The salient features of benevolent leadership include the leader's interest in the special problems of subordinates, the long-term nature of benevolent behaviors, and the willingness to protect and care for subordinates

in difficult situations (Burak, 2016). These characteristics enable benevolent leadership to establish a strong bond with subordinates and positively affect their work performance and motivation.

2.2. Turkish Style Leadership

After the Turks migrated to Anatolia from Central Asia, which is the starting point of paternalistic leadership, they encountered people from different cultures. Different cultures caused some changes in the perspectives of the Turks and as a result, they differentiated from paternalistic leadership and formed Turkish style leadership. Turkish-style leadership can be characterized by a number of features that are prevalent in Turkish culture and history. In Turkish culture, personal relationships and connections are highly valued. This aspect of Turkish style leadership contributes to the formation of emotional attachment and loyalty to the organization. As a matter of fact, this feature is related to the characteristic of unity and grouping in Turkish culture. Turkish culture attaches importance to achieving gains together rather than individualism (Özkan-Canbolat et al., 2010). Therefore, this aspect of Turkish style leadership can be considered important in jobs that require teamwork. While Turkish culture supports the sense of unity, Turkish-style leadership strengthens the sense of belonging in subordinates by establishing personal relationships. In order to use the sense of unity and ensure its sustainability, Turkish-style leaders should create order based on rules that the majority will follow (Ercan & Sığrı, 2015). Their organizing structure shows the power-oriented and authoritarian aspects of Turkish-style leaders. Excessive expression of these aspects may reduce employees' expressing their opinions and make them approach with fear.

The family is considered to be the cornerstone of Turkish culture and may influence the approach of Turkish-style leaders to leadership and management. Turkish-style leaders may prioritize the welfare and interests of family members over the interests of the organization or other employees. This may manifest itself in a more protective and nurturing leadership style for employees. Respect for elders and authorities is highly valued in Turkish culture. This may influence the leadership style of Turkish-style leaders who expect unquestioning loyalty and deference from their subordinates like a family head. As mentioned earlier, personal relationships are highly valued in Turkish culture and family members are often involved in business and decision-making processes. This may create a sense of loyalty and trust between family members in leadership positions and their employees (Ercan & Sığrı, 2015). If family members are involved in the same organization or business, there is the potential for conflicts of interest to arise. Turkish-style leaders may need to be careful to make decisions that are in the best interests of the organization rather than just family members. In some cases, Turkish-style leaders may prioritize grooming family members to take on leadership roles in the organization.

2.2.1. Strong Initiative Dimension of Turkish Style Leadership

Turkish style leaders have an orientation that develops fast attitudes and behaviors in achieving goals. They believe that time should be used efficiently and motivate their subordinates to act quickly. In this respect, it can be said that they have a tendency to develop reactionary approaches. In terms of geography, being in a region where various societies live and end, the nomadic structure of Turks may contribute to the development of such reactionary approaches (Demirel & Kişman, 2014). However, these aspects do not change the fact that Turkish-style leaders have a visionary structure and have risk-taking attitudes (Ercan & Sığrı, 2015). They do not easily deviate from the course they have created, and they act with the awareness that they need to act bravely and sacrificially to overcome the difficulties encountered (Polatcan & Cansoy, 2020; Çıbık, 2024). These visionary attitudes provide behaviours for long-term thinking. For example, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk laid the foundations of the National Struggle by sailing to Samsun on the

Bandırma Ferry on 19 May 1919. This step was a powerful initiative that led the Turkish people to the struggle for independence (Arıkan, 2001). Atatürk took action with the decision to fight for the freedom of the Turkish nation and assumed the leadership of national liberation.

Turkish style leaders have a decisive attitude (Aktaş, 2006). Turkish culture places high value on hard work and diligence and this diligence is reflected in Turkish style leaders. Turkish style leaders are generally persistent and resilient in the face of difficulties and setbacks. They are not easily deterred and continue to work hard and move forward until they reach their goals. They are motivated to succeed and do whatever it takes to make things happen (Ercan & Sığrı, 2015). Turkish style leaders usually focus on achieving their goals and work tirelessly to achieve these goals. They are usually very clear about what they want to achieve and they are not satisfied until they do it. Turkish style leaders are recognized for their ability to remain determined and focused even in the face of adversity. They keep their eyes on the prize and maintain a positive attitude even when things are difficult.

