An Analysis of Path-Goal Model Leadership and the Formation of Organizational Power Distance

Serdar Oge and Ali Alagoz
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Selcuk University, Konya, Turkey

Abstract: When all of the concepts of leadership are examined, leadership actually appears to be an effective process, a focus point for group activities an agency that provides dynamism in differentiated role structures and a capacity to take advantage of individuals by fostering cooperation among them. Also, power comes into prominence as an effective resource. What researchers mean by the concept of power is the ability to influence others. Path-goal theory is concerned with leadership behaviors intended to get employees to achieve organizational goals. Actions performed by the leader generate power distance in the organization. Power distance is an important factor in shaping the cultural organization's structure. Organizational structures that have power differences and organizational structures that do not will be quite different.

Key words: Leadership, path-goal model, organizational power distance, cultural-organization structure, employee

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is one of the most important subjects in the literature on management and it is possible to find a great deal of research devoted to it. The concepts of leadership and management are considered to be interrelated. It is generally accepted that leadership is the most important process behind all kinds of organizational and managerial efforts (Kotter, 2000; Griffin, 1984; Hitt *et al.*, 2005). Leadership is an effective process which encourages attitudes, behaviors and efforts of a particular group towards organizational goals in specific situations and circumstances, helps them to achieve the goals, gain experience and feel satisfied with the type of leadership applied (Werner, 1993). Leadership can also be expressed as the accumulation of skills and knowledge that gathers a group of people around certain goals and objectives and mobilizes them to achieve these goals and objectives. When this and all other definitions are examined, leadership actually appears to be an effective process, a focus point for group activities, an agency which provides a dynamism in differentiated role structures, a capacity to take advantage of individuals by fostering cooperation among them. Power also comes into prominence as an effective resource. What researchers mean by the concept of power is the ability to influence others or to influence individuals' attitudes and behaviors towards the achievement of organizational goals and to control them (Greenberg and Baron, 1993).

Path-goal theory is concerned with leadership behaviors intended to get employees to achieve organizational goals. The actions performed by the leader will generate power distance in the organization. Power distance is an important factor in shaping the cultural organization's structure. Organizational structures that have power differences are quite different from organizational structures that do not. In this study, researchers will focus on the power distance that is created in organizations by the leadership styles of path-goal theory and attempt to analyze leadership types and behaviors in terms of the creation of intra-organizational power distance.

PATH-GOAL THEORY

This theory which was developed by Robert House and Martin Evans in the early 1970s is largely based on Vroom's expectancy theory about motivation and sustains that human behaviors are affected by:

- The result that an individual's behavior aims to achieve
- The value assigned to this result by the individual

According to this theory, an individual's behavior will depend on his needs and the likelihood of meeting his needs. This model seeks to understand how the leader affects the business performances of subordinates and the subordinates' personal power and how he can navigate a path between them. The model also expects the leader to motivate individuals to achieve a specific purpose. This theory also considers how the leader

influences subordinates, how he perceives the purposes of work and duty and possible methods for achieving goals (Hitt *et al.*, 2005). Briefly, motivating subordinates to attain goals is more important to this theory than the leader himself (Sokmen and Tall, 2000). This research suggests that the leader has two primary functions in the organization. The first is determining organizational purposes and thus letting individuals know which of their behaviors will be rewarded. The second is getting individuals to achieve their goals by supporting them with the appropriate behaviors and as a result obtaining the desired rewards. A leader's behavior will be motivating when a mission is achieved, a need is satisfied and required activities for a successful work are supported. In short, if a leader wants to instill higher levels of success and personal happiness in the group, the first and most important thing for him to do is to assist his group and show them the way by determining objectives. In this model, there are four leadership styles (House, 1996).

Authoritarian (autocratic) leadership: This type of leadership requires explaining expectations to subordinates, guiding them toward success in their work, scheduling jobs and defining performance standards. In short, the leader determines workloads and distributes them to his subordinates. The leader determines principles and standards regarding work and expects subordinates to obey these standards.

Supportive leadership: The necessities of this type of leadership are befriending subordinates and making the subordinates feel good by showing an interest in their positions. In brief, the leader is friendly to his subordinates and shows interest in them. The welfare and happiness of his subordinates are very important for the leader.

