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Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 41 (2012) 227 – 236

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

International Conference on Leadership, Technology and Innovation Management

A qualitative analysis of charismatic leadership in creative teams: the case of Turkish TV series directors

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Abstract

TV and media play an important role in our life and it has been stated that TV series are the second most followed program type after news. Apart from their rationality and consistency, directors and teams play a major role in the recognition of the series by the society. It has been contented that the most popular Turkish TV series have been differentiated from all their equals by the charismatic leadership qualities of their directors. It has also been contented that these charismatic leader- directors act as facilitators for their teams to optimize their creativity at work.

Although there are a large number of studies related to leadership theories, only two studies related to television directors' leadership style were found in the literature. For this reason, this research was carried out on three of top ten, well-known directors who had directed or have currently been directing numerous famous movies and televisions series. They were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire depend on Conger and Kanungo's (1994) model which has been acknowledged as one of the most influential studies about charismatic leadership behavior. Pattern matching was used as a technique to explore whether the pattern of reported team leader behavior of television directors matches the theory of charismatic leadership as conceptualized by Conger and Kanungo.

Results of the present study revealed that charismatic leadership can be important in explaining the leadership role of sampled Turkish TV series directors in teams.

Keywords: Leadership, Charismatic Leadership, Creative teams, Turkish television industry

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1. Introduction

The movie industry in Turkey has experienced a recession during the 1990's but the following decade experienced a revival. In 2010, 50 million dollar revenue has been achieved from the purchase of about

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70 TV series to various countries. The market share of the Turkish films in 2010 has been estimated as 49.96%. When a wide range of occupational opportunities and the fact that the 55% of total advertisement market has been realized by television have been considered the immense value of the cinema industry may better be understood [1].

The TV series; as a matter of fact, must be evaluated as cultural products that make use of both positive and negative aspects of daily lives of a society [2]. TV series provide people an imaginary world in which trendy thoughts and new hopes are projected. Some of them become more popular than the others and thus last longer due to their success in revealing expectations of the society. And; of course, apart from their rationality and consistency, directors and teams play a major role in the recognition of the series by the society.

It has been contented that the most popular Turkish TV series have been differentiated from all their equals by the charismatic leadership qualities of their directors. It has also been contented that these charismatic leader- directors act as facilitators for their teams to optimize their creativity at work.

Within this perspective, in order to support the before mentioned contention of the role of the charismatic leader in the efficiency of teamwork, directors of the most famous Turkish TV series broadcasted on prime time were interviewed. Identification of a strategic vision, sensitivity to communicational attitudes, the requirements of group members and environmental tendencies, risk taking capability and the tendency of deviation from status quo were scrutinized as common qualifications of charismatic leaders. Finally, the influence of those mentioned qualifications of charismatic leaders upon group collaboration, efficiency and creativity were expressed.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. The Theory of Charismatic Leadership

The concept of charisma has been used to define political, social and religious leadership until the 1980's [3]. Although it was initially defined as a God-gifted attitude [4], it was later adopted to earthly affairs and leadership by the German sociologist, Max Weber [5]. In the following years, Bass (1985) foresaw that charismatic leadership was necessary for corporate success [6]. Finally, it has been mentioned that charismatic leaders are capable of identifying members' requirements, values, sources and expectations correctly; thereby transforming them into collective interests and making members become voluntarily committed to their leaders' missions. In other words, charismatic leaders are the ones who can capture members' feelings, and establish necessary integration within the group [7].

Charismatic leadership, which is revealed to be a component of Bass's Theory of Transformational Leadership, has been identified as a facilitator to increase members' faith in themselves to overcome obstacles [8]. Believing that they can contribute to the realization of the missions and the enhancement of the corporate performance [9], members can focus on high- level targets within the stated mission [10]. As a result of this interaction between the leaders and members, it has been observed that there is an increase in the group motivation and work satisfaction of corporations [11]. In other words, charismatic leaders, who may be come across with at any rank of organizations, have been identified as leaders who inspire, show trust, awaken respect, motivate positive thinking for the future, help members realize things of essence, transfer feeling of mission and stimulate them to behave accordingly [12,13,14].