2.2.2. Hierarchical Structure Dimension of Turkish Style Leadership

Respect for the hierarchical structure, which can be considered equivalent to the authoritarian dimension of paternalistic leadership, is quite common in Turkish culture. As a matter of fact, respect for elders and the sanctity felt in state institutions is an understanding that has been dominant since the ancient Turks. Turks respect authority and believe that obeying the decisions of authority is the right behavior (Özsalmanlı, 2005; Özkan-Canbolat et al., 2010; Koşar & Gürer, 2023). This belief is a reflection of the trust in senior positions (Kılıç Özkaynar, 2017). This kind of approach may prevent employees from acting flexibly and thinking creatively while maintaining a stable organization. The Turkish style of leadership is characterized by a system in which senior managers convene and communication takes place from the top down (Mert Şencan, 2016). For example, during the War of Independence, while regional troops were struggling for independence, a regular army was formed under the leadership of Atatürk. The hierarchical structure formed with the establishment of the regular army acted more quickly and systematically and was the key to success.

2.2.3. Personal Relationships Dimension of Turkish Style Leadership

Turkish-style leadership strongly emphasizes establishing and maintaining personal relationships with followers, employees, customers, and partners. In cultures where "we-ness" and in-group solidarity are salient, leaders are expected not only to coordinate tasks but also to hold the group together through interpersonal closeness and trust-based exchange (Ercan & Sığrı, 2015; Mert Şencan, 2016). This relationship orientation reflects the importance of unity, cohesion, and loyalty in Turkish culture, where achieving goals collectively tends to be valued more than purely individual success (Özkan-Canbolat et al., 2010; Gürcan, 2021). From this perspective, Turkish-style leaders build relational bonds to enhance commitment, protect group harmony, and sustain coordinated action (Türesin Tetik & Köse, 2015; Gürcan, 2018).

Importantly, this relational leadership tendency is not limited to the Republican era. In pre-Republican periods, especially within Seljuk and Ottoman governance traditions, leadership often operated through patronage-based social ties, protection norms, and loyalty relationships structured around proximity and trust. Within the Ottoman context, the ruler–community relationship was not only institutional but also deeply symbolic: legitimacy and obedience were reinforced through perceived protection, benevolence, and social order. In such systems, "being close to the leader" and maintaining interpersonal trust networks often functioned as a mechanism for coordination and social stability—an orientation that continues to echo in modern organizational life through the value attached to familiarity, loyalty, and relational reassurance.

In the Republican era, this dimension becomes especially visible in periods of collective mobilization. Leaders who establish one-to-one contact with followers can transform emotional connection into motivation, thereby strengthening commitment and action capacity. Relationship building, in this sense, functions as a psychological glue: it creates mutual responsibility, increases cooperation, and supports coordinated behavior under uncertainty (Demirel & Kişman, 2014). However, excessive reliance on personal ties may also risk nepotism perceptions or limit merit-based decision-making, which makes it important to evaluate this dimension together with ethical and institutional safeguards.

2.2.4. Flexibility Dimension of Turkish Style Leadership

Turkish style leaders have the ability to easily adapt to sudden and rapid changes with the effect of geography. The fact that the Middle East region is constantly confronted with wars, internal conflicts and the impact of natural disasters has inevitably made Turkish-style leaders act suddenly and reactively. Therefore, Turkish style leaders are based on flexibility and adaptability (Kılıç Özkaynar, 2017). They consider it reasonable to shape plans and strategies within the process. In Turkish style leaders, ideas for process improvement have priority. They care about investing in technological innovations and digital transformation (Şahin &Temizel, 2017). However, their flexible behaviors and visionary attitudes are not in conflict. Since they know the importance of their employees to have this kind of flexibility, they organize efforts and training programmes to improve their employees' flexible thinking and technological capabilities (Aktaş, 2006). For example, while Turkish commanders applied defense strategies in the early stages of the War of Independence in order to prevent the invaders from advancing from the lands, after the Battle of Sakarya, they applied offensive strategies by adapting to the changing conditions.