Participative leadership: The necessities of this type of leadership include getting the opinions of subordinates before making decisions, considering their wishes, desires and thoughts. Decisions are made as group. The leader is informed by the opinions and thoughts of individuals and includes them in the decision-making process.

Success-oriented leadership: This is a kind of leadership that requires high performance from subordinates to achieve objectives and provides the support necessary for this level of performance. A success-oriented leader sets important and high goals. He believes and trusts absolutely in his subordinates' ability to achieve these high goals.

According to Path-Goal Theory, a leader can exhibit different leadership styles in different situations according to the nature of the situation, practicing all four of these leadership styles in the appropriate situations. While a leader working with less educated individuals may focus on dictating mandatory behavior, a leader working with well-trained individuals may need to give more importance to supportive behaviors. According to the theory, motivating individuals to achieve goals is more important than the motivation of the leader. The motivational effects of the leader's behaviors can be achieved by means of individuals' purposes on the job and their own personal purposes (Sokmen and Tall, 2000). This theory tries to explain the influence of leadership styles on motivation, job satisfaction, effort and performance of wage earners and also tries to explain the effects of situational factors on workers and the business environment. The situational factors that determine the appropriateness of a leadership style are: Personality characteristics, environmental conditions, pressure from deadlines and the nature of the work.

HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

A Dutch researcher, Hofstede (1996) defines culture as a mental programming that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. Thus, culture is not unique to individuals but it is a feature that surrounds individuals who have the same educational and life experience. It derives from one's social environment not from one's genes. It is difficult to change culture and doing so is a very slow process (Hofstede, 1980).

Hofstede has revealed four dimensions of culture that helps explaining how and why people are influenced by various cultures; power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and masculinity. Later he added long-term orientation to these dimensions.

POWER DISTANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The concept of power distance indicates the relative distance that is created by the mistaken belief of relatively powerless individuals in an organization that power is distributed equally (Altay, 2004). Hofstede (1991) claims that power distance is the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. From an organizational perspective, the centralization of power is accepted in the societies with large power distances. Employees behave in the structure created by their managers and always wait for the orders of managers. However, in the societies with small power

distance, the centralization of power is frowned upon and individuals want to take part in decision-making.

The organization's cultural characteristics are decisive in shaping the structure of the organization. If there are large power differences in an organization's culture, a centralized structure arises but decentralized structures are adopted in cultures that have smaller power differences. There are significant differences between groups with large power distances and groups with small power distances. The superiors and subordinates are not equal in organizations and groups with large power distances and the hierarchical system is based on this inequality. As researchers have seen, there is a centralized structure and subordinates expect to be told what to do by their superiors. Control is important in hierarchical structures. The salary system reveals the distance between the superiors and subordinates. A good manager is a benevolent and an autocratic one treats his subordinates paternalistically. There is equality between superiors and subordinates in organizations and groups with small power distances. The roles can vary in hierarchical systems. Someone who is currently subordinate may be in a senior position in the future. As researchers have noted, if there is a decentralized structure and the hierarchical pyramid structure is flat, supervision is limited. The salary range is narrow between the top and bottom. An ideal manager is democratic. Subordinates expect to be consulted during the decision-making process but the manager makes the final decision (Hofstede, 1991). Everybody is seen as equal with efforts to minimize the differences between superiors and subordinates. The organization supports empowerment efforts (Sigler and Pearson, 2000). Power distance is expected to be small due to this empowering of workers. If there is large-power distance in an organization and all the employees have this culture, empowerment practices may be limited. Studies have shown that applications of empowerment are not successful in practice. Managers support the employees in decision-making process but employees do not want to take responsibility for the risks involved. In short, studies reveal the presence of a culture that features large power distance. Organizational culture is a crucial variable in empowerment practices.

On the other hand, leadership is the ability of bringing people together for specific purposes and mobilizing them to achieve these purposes. It is the process of using the power individuals have in themselves to provide beneficial interaction between individuals. The literature on the concept of leadership shows that leadership is a form of influencing, a kind of persuasion and furthermore, it is power that influences other people's activities. The leaders should use power to affect other people for common purposes. Power is a very important tool for affecting other people and creating behavioral changes in them. Power is also an important determinant for whether subordinates fulfill the leader's orders or not (Daft, 1991).