2.2. Charismatic Leadership and Creativity

Creativity can be defined as the thinking capability of problem solving, decision making and self-expression. Torrance (1974) defined it as being responsive to problems, lack of information, missed elements and inconsistencies [15]. One step further resulting from responsiveness is the possession of the instinct to develop projects to overcome the above- mentioned deficiencies [16]. It has been observed that

the development of creativity is experienced in parallel with undertaking of risk [17, 18]. Within this perspective, it has been believed that qualifications of charismatic leadership entailing the qualifications of responsiveness to the environment, undertaking risk, and discontinuing the status quo help provide the creativity-supporting environment while motivate and strengthen members to act in the according manner. Amabile (1988) analyzed about what should be done at each step of innovation and concluded that individual factors are the most essential elements that make up an organizational innovation model [19]. As a result, the charismatic leader encompassing the components of individual creativeness influences all members of the group; thus helps the establishment of a creative environment in which innovative ideas will be merged [20,21].

2.3. Charismatic Leadership and The Approach of Innovation Process

Kabanoff & Rossiter (1994) define the innovation process as creative behavior performed to overcome complicated problems [22]. At the same time, it has been expressed that creativeness developed as a process has a positive impact on the exhibition of their members' creative performances and the constitution of creative teams via effective communication [23]. It has been expressed that acquisition of creative thinking skills and transformation of those skills to creative performances can be realized through trainings. In this respect, the charismatic leader's attitudes and behavior which later become role-model and encourage members to believe in themselves to overcome problems, constitute the scope of the training.

2.4. Charismatic Leadership and Creative Teams

Mumford and fellows (2002) define creative work as challenging, time-consuming, source-dense and requires persuasion; therefore the missions of creative work are defined to be risky, unpredictable and unspecified. In addition, due to complexity of creative work, collective study entailing experts of various professions is required [24]. Subsequently, it is expressed that effective leaders are capable of bringing experts of various professions together in the light of a shared vision and unfolding members' commitment to the work. In order to conceptualize effective leadership, the concept of charismatic leader has frequently been studied [25] and; as a result, it has been found out that charismatic leadership has positive impact on creativeness of group members [19,26].

Conger and Kanungo's (1994) model has been acknowledged as one of the most influential studies about charismatic leadership behavior [27]. It has been differentiated from other models by focusing on six behavioral levels: 1) Identification of strategic vision and communicational skills, 2) Sensitivity to the environment, 3) Unordinary behavioral performance, 4) Undertaking personal risk, 5) Sensitivity to the requirements of group members, 6) Discontinuance of status quo.

Leaders perform above-mentioned behavior for the actualization of organizational change. After they evaluate environmental risks and opportunities, they first develop a vision followed by interaction with members of the organizations. Since the specified mission is not similar with the existing corporate vision, charismatic leaders in fact undertakes risks by deviating from status quo. During this process leaders reveal sensitivity to the members' requirements and expectations in order to obtain necessary support [28]. The six facets of charismatic leaders have been presented in Table 1 [27, 29].

While helping their members develop their problem solving skills, charismatic leaders simultaneously support team work [30]. Providing trainings, rewards, leaders indirectly help members develop personal creativeness [18]. In parallel with this perspective, Paulsen et al. (2009) found out as a result of their research about the influence of charismatic leadership behaviour on innovation at R&D corporations that charismatic leadership behaviour support innovation [31].

Table1 Facets of Charismatic Leadership

Charismatic Leadership	Environmental Sensitivity	Capacity of deciding for an environmental change in time
	Dynamic Leadership	Communicational skills in persuasion of identified vision and capacity to making members visualize the attractive picture about the corporation's future.
	Model Leadership	Capacity to develop the most appropriate role- model for the members
	Personal Leadership	Skill in encouraging members and increasing self- trust.
	Leader Expectations	Skill in developing high expectations and strengthening those expectations
	Risk Undertaking	Skill in undertaking necessary risk in order to initialize organizational change

3. Team leadership in the Turkish television industry

In 2010, 50 million dollar revenue has been achieved from the purchase of about 70 TV series to various countries. The market share of the Turkish films in 2010 has been estimated as 49.96%. When a wide range of occupational opportunities and the fact that the 55% of total advertisement market has been realized by television have been considered [1], the immense value of the cinema industry may better be understood.

Between 2005- 2009, productions of 549 TV series were actualized. According to data acquired from TUIK, it has been revealed that in Turkey, 87% of the total time spent for cultural affairs is consumed watching TV series. It has been stated that TV series are the second most followed program type after news [32].

