The Role of Transformational Leadership in Airline Business Success: A Comparison of Rising Above the Clouds and From Worst to First Book [1]

Dönüşümcü Liderliğin Havayolu İşletmelerinin Başarısındaki Rolünü İncelemeye Yönelik Karşılaştırmalı Bir Araştırma: Bulutların Üstüne Tırmanırken ve From Worst To First Kitaplarının İncelenmesi

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ABSTRACT

The aviation sector is highly affected by technological, political and economic developments. It is an undeniable fact that businesses must keep up with these rapid changes and developments, especially as they are affected by technological developments. The leadership styles and leadership characteristics of the managers are not only effective in the formation of a certain culture, but also in the life course of the enterprises and the processes of adapting to the changes. This adaptation process can be reduced and the faster adaptation can be achieved, the business success will follow in parallel. Based on this view, in our study, the effect of leadership characteristics of managers in airline companies on business success has been examined. The aim of the study is to explain the transformational leadership characteristics of managers in airline companies and the roles of these characteristics in the positive or negative processes of airline businesses. In the study, "Bulutların Üstüne Tırmanırken" and "From Worst To First" books' content analysis was made by considering the subjects of airline management, leadership and transformational leadership. At the end of research; It has been concluded that leaders do not take risks and display an innovative approach in times of crisis.

KEYWORDS
Airline; Airline Management; Leadership; Transformational Leadership

ÖZ

Havacılık sektörü teknolojik, politik ve ekonomik gelişmelerden oldukça etkilenmektedir. Özellikle teknolojik gelişmelerden etkilenen işletmelerin bu hızlı değişim ve gelişmelere ayak uydurması gerektiği yadsınamaz bir gerçektir. İşletmelerin bu değişimlere uyum sağlayabilmesi sadece ekipman veya teknoloji gibi somut etkenlerle değil aynı zamanda örgütünde uyum sağlayabilmesi ile mümkündür. Tüm bu değişimlere uyum sürecinin en büyük aktörlerinden birisi de işletme yöneticileridir. Yöneticilerin liderlik tarzları ve liderlik özellikleri sadece belli bir kültürün oluşmasında değil, işletmelerin yaşam seyri ve değişimlere uyum süreçlerinde de etkili olmaktadır. Bu uyum sağlama süreci ne kadar aza indirgenebilirse ve ne kadar hızlı uyum sağlanabilirse işletme başarısı da buna paralel olarak yol kat edecektir. Bu görüşten hareketle çalışmamızda havayolu işletmelerinde yöneticilerin liderlik özelliklerinin iş başarısı üzerindeki etkisi incelenmiştir. Çalışmanın amacı, havayolu işletmelerinde yöneticilerin dönüşümcü liderlik özelliklerini ve bu özelliklerin havayolu işletmelerinin olumlu ya da olumsuz süreçlerindeki rollerini açıklamaktır. Çalışmada "Bulutların Üstüne Tırmanırken" ve "From Worst to First" kitaplarının içerik analizi havayolu yönetimi, liderlik ve dönüşümcü liderlik konuları ele alınarak yapılmıştır. Araştırma sonunda; Liderlerin kriz zamanlarında risk almadıkları ve yenilikçi bir yaklaşım sergiledikleri sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

ANAHTAR KELİMELER
Havayolu; Havayolu işletmesi; Liderlik; Dönüşümcü Liderlik

INTRODUCTION

The aviation industry can be interpreted as a constantly evolving and changing industry with very high costs due to its structure and with high profit returns along with the expectation of quality. Parallel to the aviation industry, airline business also shows structural changes. Accordingly, airline companies can be successful as long as they adapt to changes and developments. In this adaptation process, managerial decisions, attitudes and behaviors in airline companies are very effective. Therefore, the success and failure of airline companies may vary depending on the leadership characteristics of the manager in some cases.

In this study, the effect of the leadership characteristics of the managers of the airline companies on the success of the airline was tried to be conveyed based on the books about two different airlines; "Bulutların Üstüne Tırmanırken, THY Bir Dönüşüm Öyküsü" and "From Worst to First: Behind the Scenes of Continental's Remarkable Comeback". The leadership characteristics of Cem Kozlu and Gordon Bethune, the authors of these books, were examined.

1. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONCEPT AND DEVELOPMENT

Fullness in the markets and the increase in competition with technological changes forces businesses to change. Changes and developments affect consumer preferences and behaviors as well as businesses. It can be seen that the developments experienced are coped with strategies such as growth, downsizing or step reduction. It is possible to say that the need for transformational leadership has increased due to reasons such as uneasiness and low motivation observed within the business as a result of organizational changes and structuring in businesses.

In the Turkish literature, concepts such as transformative, changer and mobilizer are used instead of the concept of transformational leadership (Yılmaz & Akdemir, 2005). However, the concept of transformational leadership took its place in the literature with the definition of by J.V. Downtown in 1973 and It became popular with the research of James McGregor Burns. Burns' research was inspired by the charismatic leadership approach and aimed to determine the points where the leader and the manager differ. Burns's research, unlike research on behavior, focused on the relationships of the leader and his subordinates (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2001). This work of Burns was later developed by the work of Bernard Bass. The definitions of the concept of transformational leadership made by different researchers are as follows.

Downton (1973) who defines transformational leadership as increasing the morale of the personnel, motivating them and achieving success, states that these leaders are aware of the expectations of their followers, question the motivating factors of the followers, and strive to increase the level of meeting the expectations of all the followers.

Burns (1978) argues that in transformational leadership, followers should become partners for the benefit of the organization and should not put their personal benefits ahead of organizational goals. This approach draws its strength from the transmission of a foresight determined by the leader to the followers.

In his 1985 study, Bass identified transformational leaders as in addition to their current role in the organization, leaders who gain the trust of the followers, ensure that employees adopt their work by adopting a common purpose, increase the level of quality and effectiveness in business outputs. In addition, it can be said that transformational leaders encourage followers to provide more performance by empowering them (Bass, 1985).

Transformational leadership according to Bass and Avolio (1993) identified as a charismatic, influential, visionary, creating an honest and respectful environment, taking into account the efforts of the followers, models appropriate behavior, providing motivation by giving hope to the followers. Also transformational leaders empowere followers to benefit their progress, increase the workforce of staff with up-to-date thoughts and theories.

Transformational leadership is defined as the process of the organization's ability to achieve its goals with taking a step towards the change in the conditions that will affect the organization, gaining the respect and trust of the followers and changing their behaviors and thoughts (Özalp & Öcal, 2000).

According to Celep (2004) transformational leadership values cultural values. When the level of morality and interaction between the leader and the followers is increased, it is stated that there is a transformational effect on the leader and the followers.

It is important for transformational leadership to adopt a need for innovation or differentiation by adopting a purpose. The purpose of this leadership is to adopt the organizational goals to the whole organization by considering the personal benefits of the individuals and to achieve more successful results by increasing the performance. Thus, individuals become aware of the necessity of prioritizing the existence of the organization before their personal benefits and change is made possible (Yılmaz, 2011).

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

In addition to general leadership characteristics, some features have been determined that distinguish transformational leadership from other leadership types. Among these features, being transformative and innovative is attributed to transformational leadership as an identity. Transformational leaders lead change and do it in their own unique way. Transformational leaders make work an adopted goal rather than just a task, and they provide unity by developing shared goals (Halis et al., 2007). Transformational leader should be courageous and be able to take risks because it will change the current order or functioning. It is foresight about the risks that may occur and takes precautions accordingly. Another characteristic of the transformational leader is that he is fun and humorous. Being able to approach the events with a sense of humor when appropriate and to catch the other people from this angle reduces the tension, but the level of this approach is important (Doğan, 2005). The transformational leader leads the organization, but also acts as a member of the organization, maintains the organizational culture, delegates authority and responsibility, allows followers to use their skills, makes deviations from the strategies according to the current situation, is open to continuous learning and believes in the vision of the organization (Bass, 1990).

After the first studies, in addition to the characteristics, the dimensions of transformational leadership were defined by Bass. Later, Bass and Avalio included inspirational leadership in three dimensions defined as charisma (Idealizing Influence), individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Aslan, 2013). In other words, according to Bass and Avalio, transformational leadership has four dimensions. When we look at the English software, these dimensions, which are expressed as 4-I; Idealized Influence, Individualized Consideration, Intellectual Stimulation and Inspirational Leadership (Tracey & Hinkin, 1998).

