

An Elaboration of the “Transformational Leadership” Using Leadership Characteristics of Ataturk: An Outlook from Ataturk’s Mausoleum

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Abstract

Leadership is one of the most examined and reviewed issues among management researchers. Transformational leadership as a modern leadership approach is accepted commonly in today’s leadership literature. In this study, transformational leadership characteristics of the founder of the Turkish Republic Ataturk was studied with a relative new instrument which is the written texts by foreigners in Memory Books of Ataturk’s Mausoleum (Anitkabir) by the methodology of “content analysis”. In this context, Anitkabir (Ataturk’s Mausoleum) Special Visitor’s Book in which the high status foreign visitors express their opinions about Mustafa Kemal Ataturk¹ was examined for the purpose to determine the factors that are effective in assessing and expressing his leadership characteristics. Researching these books have both some advantages of covering ideas of different perspectives of different cultures, and also disadvantages because the statements in these books represent only official statements written under the pressure of diplomacy and public opinion. In this review, each finding from the historical notes was evaluated with the perspective of transformational leadership framework and its behavioral sub factors. Within these notes, 600 statements from different countries and cultures were examined. In the end, in the context of the four volumes of Anitkabir Special Visitor’s Books, four main behaviors (components) of the transformational leadership were enlightened by nine sub factors, 108 keywords and 536 statements. In the end, results indicated that strongest emphasis was on the idealized influence of Ataturk which was followed in order of frequencies by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration behaviors. It is assumed that this study will contribute to academia in making transformational leadership more concrete. Also, this study aimed to enlighten the leadership characteristics of Ataturk with the transformational leadership framework by using Anitkabir Special Visitor’s Books.

Introduction

The leadership was studied and interpreted distinctly because of the transformations in the context of historical developments in the leadership literature. Although there are lots of researches in leadership, it is a fact that, there is a real need of new findings on transformational leadership until now. If these previous leadership researches are based on realistic and concrete data and handled with an interdisciplinary approach, the leadership researches will more contribute to the findings and outcomes reached.

Leaders are perceived and evaluated differently by followers and individuals who know them and who are affected by them. Determining the effectiveness of the factors on

evaluation of the leaders, perception and expression leadership characteristics will shed light. But the difficulties in this issue are to reach different evaluations for the same widely recognized leader by different people and to interpret these evaluations. The majorities of researches on leadership are based on a few people and is made on narrow field of research. But, leadership has an extensive and complex structure in which there are lots of factors in interaction.

One of major problem encountered by researchers in leadership behavior is to examining leadership behaviors and abilities when they are studied cross-culturally (Smith et al., 2002). A behavior that is clearly understood in one culture may be defined total differently in another. In leadership literature, less attention has been paid to examine the values and abilities of selected leaders from perspectives of different cultures. This research aims to fill the gap left by previous research by exploring transformational leadership” concept by using leadership characteristics of Ataturk. With this aim, the leadership characteristics of Ataturk were examined with the framework of transformational leadership behaviors and its sub factors to make the concept more concrete with the help of statements of others in assessing leadership characteristics of Ataturk.

Literature

The transformational leadership represents one model of leadership among many in the literature. The literature on leadership is vast; a quick scan through any leadership and management journals will reveal a variety of theories. Yukl classified leadership theories into five broad approaches (Yukl, 2002: 10-13). First, the “trait approach” studies such attributes as personality and values that distinguish leaders from followers. Second, *behavioral approaches* examine the activities and responsibilities of leaders for the purpose of identifying effective leadership behaviors. Third, the “power-influence approach” is concerned with the types of power leaders possess and how they exercise this power to influence followers. Fourth, the “situational approach” investigates the influence of contextual factors like the nature of the task, followers’ characteristics, and type of organization on leadership. Finally, the fifth approach is an “integrative perspective” that attempts to combine elements of the above-mentioned models which covers transformational leadership concept as well.