THE EFFECTS OF PATH-GOAL MODEL LEADERSHIP STYLES ON POWER DISTANCE

Power distance in authoritarian (autocratic) leadership: A leader may be authoritarian when a new model or philosophy is developing when a process is spreading or when making employees believe in a new thing. At an initial stage, authoritarian leadership is necessary to describe jobs and tasks carefully. Autocratic leadership involves absolute, authoritarian control over a group. The collection and transmission of knowledge, supervision and training should all be provided by having a relationship with subordinates. During these initial stages, the leader makes the final decision. The leader takes all the responsibility and he does not do much to support the subordinates. Authoritarian leadership has several advantages. This leadership approach is appropriate for making new members adopt the goals and basic policies of a newly established organization (House and Mitchell, 1982). Authoritarian leadership is an appropriate leadership style in crisis and emergency situations. An authoritarian leadership style tries to give employees specific directions and expectations regarding the organization's rules and principles (Hoy and Cecil, 1991). An individual who has just joined the organization will be highly motivated but his/her professional capabilities may not be high. At this point in order to increase the employee's competency, the leader's supervision should be careful. Although, the leader's style is generally imperative, his behavior can also be supportive regarding the individual's motivation levels (House and Mitchell, 1982).

In the authoritarian leadership style of path-goal theory, there is high level of power distance between employees and the leader. Autocratic leaders do not exchange ideas with individuals. They enter into relations only when necessary. They give orders and expect the employees to do their jobs. The authoritarian leadership style requires more formal relationships. An authoritarian leader decides what should be done and how it should be done. He explains his expectations to his subordinates, gains their recognition and organizes the work to be done. An authoritarian leader determines and implements standards of achievement and makes individuals obey standard rules. He explains to his subordinates how things should be done. These behaviors reveal the reason

for this leadership style's large power distance. If there is large power distance, individuals cannot do anything without asking their seniors. They just wait for the orders of their seniors. Also, there is a centralized structure and the powerless ones are dependent on the powerful. This leadership style should only be applied in emergency situations and crises or increasing power distance can lead to communication problems in the organization.

Studies of power distance and leadership have shown that power distance has a positive relationship with self-centered leadership and people-oriented leadership (Carl *et al.*, 2004). It also emphasizes that an authoritarian leadership style is effective in organizational structures with large power distances. The studies have discovered that paternalistic leadership behaviors are widespread in large power distance organizations (Dorfman, 2003).

The relationship between power distance and the tendency to accept administrative supervision was studied in another survey (Bu *et al.*, 2001). According to this study, the tendency to accept administrative guidance is greater in cultures with large power distance than in cultures with small power distances. For this reason, power distances will determine individuals' need for task-oriented leadership. Leadership may be more important to the relationship between employees and leaders in situations with large power distance because these employees need to be guided and coordinated by their leaders. They are dependent on their leaders. In the opposite relationship, since there is a positive relationship between small power distances and individuals' autonomy and independence, individuals will want to be more independent on the job and will show less desire for their leaders' guidance, coordination and help to expedite the achievement of goals (Hofstede, 1980). Thus, organizations with large and small power distances differ in terms of their need for work and task-oriented authoritarian leadership. Another study of this topic (Smith *et al.*, 2002) reveals that managers who largely depend on official processes in daily activities tend to have less trust their subordinates and solicit their opinions less frequently. Rodriguez (2005) indicates that the authoritarian style of leadership will be more efficient in societies with large power distances and in societies that tend to avoid uncertainty by determining job assignments and procedures and using legitimate coercive authority.