2.1. Idealized Influence

The concept of idealized influence is used in a similar sense to charisma and has been conceptualized by research on charismatic leadership. When one of the managers in the organization is characterized as charismatic as a result of the observations made by the members of the organization, great differences occur in the members. With the idealized effect, the members of the organization tend to be in the direction desired by the leader in their beliefs, thoughts, reactions and actions towards work (Baltaş, 2001).

2.2. Individualized Consideration

In this dimension, which takes the individual into consideration and gives importance to the individual, transformational leaders care about the support and development of organization members. They also appreciate the benefits of employees to the organization. The dimension of individualized consideration increases the desire of the organization members to reveal their entire existence and power (Bolat & Seymen, 2003). It also encompasses ownership and guidance of the individual through advice. This dimension is stated as the level of the leader's respect, interest and support to the followers (Judge et al., 2004). The individualized consideration dimension can be evaluated within the framework of supporting and developing the individual (Yukl, 1999). Development is to increase the opportunities for common purposes by mentoring and counseling (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The element of support includes the friendly approach, helping, being kind and praise (Yukl, 1999).

2.3. Intellectual Stimulation

The intellectual stimulation dimension enables the followers to comprehend the problems, evaluate the problems from different aspects, and gain more productivity with a new perspective. It is the dimension of influence that encourages the followers in the context of questioning and can take them out of the standard thoughts (Aslan, 2013). With this dimension, it is aimed to increase the awareness of the followers. On raising the awareness of the followers of transformational leadership; the leader investigates the previous habits, helps the followers to evaluate their old thoughts, and enables them to bring a new perspective in situations they cannot get out of (Sökmen, 2010). With the intellectual stimulation dimension, it is ensured that the problems are identified, interaction between the leader and the followers, productivity towards the problems and the transfer of thoughts (Gumusluoğlu & Ilsev, 2009).

2.4. Inspirational Leadership

The inspirational dimension of transformational leadership is defined as responding to followers requests and encouraging them in line with determined goals. Transformational leaders increase the awareness of the followers about the work they do and provide motivation by encouraging them for success (Bass, 1998). The

motivation of the followers, which indicates being positive, being willing for the purposes, meeting the demands thanks to a good communication channel, and experiencing uncalculated possibilities, was emphasized. The inspiring dimension creates a source of inspiration for the followers thanks to the leader's charisma (Bolat, 2008).

3. METHODOLOGY

When looking at biography and autobiography books, it is generally possible to benefit from people's experiences and be inspired. In particular, the autobiographic works of people who are not alive or who cannot be interviewed are very useful in terms of benefiting from their experiences. Although there is no such study in the aviation literature, there are examples in the field of social sciences. In the field of leadership, Vatansever (2017) reviewed Turgut Uzer's Book of "Olymp and Mortals" in terms of authentic leadership. With this study, it is aimed to contribute to the literature with the thought that it can bring a different perspective to researchers and readers. In the field of leadership, Vatansever (2017) examined Turgut Uzer's Book of Olymp and Mortals in terms of authentic leadership. With this study, it is aimed to contribute to the literature with the thought that it can bring a different perspective to researchers and readers. For this purpose, the books "Bulutların Üstüne Tırmanırken, THY Bir Dönüşüm Öyküsü" and "From Worst to First: Behind the Scenes of Continental's Remarkable Comeback" were reviewed because of they contain similar success stories.

The subject of the research was determined on the curiosity of how the characteristics and leadership styles of the leaders who lead the airline businesses and have a great impact on the business culture will affect the management of the airline businesses. The main purpose of the research is to make inferences about the characteristics and leadership styles of the leaders in airline companies, based on the success stories of airline companies belonging to Turkey and the USA. With this study, it is aimed to contribute to the literature with the idea that it will be beneficial for the managers in their leadership styles, methods and studies, who lead airline companies. In addition, the fact that a qualitative method is not used in the content analysis of the books written in the style of autobiography in the related literature makes the study interesting in terms of its method.

In this study, the leadership characteristics of Cem Kozlu and Gordon Bethune were tried to be determined by the content analysis of the books "Bulutların Üstüne Tırmanırken, THY Bir Dönüşüm Öyküsü" and "From Worst to First: Behind the Scenes of Continental's Remarkable Comeback". In addition, it was tried to determine which features emerged more dominantly during the periods when the mentioned airline companies were going through troublesome processes. The findings obtained are important in terms of both examining and comparing the leadership characteristics of the leaders in the airline companies and examining the effects of the leaders on the success of the business.