2.2.5. Emotional Intelligence Dimension of Turkish Style Leadership

Turkish style leaders provide emotional support to subordinates in the face of difficulties. Turkish style leaders have a strong ability to inspire and mobilize their followers. In many cultures, including Turkish culture, there is a strong emphasis on interpersonal relationships and collective well-being (Köksal, 2011). Leaders who prioritize the emotional well-being of subordinates can develop a sense of trust and loyalty that can lead to increased productivity and job satisfaction. Providing emotional support can help subordinates feel valued and respected, which can improve their overall performance and morale (Ercan & Sığrı, 2015). Effective leaders understand the importance of supporting their team members not only in terms of achieving organizational goals but also in terms of their personal and emotional needs (Çalışkan & Özkoç, 2016). Atatürk motivated and led people by using his emotional intelligence during the War of Independence. Atatürk understood the emotional needs of his soldiers and the people and empathized with them to empower and support them. He gave speeches that gave people hope, gained their trust and reinforced the spirit of unity. For example, after his landing in Samsun on 19 May 1919 during the Turkish War of Independence, Atatürk issued the Amasya Circular. This circular is a text promising hope and freedom to the people. Atatürk called on the Turkish nation to join the struggle for independence and to unite for the liberation of the homeland. This speech created a great excitement among the Turkish people and lit the fire of the struggle for independence.

3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to examine the interaction between paternalistic leadership and Turkish style leadership concepts and to determine the characteristics of Turkish style leadership. This study aims to answer the question of which aspects of Turkish style leader differ from paternalism and paternalistic leaders.This study employs a narrative and comparative literature review design to conceptually analyze the relationship between paternalistic leadership and Turkish style

leadership. Literature review studies are particularly useful for synthesizing fragmented findings and clarifying conceptual boundaries through systematic mapping (Tranfield et al., 2003; Webster & Watson, 2002). Within this framework, academic publications were searched in TR Dizin, Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar (Due to the limited number of articles) databases to identify relevant research on paternalistic leadership, Turkish leadership patterns, and culturally embedded leadership behaviors.

The search process included both Turkish and English keywords such as paternalistic leadership, paternalism, Turkish style leadership, Turkish leadership profile, culture and leadership in Turkey, otoriter liderlik, and Türk tipi liderlik. Studies were included if they directly addressed paternalistic leadership dimensions (authoritarianism, benevolence, morality) o discussed leadership characteristics in Türkiye through cultural or historical lenses. Duplicate records were removed, and title/abstract screening was followed by full-text assessment. During synthesis, extracted concepts were organized under predefined sub-dimensions for both leadership styles, and the comparison was built by identifying overlapping and diverging mechanisms (Page et al., 2021). As a result, a dimension-based framework was constructed to interpret how paternalistic roots transform into Turkish style leadership attributes in the Anatolian sociocultural context.

Table 1. Researchs of Turkish Type of Leadership

Author	Year	Type	Dimensions	Context
Arıkan	2001	Article	Assertiveness Emotional Intelligence	Historical Atatürk
Gönüllü	2002	Thesis	Personal Relationships	Cultural
Özsalmanlı	2005	Article	Respect for Hierarchical Structure	Public Administration
Aktaş	2006	Thesis	Assertiveness	Cultural
Şahin & Temizel	2007	Article	Respect for Hierarchical Structure	Public Administration
Tabak vd.	2010	Article	Assertiveness	Implicit Leadership Theory
Özkan-Canbolat vd.	2010	Article	Personal Relationships Assertiveness	Political Leaders
Köksal	2011	Article	Respect for Hierarchical Structure Personal Relationships	Cultural
Türesin Tetik & Köse	2015	Article	Personal Relationships Respect for Hierarchical Structure	Organizational Behavior
Ercan & Sığrı	2015	Article	Personal Relationships Respect for Hierarchical Structure	Cultural Managers
Çalışkan & Özkoç	2016	Article	**Kişisel İlişkiler Duygusal Zekâ**	National Culture
Mert Şencan	2016	Article	Assertiveness Respect for Hierarchical Structure Personal Relationships Emotional Intelligence	Academicians
Kılıç Özkaynar	2017	Article	Assertiveness Respect for Hierarchical Structure Flexibility	Historical

Staub	2017	Article	Personal Relationships Emotional Intelligence	Women in Business
Gürcan	2018	Thesis	Personal Relationships	Cultural
Polatcan & Cansoy	2020	Article	Assertiveness	Cultural Scale Development
Gürcan	2021	Article	Personal Relationships Respect for Hierarchical Structure	Management Culture
Koşar & Gürer	2023	Article	Respect for Hierarchical Structure	Proverbs (Culture)
Ahmed	2020	Thesis	Personal Relationships	Cultural
Çıbık	2024	Article	Assertiveness Flexibility	Historical

An examination of Table 1 reveals that the majority of the studies are articles and are predominantly situated within a cultural context. The earliest study making a contribution to the concept of Turkish-style leadership was published in 2001, and this study focused on an analysis of Atatürk's leadership style (Arıkan, 2001). A review of the literature further indicates that Turkish-style leadership has been most frequently associated with the personal relationships dimension. Moreover, a marked increase in the number of studies has been observed, particularly from 2015 onwards.