4. Current Study

Although there is a large number of studies related to leadership theories, after an extensive literature search only two studies related to television directors' leadership style were found [33,34]. For this reason, this research was carried out on directors. We used pattern matching as a technique to explore whether the pattern of reported team leader behavior of TV series directors matches the theory of charismatic leadership as conceptualized by Conger and Kanungo.

We are also interested in expanding the theory through qualitative methods in order to determine whether there exists a possible link between the concepts of shared leadership with charismatic leadership theory. Because the workgroup performance is under the supervision of the leaders, they can theoretically be in a difficult position when it comes to managing creative professionals. Therefore, it can be thought that modifying the charismatic leadership theory in order to include these leadership concepts might create a more suitable environment for the leadership of today's creative teams.

5. Method

5.1. Study participants

Ten well-known directors who had directed or have currently been directing numerous famous movies and televisions series were asked to participate in our study. However due to their heavy work schedule and/or their reluctance to participate an interview, we could only interview three of them, which is a limitation of this study. The ages of the participants were; 52, 58 and 43 years and all of them were men.

The first participant is G.M. who directed many popular movies such as "Arabesk", "Kahpe Bizans" and "Osmanlı Cumhuriyeti" and television series such as "Hayat Bilgisi", "Selena", and "Yahşi Cazibe". He is the founder of the production company named "Tükenmez Kalem". The second participant is Ü.E. who directed many popular movies such as "Madde 438", "Darbe" and "Bu Devrin Kadını" and

television series such as “Çiçek Taksi”, “Gemilerde Talim Var”, and “Aman Annem Görmesin”. The third participant is T.S. who directed many popular television series such as “Muhteşem Yüzyıl”, “Küçük Sırlar”, and “Kavak Yelleri”. He is the founder of the production company named “Tims Productions”.

5.2. Interview process

In-person interviews lasted approximately one and a half hour. All of the interviews were conducted by two researchers, including 18 open-ended questions focusing on career history and developmental experiences, past mentoring relationships, and some direct questions about charismatic leadership.

5.3. Data analysis process

We used a typical content analysis coding protocol. Our content analysis focused on the qualitative analysis technique of “pattern matching”. According to Lee et al. (1999) pattern matching is a technique where “... formal hypotheses, an explicit theory, or a less formal conceptual model allows the anticipation of a particular pattern of variables, phenomena, or outcomes” [35]. The existence of the behavioral components of charismatic leadership theory has frequently been identified by pattern matching which is also used to describe the activities of television program directors.

For content analysis coding we followed the following stages. Stage 1 — Once all the interviews were completed, the preliminary data analysis efforts involved reading the transcript of each interview at least two times in its entirety; Stage 2 — Transcripts were coded for each of the six major factors of charismatic leadership according to Conger & Kanungo. These passages were only coded for presence and did not receive a scale coding. Stage 3 — They came together to resolve coding disagreements.

We calculated interrater reliabilities by first examining agreement on the number of full utterances coded on each director's transcript. The initial pass showed that the raters coded approximately 85 % of the same passages within the transcripts. The coders met and reconciled the initial coding discrepancies so that all agreed on the passages to be coded so there was 100 % agreement on whether the passages represented one of the coded categories.

6. Results

6.1. The nature of television directors leadership

It was found out that all of the participants demonstrated a strong passion for their job, two directors were trained in all stages of work-related pre-production and the other participant started in one other position, such as a playwright. Also they all observed other directors or analyzed other director's work in their early careers and they believed in necessity of dedication. They also emphasized that their craft has become their life and also indicated that they have not shown the best yet in a great optimism.

6.2. The nature of television directors leadership

6.2.1. Vision and vision articulation

Within the current study we were interested in how directors conveyed a vision to the production cast and crew. For this reason, we posed the question "how do you share your vision in order to reach your objectives?" A part of the answers are given below:

“I share both short terms and long terms goals of my project in order to make them believe it and trust the project. I ensure that they trust the project.”

“Since people believe in what I do, I see no necessity in trying to inspire or encourage them to believe something. In other words as I know them by heart, I chose projects according to style of the directors.”

“The bottom line in this business is passion and if you are able to pass over this feeling of passion, there is no problem.”

Common aspects of all these statements were that trust among team members seemed very important. To make them believe and trust, skills of communication, ability to internalize values of the project and power of inspiration were seen as essential elements.