3.1. Method

Content analysis method was used as the research method of the study. Content analysis is a qualitative research method. Texts have meanings according to certain contexts, discourses or purposes. The texts are read for specific purposes and the data becomes informative according to specific problems. Content analyzes classify textual material and reduce it to more relevant, manageable bits of data (Weber, 1990). In content analysis, the universe is limited to the textual data about the research problem. The research universe may consist of newspapers, magazines, books, government documents, speeches, letters and other similar documents and texts (Koçak & Arun, 2006). In this context, regarding the subject of the research; The boks "Bulutların Üstüne Tırmanırken, THY Bir Dönüşüm Öyküsü" and "From Worst to First: Behind the Scenes of Continental's Remarkable Comeback" were taken as research data. As can be understood from the titles of the books in question, they are stories of transformation. The behaviors and approaches of the leaders in the troubled processes of the enterprises can be effective in overcoming the process. For this reason, it may be beneficial to examine these books written directly by people. In addition, these two books were determined for the purpose of examining two airlines, which are important reference sources in terms of success examples of airline companies in the aviation sector. The book "Bulutların Üstüne Tırmanırken, THY Bir Dönüşüm Öyküsü" was written by Cem Kozlu in 2006 and consists of 14 chapters and 320 pages. The book "From Worst To First: Behind the Scenes of Continental's Remarkable Comeback" was written by Gordon Bethune in 1998 and consists of 14 chapters and 295 pages. The research is limited to the data and findings collected from the books in question.

After the books were read several times by the researcher, the parts that could be associated with leadership were identified. The detected parts were analyzed and interpreted. For analysis, resources in the transformational leadership literature were examined and transformational leadership characteristics were determined through people who have worked in the field of management and leadership for many years. Then,

in line with the information conveyed by the authors in the books, the parts that can refer to these features were determined. By analyzing the distributions and percentages of the features within the sections determined from the books, it was determined which features emerged more dominantly. In the analysis of distribution and percentages, reliability (consistency) was evaluated by an independent coder and the extent to which the results matched was compared. After reaching similar results; The percentage distributions of the features in both books are presented in the findings section in comparative form. In order to understand more clearly how the determined features are interpreted and from which aspects the citations in the study are handled, their brief explanations are shown in Table 1 on the transformational leadership characteristics model.

Table 1. Model of Characteristics of Transformational Leadership

Feature	Description
Motivation	Demonstrating a communication and approach in the form of ensuring that employees are more committed to their work and instilling a belief in success
Reliability	Being trusted by others, to get the job done and to believe in working principles
Visionary	Adapting different applications with different perspectives
A good observer	Having an opinion with observing all changes, events and people in the environment in a good way
Originality	Having different ideas and practices, exhibiting an out of the box approach
Importance to the individual	Strong relations with employees and giving importance not only to their business life but also to their personal lives
Being open to change Innovator	Not resisting the changes that can be implemented, supporting the change with an innovative approach.
Courage and risk taking	Taking risks by displaying a courageous approach in decisions and behaviors.
Openness to learning	Not being against new information and suggestions. Consulting experts on unknown issues and being aware of the fact that there is a lesson to be learned from every event.
Stable	Being consistent in their thoughts and decisions and standing behind their own ideas
Participant	Adopting an approach to encourage participation in activities in social life and to participate in work-related processes personally
Having strong communication	Healthy communication by adopting a different and positive approach according to people and situations
Having managerial skills and approach	Showing changes according to events rather than a standard management approach, good management of crisis situations and good management of relations with employees
Delegation of authority and responsibility	Delegation of authority and responsibilities to subordinates by establishing a team that they can rely on and involving employees in the process by assigning different responsibilities when necessary

3.2. Findings

This research helps us to have an idea about the leadership characteristics and the leadership styles of Gordon Bethune and Cem Kozlu through books of Cem Kozlu's book in which he tells about his experiences at Turkish Airlines, and Gordon Bethune's book in which he tells about his experiences at Continental Airlines. If we specify the comparative distributions of the determined features of the data in the books of Cem Kozlu and Gordon Bethune;

The goodness of managerial skills and approach was determined in 16 separate sections in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 15.53, while it was determined in 14 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 9.09.