4. TURKISH STYLE LEADERSHIP- PATERNALISTIC LEADER COMPARISON

Paternalistic leadership is a style in which the leader acts as a father figure, providing guidance, direction and support to followers (Bedi, 2020). This style is usually associated with a hierarchical organisational structure with a real leader at the top of the pyramid. Paternalistic leaders may tend to control every aspect of their employees and shape their decisions according to their own views, as they make unilateral decisions and may not always seek input from their followers. This may cause the leader to be perceived as authoritarian. However, they may also be seen as caring and supportive because they are personally interested in the well-being of their followers. Turkish style leadership shares some similarities with paternalistic leadership in terms of being authoritarian and relationship orientated (Özkan-Canbolat et al., 2010). Turkish-style leadership is a style characterised by a combination of authoritarian and relationship-oriented traits, which also places high importance on empathy and effective communication. This style is often associated with Turkish culture, which places great importance on establishing and maintaining personal relationships. In Turkish-style leadership, the leader is seen as a role model and mentor who provides guidance and direction to followers while at the same time showing a deep concern for their personal welfare (Aktaş, 2006). Leaders who adopt this style may use their position of authority to make decisions, leaders may be overprotective or interventionist towards their followers, although this behaviour is actually due to the paternalistic leader's protective instincts, the follower may lose their own skills and motivation. In this case, the paternalistic leader needs to follow a balanced policy towards the follower. He can seek input and feedback from his followers to ensure that his decisions are in line with the needs and goals of the organisation. By giving responsibility to his/her followers, he/she can empower them and provide opportunities for them to make their own decisions. This will help them to increase their independence and self-confidence.

From a Hofstede-based cultural interpretation, Türkiye scores relatively high on Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance while showing a more collectivistic tendency and moderate scores in other dimensions. These indicators suggest that hierarchical expectations, rule-orientation, and

group cohesion are culturally reinforced—conditions that typically nurture paternalistic patterns such as obedience–protection exchange (Hofstede, 2001; Country comparison tool, n.d.).

Similarly, the GLOBE Project emphasizes that leadership effectiveness perceptions vary across cultures and that high power distance and in-group collectivism increase the social legitimacy of hierarchical and relationship-centered leadership practices (House et al., 2004)

When the dimensions of Turkish style leadership and paternalistic leadership are analysed, it is observed that Turkish style leadership emphasises personal relationships and emotional intelligence more (Aktaş, 2006). Paternalistic leaders may be inclined to exhibit the authoritarian aspect of the father in some cases. On the other hand, Turkish-style leaders prioritise empathy in order to reinforce the sense of unity of subordinates and to strengthen trust (Ercan & Sığrı, 2015). In this respect, Turkish style leadership can be successful in environments that require customer service or working in teams (Aktaş, 2006). Turkish style leadership can be relatively more effective than paternalistic leadership in work environments where flexibility and adaptability are required. However, empathic behaviour may cause difficulties in making quick and difficult decisions. As a result, problems may occur in crisis management.

Paternalistic leadership may be more suitable for military organisations and similar structures. For example, it may be appropriate to adopt paternalistic leadership at state levels, because such organisations are dominated by the chain of command and require the protection of hierarchical order (Erdoğan et al., 2022). However, this style of leadership may not be beneficial in businesses with an organisational culture based on acting in a reactionary manner where conditions change very quickly (Güllüce et al., 2019).

Therefore, while paternalistic leadership explains the authority–care exchange, Turkish style leadership broadens this logic by adding vision-driven assertiveness, relational bonding as cohesion strategy, emotional intelligence as mobilization tool, and flexibility as survival competence. The key distinction is that Turkish style leadership appears to place more weight on social-emotional coordination and situational agility beyond paternalistic control mechanisms (Ercan & Sığrı, 2015; Özkan-Canbolat et al., 2010). In applied terms, paternalistic leadership may be more functional in highly standardized environments requiring strict discipline, whereas Turkish style leadership may be more advantageous in environments requiring rapid adaptation, team cohesion, and social legitimacy under uncertainty.