In relation to the topic, we asked questions regarding prototypes of leaders they would chose while making films. Some important points mentioned are:

“I use my empathy power and I try to make them believe that what they do is good because I tell them what they want to hear. If I cannot make them believe, which is a rare case, then what I say is done.”

“I have patience in what I do and even though I listen to criticism of others carefully, I take my decisions on my own. When there are problems related to operations of tasks, I try to stay calm and listen to what all parties have to say. In order to keep the morale of all team members high and motivated, I do not hold prejudices.”

“I should say that I am an authoritarian leader and at the same time, I am a friendly person and I work closely with them.”

From answers given to the questions, we can understand that informants were both task- and people-oriented. All of them approach participants with feelings of empathy and they ascribe feelings of success to all group members.

6.2.2. *Sensitivity to group members' needs*

The charismatic leadership process entails the sense of sensitivity to production team member needs by using influence techniques. In order to sense this, we asked the question "Do you trust your team members in case of chaotic situation?" Answers we received fit our expectations:

“Since we are like a family, I prefer to trust them always. Other than business, I trust them always and they know that we go together.”

“I trust them in operations and we act as members of a family. Everyone knows that we are a team and that under difficult conditions, we trust each other.”

“I trust my team members because I know that everyone does their jobs in best way possible.”

From the above answers, it was understood that they shared feelings of being members of a family and that they approached each other with care and sensuality. We can easily say directors act sensibly towards feelings of team members.

Accordingly, we asked our second question which was "what are your criteria while you are going to form your teams?" In conclusion, it has been contented that showing intense sensitivity to the needs of team members is crucial for charismatic leadership depending the answers:

“Determining employees who are specific in their tasks is one critical point. At the same time, these people should have sense of ethics, work values and sense of attachment. Even if they are very talented, if they do not have work ethics, I do not prefer to work with them.”

“I work with people who are good and value ethics. I also like to work with people who are good

team players. Most important thing is to be able to work together and believe in what others do at the same time.”

“If you consider us as a football team, I like to work those who I know by heart and who I like. Even if we do not say a word, we can understand each other and this is what I value the most. The dialogue we have means that we understand each other. Everyone should know and should support each other for continuity of tasks.”

6.2.3. *Unconventional behavior*

Charismatic leaders often exhibit unique behavior that surprises other members of the organization, and is especially important in creative groups [36]. In the current study, we did not ask the directors directly if they were engaged in unconventional behavior. Instead, we preferred to ask about their findings about reaching for success in order to identify these behaviors. The comments are given below:

“Sensitivity one has for his or her profession, ethics and specialty are my priority rules. Besides, I also value and believe in team works, I am a good researcher and I trust my team members all of which are my personal values.”

“I am a realistic person and follow my own dreams and passion. I predict behaviors of others and determine my strategies accordingly.”

“You have to like what you do and then you have to turn it into a passion.”

Our second question was related to whether they are pessimistic or optimistic when they face certain events. From statements of our directors, we understood that even in worse cases, they are optimistic and that when there are problems they are even more motivated to solve such problems:

“I am an optimist person because I like to achieve my goals. When there are problems in front of me, I become even more encouraged than ever. I try to do my best and when there are some bad things, I do not let myself down so easily.”

“I am definitely an optimist person.”

“I think this changes from experience to experience. If you are in this business for a long time as I am, you cannot be a pessimistic person.”

Following the last question, we asked kinds of competencies that are necessary in order to manage the teams. One expressed professionalism:

“Professionalism in what you do is very important and you get this sense with time.”

From two key informants, we understood that they finalize projects which they considered to be failures. They motivated themselves even more under pessimistic situations:

“If I see that my team members do not believe in what they do even though I try to encourage them, then I think that I face difficulties in managing them. I even had experiences where I had to cancel my projects because those who do not believe in what they do transfer negative feelings to others. I do not fire one single person but I prefer to cancel the whole project because sense of team work does not enhance with one of them being taken off the project.”

“I act as myself and treat others equally. I definitely think in positive terms and get best success out of worse situations. I determine some other objectives but do not trap myself in unrealistic objectives. For instance, I made huge amounts of investments for a television project but then everything changed and I had to cancel it. When my family and team members asked how I was

feeling I told them that I was feeling OK and even never felt better.”