Power distance in achievement-oriented leadership: In path-goal theory, the motivation of subordinates is more necessary for success than the leader. An achievement-oriented leader manifests full trust to his subordinates. An achievement-oriented leader can be defined as someone who sets high goals of primary importance for the organization and trusts fully in his subordinates' ability to fulfill these goals. Achievement-oriented leaders stipulate clear and precise objectives to be achieved by their subordinates. These kind of leaders first set difficult goals and then try to upgrade performance step by step (www.hrturkiye.com, 10.10.2012). The leader should motivate subordinates and still retain an authoritarian and supervisory style in order to increase the subordinates' capabilities. Both types of behavior should be practiced strenuously if capability levels are not high enough or if there is low motivation (Kotter, 1990). The behaviors of an achievement-oriented leader include setting goals for subordinates, establishing rules for achieving goals, motivating individuals and expressing trust in subordinates (Umstot, 1984). The power distance will be large in achievement-oriented leadership. Such leaders focus on success and are strict about the path to it. They assign tasks to subordinates and never let the subordinates blow off their responsibilities. They expect the subordinates to fulfill their duties fully. The employees are too afraid to express their opinions and expect to be guided by their leaders. They cannot operate independently. The seniors are not flexible on this point (Hollander, 1990). This type of leadership does not let subordinates behave independently and creates a large power distance in the organization. Large power distance does not let the relationship between the leader and the subordinates to go beyond formality. The seniors only get in touch with the employees for the sake of identified goals. This leads to a difference in status between the managers and the employees. Although, this difference in the status does not let the employees work comfortably, it is easy to be successful with such discipline since this type of leadership requires discipline too (House and Mitchell, 1982). Individuals value both the personal and social norms in organizations with large power distance and have more desire and need for their leaders' guidance (Hofstede, 1980). Studies reveal that employees in large power distance organizations readily accept their administrative orientation (Bu *et al.*, 2001). For this reason, the employees' power distance indicates their need for achievement-oriented leadership. In this relationship leadership is more important to the employees because of their dependency on the leader, their need for the leader's guidance and coordination (Hofstede, 1980). In the opposite relationship, since there is a positive relationship between small power distance and individuals' autonomy and independence, individuals will want to be more independent on the job and have less desire for their leaders' guidance, coordination and help to expedite the achievement of goals (Carl *et al.*, 2004).

Another study of environments with large and small power distances observed that when individuals in environments with large power distance are delegated authority they underperform but individuals in environments with small power distance perform the same regardless of the authority invested in them (Eylon and Au, 2000). According to Rodriguez (2005), the achievement-oriented leadership style is effective in organizations where there are contingent rewards, charisma, the use of expert power and the tendency to avoid uncertainty is weak to moderate.

Power distance in supportive leadership: Supportive leadership is a type of leadership that appreciates and celebrates a job done well, explains its reasons for criticisms and makes constructive criticism. Considering the needs of the employees, showing concern for their efforts, solving their problems and including them in the decision-making process are characteristics of supportive leadership. Supportive leaders listen carefully to their employees and behave like friendly peers with their employees. Emotions and personal expectations are taken into serious consideration by supportive leaders. The leaders tend to alter their course for the sake of the happiness and welfare of the employees (House and Dessler, 1980). Since, the employees are good at their jobs, the leader shows great concern and offers much encouragement. The leader should admit that his only job is supporting his employees. If the leader worries about a task being done correctly by his qualified employees, there will be a loss of confidence (Kotter,1990). As a result, the employees' self confidence and performances will decrease. Supportive leadership allows risk-taking behavior. If the management and the leader approves the risks, the employees can take acceptable and reasonable risks on the job. The employees who trust in their leaders' support on the job done can take more risks than other employees (Hitt *et al.*, 2005).

Power distance in supportive leadership is small when leaders support their employees. This allows employees to work more easily and efficiently. An ideal leader should be skilled and democratic in small power distance environments, a leader who considers the subordinates more or less equal with him, cares about the subordinates' opinions and includes them in the decision-making process. In this case, employees feel comfortable with their leaders. The power distance in supportive leadership minimizes inequality between individuals. There is interdependence between strong and weak individuals or at least there should be. There is a decentralized structure, since the leaders value their employees' opinions and ideas. The employees can express their opinions freely and expect to be consulted.

Since, the employees are more motivated to produce ideas, they can get good results. Thus, a more democratic environment is established between superiors and subordinates. The supportive leader considers the happiness and welfare of his employees, helps them with their problems and makes jobs and tasks more attractive to the employees. Also, the supportive leader makes individuals work efficiently in groups by supporting cooperation. If power distance increases in the environment expectations of support from the leader increase. The need for supportive leadership can be defined as individuals' need for their leader's support. Thus, individuals with high expectations of support need relation-oriented leadership more (Hofstede, 1980). In countries with small power distances, the awareness of relational skills are an important dimension of the emotional intelligence effective leadership requires (Shipper *et al.*, 2003). According to Rodriguez (2005), a supportive leadership style will be effective for the societies that are collectivistic with midrange power distances.