The feature of being innovative was determined in 14 separate sections in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 13.59, while it was determined in 13 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 8.44.

The feature of being a good observer was determined in 12 separate sections in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 11.65, while it was determined in 16 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 10.38.

The feature of having a vision was determined in 9 separate sections in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 8.73, while it was determined in 16 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 10.38.

The feature of being open to change was determined in 8 separate sections in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 7.76, while it was determined in 6 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 3.89.

The feature of being open to learning was determined in 8 separate sections in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 7.76, while it was determined in 9 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 5.84.

The feature of giving importance to the individual was determined in 7 separate sections in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 6.79, while it was determined in 6 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 3.89.

The feature of being determined was determined in 7 separate sections in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 6.79, while it was determined in 16 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 10.38.

The feature of having high self-confidence was determined in 5 different sections in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 4.85, while it was determined in 7 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 4.54.

The feature of being a participant was determined in 4 separate sections in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 3.88, while it was determined in 5 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 3.24.

The feature of being strong in communication was determined in 4 separate sections in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 3.88, while it was determined in 7 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 4.54.

The motivation feature was determined in 4 separate sections in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 3.88, while it was determined in 13 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 8.44.

The reliability feature was determined in 3 separate sections in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 2.91, while it was determined in 4 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 2.59.
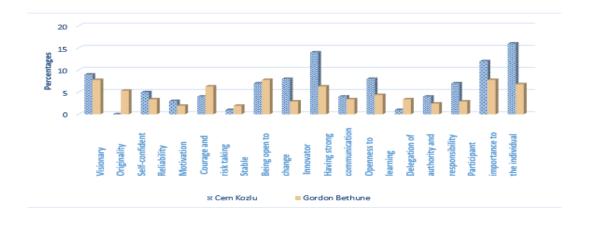
The ability to be courageous and take risks was determined in a section in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 0.97, while it was determined in 4 parts in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 2.59.

The feature of delegating authority and responsibility was determined in a section in Cem Kozlu's book and the percentage rate was 0.97, while it was determined in 7 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 4.54.

There is not any finfings about originality in Cem Kozlu's book, while it was determined in 11 sections in Gordon Bethune's book and the percentage was determined as 7.14.

Comparative distributions of traits related to transformational leadership are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Comparative Distribution of Transformational Leadership Traits in "Bulutların Üstüne Tırmanırken" and "From Worst To First" Books

CONCLUSION

Transformational leadership has been widely studied lately and there are analyzes that are generally made by considering the dimensions of transformational leadership. However, as a result of this study, which was analyses considering the above features, we can clearly see the transformational leadership characteristics of Cem Kozlu and Gordon Bethune, who have taken a radical transformation as their goal since the day they were in the business. The interpretation of the study by adhering only to the texts written by the authors limits the research. However, it is noteworthy that Cem Kozlu and Gordon Bethune are described as transformational leaders by employees, viewers and the public, in line with the words of the authors included in the book and the information obtained from some sources read.

Considering the processes described, Gordon Bethune's vision, determination, observations, managerial approach, motivating and innovative aspect draw attention in the troubled processes of Continental Airlines. Likewise, Cem Kozlu's managerial approach, innovative aspect, observant aspect, vision, transformational aspect and openness to learning draw attention in the troubled processes of Turkish Airlines.

As a result of the analysis, the features with the highest and the lowest three values in both books were determined. As a result of the evaluation of the books separately; While Cem Kozlu's low value traits were observed as originality, courage and risk taking and delegation of authority and responsibility, Gordon Bethune's reliability, being a participant and courageous and risk taking traits were observed as the traits with the lowest values. While Cem Kozlu's highest valued traits were observed as managerial skill, innovativeness and observant aspect, Gordon Bethune's highest valued traits were his vision, determination and observing aspect. Being a good observer is one of the highest values for both leaders. On the other hand, it can be interpreted that the observant aspect, vision, determination, innovativeness, managerial skills and approaches of the business leaders are important for the success of the business during the troubled times of the airline companies. In these periods, it can be concluded that the leaders do not take risks and act decisively with their innovative approaches and manage the process well, which will make a better contribution to the success of the business.

Since the data is limited to the books, more information and clear inferences about the transformational leadership characteristics of Cem Kozlu and Gordon Bethune can be obtained by interviewing people who have worked in the same period, by news and by interviews written about them.

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