Related to above discussions, we asked our participants whether they are satisfied with results of their tasks and common points of answers we received was that they still did not realize their bests and that there was time for their master piece work:

“I never consider my task as done. I search for best and I tend to question every kind of project. I feel excited.”

“I never say that this is done and constantly search for the best. I need to believe that a project will be successful and that will capture attentions of all others.”

“I always look for the best.”

Following these questions, we asked them to summarize their leadership philosophy in three words. The answers are given below:

“Belief, positive perspective and professional competency.”

“Honesty, courage and creativity.”

“Working in order to be sustainable in the business, honesty and sharing of all kind with people.”

6.2.4. *Sensitivity to environmental trends*

Charismatic leaders are said to possess a heightened sensitivity to the environment and carefully scan for trends that would cause them to adapt their vision [34]. When we analyze questions aimed to reveal environmental sensitivity of participants, what we observed was that all of them shared certain degree of sensitivity to their external environments:

“I analyze the environment I live in detail and I try to produce works that respect my environment. I also like to learn more about individual characters and for instance, after 20 minutes, I can learn about your personal story and write a scenario on it. I am very interested in life stories of individuals because I believe that stories of individuals can be filmed.”

“Due to work of my father, we travelled quite often since I was a children and I am good at examining behaviors of individuals as well as their characters.”

“There is no life without individuals so because of this, I am in constant communication with people around me. I am sensible to social issues and even thanks to my efforts, some regulations on Turkish legal system was modified.”

6.2.5. *Personal risk and deviation from the status quo*

Another component of charismatic leadership within the Conger and Kanungo conceptualization has been identified as personal risk in undergoing deviation from the status quo. This dimension examines leaders who sacrifice or incur high costs for the organization [34].

Our discussions with three of these directors showed that they do not like to take unpredictable risks. All of them stated that when they take such risks, reputation of their team works will be damaged however if they believed that risks will enhance their chances of success, then they take such risks. Each of team members distributes risks equally to group members.

Given that they work under competitive pressures, we asked them a question related to their "efforts of managing a competitive vision statement" and common points of answers we received were that they followed trends and they try to create their own differentiated works:

“Some producers change the scenarios but I let my producers to do whatever they like to do. In

scenarios, I also let my team members do whatever they like to add and do.”

“If they have creative ideas, then I listen to these ideas and implement them. I never impose my ideas on them.”

“If they promise for better, then we let them do so.”

7. Discussion and implications for future research

The directors believe that trust among team members is very important by the success of a project. To make the team members believe and trust, skills of communication, ability to internalize values of the project and power of inspiration is seen as essential elements by sharing the vision in order to reach the objectives.

The directors are both task and people oriented. All of them approach participants with feelings of empathy and they ascribe feelings of success to all group members. They share feelings of being members of a family and that they approached each other with care and sensuality. They act sensibly towards feelings of team members. They also value and believe in team works and trust their team members. We believe that directors act to the needs of team members because while teams are formed, directors already know who they will work with and what these people will need. Also, it is contented that showing intense sensitivity to the needs of team members is crucial for charismatic leadership.

The directors as charismatic leaders follow their own dreams and have passion to realize them. They also follow trends but they try to create their own differentiated works. They think that they still do not perform their bests and that there is time for their master piece work.

Even in worse cases, they are optimistic and that when there are problems they are even more motivated to solve such problems and motivate themselves even more under pessimistic situations

Their leadership philosophy includes belief, positive perspective, professional competency, honesty, courage, and creativity.

The directors possess certain degree of sensitivity to their external environment and scan for trends that will cause them to adapt their vision such as charismatic leaders.

The directors do not like to take unpredictable risks. They stated that when they take such risks, reputation of their team works will be damaged however if they believe that risks will enhance their chances of success, then they take such risks in undergoing deviation from the status quo.

Depending on the directors' answers summarized above given by the interview using the Conger and Kanungo questionnaire for charismatic leadership they can be seen as charismatic leaders. Since it was conducted with only three participants, the authors should state that the conclusions and discussions can not be generalized among the actual sample population. Novel studies with increased number of participants are therefore needed to document and establish the link between charismatic leadership and TV producers.

Also, the quotations of the interviewed participants were not verified by the third party individuals (their team mates, workers and friends etc.) in the current study. Therefore future studies might include a broader perspective by incorporating the perceptions of team members such as the cast and crew as well.

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