In such a large field of theoretical perspectives, the transformational leadership model stands out amongst so many other theories. Certainly, the name is appealing and the popularity and attractiveness of transformational leadership are based on research evidence that it is associated with superior performance in various organizations (Lowe, Kroeck and Sivasubramaniam, 1996). Transformational leadership has also been found to contribute to the self-confidence of followers, organizational commitment, group cohesion, trust in the leader, work satisfaction (Kelloway and Barling, 2000) and moral dimension of organization (Bass, 1998: 26)

In 1978, Burns first used the term “transforming leadership” to describe a relationship in which “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (Burns, 1978: 20). Building on this initial conceptualization, Bass extended the concept of “transformational leadership” to describe those who motivate followers to do more than they originally intended to do by presenting followers with a compelling vision and encouraging them to transcend their own interests for those of the group or unit (Bass, 1998: 5-6). In fact, a defining characteristic of transformational leadership is the enormous personal impact it has on followers’ values, aspirations, ways of thinking about work and interpreting events (Yukl, 1999).

Bass and Avolio (1996) later developed the “full range of leadership” model which comprises three styles; transformational, transactional and laissez-faire. In this model,

“transactional leadership” with the work of Burns, is characterized by an exchange relationship in which leaders motivate followers by providing them with rewards (or punishments) in return for follower effort (or lack of effort). In Hollander’s transactional approach (1978), leadership is seen the result of a complex set of interactions among the leader, the followers and the situation. Burns argues that transactional leadership occurs when leaders and followers are in some type of exchange relationship to meet mutual needs. This type of leadership does not result in organizational or societal change. Instead it tends to perpetuate and legitimize the status quo.

As the third, laissez-faire leadership is a “hands off” style in which the person in charge “abdicates responsibility, delays decisions, gives no feedback, and makes little effort to help followers satisfy their needs” (Northouse, 1978). Laissez-faire leaders permit followers to direct themselves.

The transformational leadership approach serves to change the status quo by appealing to followers’ values and their sense of higher purpose. Transformational leaders are charismatic in that they are able to articulate a compelling vision of the future representing organizational or social change. Through their vision they appeal to their followers’ values and help the followers to get their needs met (Hughes, Ginnett and Curphy, 1999).

Within the transformational leadership construct, Bass identified four factors, or types of leadership behaviors that are classified as transformational. First, there is “idealized influence”, which is sometimes referred to as charisma. This factor defines those behaviors in which the leader acts as a role model, cultivating faith, trust, and respect in the followers. Examples include doing what is right rather than what is most convenient or cost-effective and making decisions more transparent by explaining the rationale behind the decisions (Kelloway and Barling, 2000).

Second, “inspirational motivation” refers to those acts in which leaders present a vision (i.e., an ideal followers can strive for), set high standards and convince individuals that they can achieve beyond expectations. By raising subordinates’ self-confidence and by being enthusiastic and optimistic about their followers’ work, transformational leaders exhort followers to transcend themselves (Kelloway and Barling, 2000).

Third, the transformational factor of “intellectual stimulation” includes those actions in which leaders promote the development of future leaders, challenging subordinates to think for themselves, and to evaluate old problems in innovative ways. Telling a subordinate to think further about a problem or asking a subordinate to brainstorm with the leader are two ways that leaders can exercise intellectual stimulation (Kelloway and Barling, 2000).

Fourth, “individualized consideration” focuses on the relationship between the leader and each follower. Leaders who display strength in this transformational dimension treat each subordinate individually, coaching and advising them, and recognizing subordinates’ achievements. Other demands often prevent leaders from spending as much time as they would like with their subordinates, but leaders who are strong on individualized consideration find the opportunity to work one-on-one with their subordinates.

Today Ataturk is mostly remembered as a nation builder and a reformer. However his military leadership before and during the Turkish War of Independence initially granted him the ‘leader’ status. At the beginning, he was known as Mustafa Kemal. Considering Ataturk’s transformational influence on Turkish history, particularly during the War of Independence, the transformational leadership definition provided by Bass is selected as the suitable basis for examining Ataturk’s leadership ability. According to Bass, transformational leadership is about ‘transforming followers, creating vision of the goals that may be attained and articulating for the followers the ways to attain those goals’ (Bass, 1998).