Power distance in participative leadership: This type of leadership is seen in organizations that are democratic and people-centered. All the employees of democratic organizations are involved in the decision-making and decision implementation processes. In such organizations, there is perfect communication and total harmony between the leader and subordinates. Participative leadership is a kind of democratic leadership based on sharing the leader's administrative ability with the group members' tendencies. The group members' opinions are always taken into consideration while determining the objectives and policies of this type and division of labour. The leaders who adopt this approach believe that the individuals are motivated by themselves and that they do not need to control the individuals heavy-handedly. They appreciate successfully completed jobs. All employees are involved in the decision-making and decision implementation processes in democratic organizations. In such organizations, there is excellent communication between the leader and subordinates.

Employees' ideas, feelings, beliefs and desires are appreciated and as a result their aspirations and their desire to work increases. A democratic leader knows the goals and objectives of the group. He helps individuals understand these goals and objectives, directs them towards the achievement of their goals and promotes team work. In short, the leader helps employees to develop in all respects.

Power distance is small in participative leadership. It is similar to supportive leadership in this regard. The only difference is that a supportive leader supports the

employee in performing the work while a participative leader tends to work together with employees. So far, research on power distance and leadership shows that participative leadership is not practiced by the leaders of groups, organizations and societies with large power distances but it reveals that participative leadership is preferred in environments with small power distances (Dorfman *et al.*, 2004). In the environments and organizations with small power distances, employees expect a more participatory management style from their seniors while employees in the environments with large power distances are satisfied with autocratic and paternalistic management styles (Hofstede, 1980). Another study of this subject indicates that managers who largely depend on official processes in daily activities tend to have less trust their subordinates and solicit their opinions less frequently. In environments with small power distances, individuals feel a need for the opinions of more highly ranked people (Adsit *et al.*, 1997). Studying the relationship between power distance and transformational leadership styles reveals that transformational leadership should be markedly participative in order to be effective in egalitarian cultures (Den Hartog *et al.*, 1999). It is revealed that when authority is delegated to employees in environments with large power distances, they underperform but individuals in environments with small power distances perform the same regardless of the authority invested in them (Eylon and Au, 2000). According to Rodriguez (2005)' theory, the participative style of leadership can give very useful results except relatively large power distance, strong collectivism and the communities which have combination of high uncertainty avoidance.

CONCLUSION

In environments, cultures and societies with small power distances, obedient behavior is valued less and independence is valued more. In cultures with small power distances, the perception of power difference between juniors and seniors is less marked and there is a stronger democratic tendency. On the contrary, conformity and obedience behaviors are highly valued in societies that have large power distances and hierarchical tendencies. In these societies, the perception of power difference is larger and social relations are authoritarian and tend to be paternalistic. In environments and organizations with small power distances, the managers and employees expect a more participative management style from their seniors while the managers and subordinates in environments with large power distances are satisfied with directive, autocratic and paternalistic management styles. Similarly while in the organizations with large

power distances close guidance is evaluated positively by the employers, in the environments with small power distances, close guidance is evaluated negatively by the juniors and it is undesirable. In this context, people who perceive large power distances expect their seniors to adopt an autocratic style of leadership and do not devote much attention to attempting to affect decision-making. Individuals who perceive small power distances expect to be consulted by their seniors and approach them to explain their opinions. Therefore, people who perceive small power distances try to promote closer relationships with their seniors than individuals in situations with large power distances. The latter prefer to keep a safe distance from their seniors. According to the theory of power distance, as the distance to a more powerful person diminishes, the tendency to reduce this distance increases. Reducing power distance can be seen at both the cognitive and behavioral levels. Individuals in situations with small power distances will try to reduce the power distance with their leaders. The concept of power distance indicates the relative distance that is created by the mistaken belief of relatively powerless individuals in an organization that power is distributed equally.

An authoritarian and achievement-oriented leader will generate large power distance in an organization with a large power distance between the leader and the employees and no equality. This will prevent the employees from acting without consulting their superiors individually. The workers will expect their seniors' guidance while working. Communication with employees should be strengthened in order to reduce this large power distance and the employees should be permitted to make decisions in a more democratic environment. Supportive and participatory leaders create small power distances in organizations. There is interaction between managers and employees in such organizations. The employees play an active role in decision-making and the leaders actively seek out the input and the ideas of employees. In such an environment, much more effective results can be obtained and the employees' job satisfactions increases.

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