Table 2: Sub-dimensions of Paternalistic Leadership and Turkish Style Leadership

Leadership Approach	Core Sub-Dimension	Short Definition	Behavioral Indicators in Organizations	Potential Strength	Potential Risk
Paternalistic Leadership	Authoritarianism	Leader maintains strict authority and expects obedience	Centralized decisions, limited participation, strict supervision	Fast control & order	Low autonomy, learned dependency
	Benevolence	Leader protects and supports followers like a family member	Personal support, tolerance for mistakes, "looking after" employees	High loyalty & commitment	Favoritism perception, overprotection

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	Moral Leadership	Leader is seen as virtuous and self-sacrificing	Fairness, integrity, role modeling, ethical guidance	Strong legitimacy & trust	Moral pressure, idealization
Turkish Style Leadership	Strong Assertiveness	Persistence in vision + decisive action under pressure	High initiative, goal persistence, crisis decisiveness	Mobilization capacity	Excessive pressure, rigidity
	Hierarchical Respect	Respect for authority and seniority as social norm	Top-down communication, deference to senior roles	Stability & coordination	Voice suppression, low creativity
	Personal Relationships	Relational bonding as unity mechanism	Informal contact, trust building, loyalty focus	Strong belonging	Nepotism / in-group bias
	Flexibility	Rapid adaptation to changing conditions	Improvisation, situational planning, agile responses	Resilience	Short-termism, inconsistent structure
	Emotional Intelligence	Empathy + inspiring followers emotionally	Motivation, reassurance, meaning-making, social sensitivity	High morale	Decision fatigue, emotional over-involvement

5. LIMITATIONS

Since this study offers a literature-based and conceptual comparison, the generalizability of its conclusions needs to be supported by empirical evidence. Future research is recommended to develop or adapt an original measurement scale capable of assessing Turkish-style leadership, conduct cross-sector comparisons to test under which conditions Turkish-style leadership becomes more salient, and examine through quantitative models the effects of the interaction between paternalistic leadership and Turkish-style leadership on employee voice, psychological safety, and creativity (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008).

6. CONCLUSION

Turkish-style leadership is a leadership style that has the characteristics of a hybrid culture formed as a result of the interaction of the culture of the Turks living in Central Asia and the interaction of Turks with various cultures when they migrated to Anatolia, and its origin is paternalistic leadership. The moral, benevolence, authoritarianism aspects of paternalistic leadership have been transformed into strong assertiveness, respect for hierarchical structure, establishing personal relationships, flexibility, emotional intelligence in Turkish style leadership.

The strong assertiveness characteristic of the Turkish style of leadership refers to not giving up on their vision even in difficult times and moving their subordinates decisively within a certain route. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's departure for Samsun on 19 May 1919 is an example of this trait. Respect for the hierarchical structure of the Turkish style of leadership expresses the respect for elders and respect for the state, which are dominant in Turks. In Turkish culture, the authoritarian structure of leaders is respected. The transition from Kuvayi Milliye Troops to the regular army is an example of this aspect of Turkish style leadership. The characteristic of establishing personal relationships of Turkish style leadership expresses the importance of establishing communication between individuals as a guarantee of acting in unity. He is aware that determining the needs of subordinates and supporting subordinates will increase loyalty. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's close relations with the public during the War of Independence is an example of this aspect of Turkish style leadership. The flexibility aspect of Turkish style leadership refers to the ability to adapt to changing conditions and to react quickly and accurately to changing conditions. The reason why

Turkish commanders switched from defence strategies to offensive strategies in the War of Independence was the changing conditions and this emphasises this aspect of Turkish style leadership. Emotional intelligence characteristic of Turkish style leadership refers to the ability to understand the inner worlds of subordinates, to support subordinates through this understanding ability, and to motivate subordinates. For example, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's Amasya Circular was a call that instilled hope and freedom in the people. This circular has features that trigger the emotions of individuals and enable them to act. This kind of circular can be considered as a product of emotional intelligence.

Understanding the Turkish style of leadership can provide a deeper approach to analysing the influence of the leader on the developments in Turkiye. Researchers are recommended to empirically examine Turkish style leadership and its interaction with other organisational behaviours.

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THE TRANSFORMATION OF PATERNALISM IN THE TURKISH CONTEXT: A CONCEPTUAL EXAMINATION OF TURKISH-STYLE LEADERSHIP

Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Beyanı

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