Ataturk had a clear vision. His vision was to change the Ottoman Turkey, which was seen as the ‘sick man of Europe’ at the time, to a sovereign, democratic, self-reliant, and

secular and a modern Turkish State. This vision was a call for a total revolution encompassing political, social, and technological changes. Ataturk knew that war of independence was the first step towards the achievement of this vision.

Method

In this study, Ataturk's leadership behaviors were evaluated with the perspective of transformational leadership framework and its behavioral sub factors. The sample data of this study is comprised of the written texts in Anitkabir Special Visitor's Books by top level managers and leaders of other countries who visited Ataturk's Mausoleum in wide periods of time. These books have advantages of covering ideas of different perspectives of different cultures on Ataturk.

An important aspect of Bass's scholarship on transformational leadership is the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which is used to measure the leadership style of an individual (Bass and Avolio, 1990). With this type of information, instructors and coaches can help leaders-in-training prepare a personal development plan. More experienced leaders can likely develop their own development goals from their MLQ scores.

Although the MLQ measures the extent to which a leader is transformational according to Bass and his colleagues, we are still unclear as to when we can categorize someone as a transformational leader. There are four factors of transformational leadership behaviors, so it is likely that leaders will exhibit some, but not all of the factors. What if a leader exhibits only two of the factors? What if the leader exhibits only some of the transformational behaviors and then only some of the time? The design of this study was inspired by these interesting questions.

The Anitkabir Special Visitor's Book was opened in 1948 and reached a number of 23 Volumes by the year 1999. These 23 Volumes were published by Turkish General Staff in 1999. In this study, 4 nearest volumes (Volumes 20,21,22,23) of Anitkabir Special Visitor's Books were examined covering years between 1996-1999. Each volume included roughly 150 assessments which indicate a total of 600 statements by foreigners.

Because of the fact that, Ataturk is a world-wide known leader and a great number of leaders expressed his opinions about Ataturk's leadership thoughts for many years, we have concluded that this data base was suitable for the aim of this study. The factors effecting the leader's evaluations and expressions of other leaders' leadership characteristics were analyzed by "qualitative content analysis method". Hence, analysis through four recent volumes was performed to determine the extent to sub factor of transformational leadership behavior, as suggested by Visitor's Statements.

Results

In this research, the assessments of foreign top level leaders of other countries in Anitkabir (Ataturk's Mausoleum) Special Visitor's Book were evaluated with the light of four dimensions of transformational leadership; idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

In this paper, the leadership characteristics assessed by foreigners were encoded and the evaluations of leaders were classified by taking into account for their countries, positions, assessments dates, emphasized leadership characteristics and the words used to specify their individual hopes. These data with the content analysis was evaluated with the evident from transformational leadership literature as seen in Table-1.

Table 1: Content Analysis of the Transformational Leadership of Ataturk with the Statements from Anitkabir Special Visitor's Books.

Transformational Leadership Behaviors (Factors)	Sub Factors	Keywords from Visitor's Statements and Numbers	Frequency
Idealized Influence	Personality traits	Grandeur, great, leader, manager, commander, respectable, father, sire, great soldier, great leader, hero, ancestor, amity, determination, prominent, devout, reformism, sublime, just, peacekeeper, patriotic, democrat, fraternity, genius, decisive, statesman, dignity, courageous, savior, faithful, sacrificing, success, principle, rhetorical skills, integrity. (35)	320
	Setting an example	Exalt, acceptance, adoption, on the pursuit of his goals, enlightening, following his path. (6)	21
Inspirational Motivation	Inspiring and motivating	Empowerment, being at his disposal, source of inspiration, permanent, living at works, well-known, conspicuous, immortal, heritage, engraved in the minds, forever, prints, How happy who says I am a Turk. (13)	25
	Having vision	Future, splendid future, having dream, imagination, realizing, founder, work, independence, foreseeing, building a nation, lay the foundation. (11)	80
	Establishing relations	Bridging, setting relationship, improve, develop, integrate, unite, open to outer world, making bonds of friendship, establishing good neighborhood relation, gather under the same roof, unity, integrity, respecting others. (14)	25
Intellectual Stimulation	Encouraging for creativity	Innovation, change, restructuring, improvement, reformism. (5)	20
	Creating a free and appropriate climate	Modernism, modern, modern environment, to create a new country, equality for everybody, appropriate climate, guarantee, civilization, development, liberating from colonialism, liberal, presenting secularism, democrat. (13)	27
Individualized Consideration	Being didactic	Trainer, educator, instructor, tutor, caring for child and woman. (5)	6
	Mentorship	Guiding, counselor, supporter, sponsor, adviser, master. (6)	12

