

paternalistic leadership

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Paternalism is a time-worn term that has had indefinite meaning in common usage

(Jackman, 1994, p. 10).

Debates on paternalism date back to the times of Aristotle and Confucius when a family was considered to be the model for organizing and governing the state. However, systematic research on paternalism in the context of *leadership* has only started around the turn of the century (see, Aycan, 2006; Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008 for a review). Paternalistic leadership (PL) refers to a hierarchical relationship in which the leader guides employees in matters concerning their professional and personal lives in a manner resembling a parent, and, in return, expects loyalty and deference (Aycan, 2006; Gelfand, Erez, and Aycan, 2007). Paternalistic Leadership Questionnaire (PLQ; Aycan, 2006) has 21 items reflecting five dimensions of the construct: *creating family environment in workplace* (leader behaves like a senior family member guiding subordinates in their professional and personal lives), *establishing close and personalized relationships with subordinates* (leader establishes close relationships with every subordinate individually), *getting involved in employees' non-work lives* (leader is involved in subordinates' lives beyond work, such as attending their weddings, acting as a mediator in family disputes), *expecting loyalty* (leader expects loyalty and deference from employees and considers loyalty more important than performance), and *maintaining authority and status hierarchy* (leader expects that subordinates respect his or her authority and maintain the status hierarchy).

Paternalistic leadership is commonly practiced in Asian, Middle-Eastern, Latin American and African organizations (e.g., Ayman and Chemers, 1991; Behrens, 2010; Jackson, 2004; Kabasakal and Bodur, 2004; Kim, 1994; Martinez, 2005). As such, it represents a leadership style in the 'majority world' (Kagitcibasi, 1996). Two groups of researchers have initiated

work on PL independently in early 2000: Aycan and colleagues (e.g., Aycan, 2006; Aycan, *et al.*, 2000) and Cheng and colleagues (e.g., Cheng, Chou, and Farh, 2000; Cheng *et al.*, 2004). Cheng and colleagues defined PL as a leadership style that combines strong discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence and moral integrity (Cheng *et al.*, 2004). While Aycan's conceptualization takes a more neutral stance and defines the role expectations in the superior–subordinate relationship, Cheng *et al.*'s conceptualization assumes that a leader is benevolent and moral. The latter view may not be shared in cultural contexts characterized by individualism and low power distance. Opponents perceive it as “benevolent dictatorship” (Northouse, 1997) leading to “non-coercive exploitation” (Goodell, 1985), whereas proponents characterize it as “role-transcending concern of an employer” (Padavic, 1994) leading to “empowerment, protection, grooming, development” (Singh and Bhandarker, 1990). Investigating contingencies under which PL yields positive organizational outcomes (e.g., cultural, organizational, employee- and task-related) is an important agenda for future research. Indeed, some aspects of paternalistic leadership (e.g., loyalty expectation) were found to be associated with managers' bullying of employees (Soylu, 2011) and favoritism and discrimination in the workplace (e.g., Colella and Garcia, 2004; Warren, 1999), while other aspects (e.g., creating family environment in workplace) were associated with positive employee attitudes toward organization (e.g., Pellegrini, Scandura, and Jayaraman, 2010).

See also *leadership; leadership, contingencies*

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