Discussion and Implications

There are many leadership models to be choosing from and to be considered by many of the persons when planning their own leadership development. Transformational leadership

is not the only perspective to be examined, but it is one of the more important ones. The transformational leadership model promoted by Bass and associates is more expansive than most models, and therefore deserves serious consideration. By providing concepts and example behaviors for leadership (i.e., transformational leadership) and management (i.e., transactional leadership), this model gives leaders at all levels plenty of advice on how to project their influence and achieve objectives, arguably the central goals of military leadership. Furthermore, in the important areas of leadership research and development, the transformational leadership measures developed by Bass and others are very useful for studying leadership and for developing the potential of individuals.

In this review, each finding from the historical notes was evaluated with the perspective of transformational leadership framework and its behavioral sub factors. Within these notes, 600 statements from different countries and cultures were examined. In the end, in the context of the four volumes of Anitkabir Special Visitor's Books, four main behaviors (components) of the transformational leadership were enlightened by nine sub factors, 108 keywords and 536 statements. In the end results indicated that strongest emphasis was on the idealized influence of Ataturk which was followed in order of frequencies by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration behaviors.

Results have also indicated that, the most important emphasis were on the “founder”, “visionary”, “modernist”, “democrat and secular” characteristics of the Ataturk while the motto “Peace at home, peace in the world” was mostly used saying of Ataturk.

Leaders are required to lead their followers not only with the lawful authority over their subordinates but also effective leadership requires the ability to inspire others to willingly participate in the achievement of a shared vision set out by the leader and to assist them throughout that transformational journey. Ataturk possessed all four main characteristics of transformational leadership. These characteristics have been apparent in his military achievements during war and peace processes of independence. Ataturk transformed a dying empire to a new nation and on this path he carved his name in the nation’s history as the Commander-in-Chief who led the Turkish troops to victory and to liberty.

This research carried an important limitation that the statements in these books represent only official statements written under the pressure of diplomacy and public opinion. There are some more valuable and objective historical sources of data about Ataturk. In the future, it is planned to examine some more materials on Ataturk in identifying his transformational leadership.

In this research, we tried to find out which factors play role in determining the leader’s evaluations and expressions of other leader’s leadership characteristics. Also, the written texts by foreigners in Ataturk’s Mausoleum Special Book were evaluated by the transformational leadership literature. The method used in this research is accepted to guide similar researches in the future. It is assumed that this study will contribute to academia in making transformational leadership more concrete. Also, this study aimed to enlighten the leadership characteristics of Ataturk with the transformational leadership framework by using Anitkabir Special Visitor's Books.

Limitations

As it is known, method of content analysis is generally assumed to be subjected to the problems of sampling. Hence, the study had also some limitations with the context of Special Books of Anitkabir. Firstly, researching these books have both some advantages of covering ideas of different positions and cultures, and also disadvantages because the statements in these books represent only official statements written under the pressure of diplomacy and public opinion. Secondly, due to time and financial constraints and in order not to expand scope of the present study, only the four volumes of Anitkabir Special Visitor's were

examined. It would still be worthwhile for future studies to examine the other volumes in terms of leadership factors.

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Endnote:

¹ The term "Ataturk" means the father of the Turks. It was a name conferred on Mustafa Kemal by the Turkish nation.

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