# The Intermediate Role of Employee Loyalty in The Effect of Paternalist Leadership on Work Engagement: A Research in The Health Sector

Paternalist Liderliğin İşe Bağlılık Üzerine Etkisinde Çalışan Sadakatinin Aracılık Rolü: Sağlık Sektöründe Bir Araştırma

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## **Abstract**

This research was carried out to test the mediating role of employee loyalty in the effect of paternalistic leadership perception of healthcare employees on their level of work engagement. The sample of this study consists of 310 healthcare professionals working in a private hospital operating in Istanbul. The research data was collected by face-to-face survey method. Process Macro v4.0 application and IBM SPSS 25.0 program were used in the analysis of the data. Participants' paternalistic leadership perception mean score was  $3.53\pm0.70$ , employee loyalty mean score was  $3.71\pm0.79$ , and work engagement mean score was  $3.55\pm0$ . Determined as a result of analysis that paternalist leadership had positive effect on work engagement ( $\beta$ =.523, t=10.766, p<.01). As a result of the analysis, it was determined that paternalist leadership had a positive significant effect on work engagement ( $\beta$ =.535, t=11.103, p<.01). Employee loyalty has positive effect on job engagement ( $\beta$ =.728, t=18.640, p<.01). Employee loyalty was found to have an intermediating role in the effect of paternalistic leadership on work engagement (c'=.3228, 95% CI [.2382, .4180]). As a general result, it would be appropriate for health managers who want to increase the level of work engagement and employee loyalty of health care employees to show paternalistic leadership behavior. Since employee loyalty has intermediating role in this relationship, health managers can increase the level of work engagement of health care employees with practices that increase employee loyalty.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Paternalistic Leadership, Work Engagement, Employee Loyalty. Healthcare Employees.

#### Öz

Bu araştırma sağlık çalışanlarının paternalist liderlik algısının işe bağlılık düzeyleri üzerindeki etkisinde çalışan sadakatinin aracılık rolünü test etmek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Araştırma İstanbul ilinde özel bir hastanede çalışan 310 sağlık çalışanı üzerinde yapılmıştır. Araştırma verileri yüz yüze anket yöntemi ile toplamıştır. Verilerin analizi IBM SPSS 25.0 programı ile Process Makro v4.0 uygulaması kullanılarak yapılmıştır. Katılımcılara ait paternalist liderlik algı puan ortalaması 3.53±0.70, çalışan sadakati puan ortalaması 3.71±0.79, işe bağlılık puan ortalaması 3.55±0.71, olarak belirlenmiştir. Yapılan analizde paternalist liderliğin çalışan sadakati üzerine pozitif yönde ve anlamlı bir etkisi olduğu saptanmıştır (β=0.523, t=10.766, p<0.01). Analiz sonucunda paternalist liderliğin işe bağlılık üzerinde anlamlı etkisi olduğu saptanmıştır (β=0.535, t=11.103, p<0.01). Çalışan sadakatinin işe bağlılık üzerinde pozitif yönde ve anlamlı bir etkisi olduğu belirlenmiştir (β=0.728, t=18.640, p<0.01). Paternalist liderliğin işe bağlılık üzerindeki etkisinde çalışan sadakatinin aracılık rolü olduğu tespit edilmiştir (c'= 0.3228, %95 CI [0.2382, 0.4180]). Genel sonuç olarak sağlık çalışanlarının işe bağlılık ve çalışan sadakatinin aracılık rolü olduğu için sağlık yöneticileri çalışan sadakatini arttırıcı uygulamalarla sağlık çalışanlarının işe bağlılık düzeylerini arttırabilirler.

Keywords: Paternalist Liderlik, Işe Bağlılık, Çalışan Sadakati, Sağlık Çalışanı.

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## Introduction

There are many factors that affect the attitudes and behaviors of the employees in the organization, either positively or negatively. One of these factors is the leadership behaviors of managers (Nal & Sevim, 2021: 1131). One of the leadership styles on which research has focused in recent years is paternalistic leadership.

Studies show that paternalistic leadership has positive effect on employees' job satisfaction, organizational justice perception, organizational commitment, work engagement, organizational citizenship, positive voice, organizational trust, and organizational attitudes and behaviors that contribute positively to employees and organizations (Bektaş, Kanatlı & İşçi, 2021: 772; Hashmi, Khalid & Yasmin 2021: 1729; Nal, Bektaş &Tarım, 2021: 901; Nal & Sevim, 2021: 1135; Nal & Tarım, 2019: 1200; Shi, Yu & Zheng, 2020: 6). On the other hand, studies show that paternalistic leadership has negative effect on behaviors and attitudes that have negative effects on the employee and the organization, such as turnover intention, organizational cynicism, mobbing, and work-family conflict (Gull, Song, Shi, et al. 2021: 7; Kara, Kaya, Başboğa, et al. 2020: 133; Özmen, 2019: 258; Sungur, Özer, Saygılı & Uğurluoğlu, 2019: 142).

Studies show that work engagement has positive effect on organizational attitudes and behaviors that contribute positively to employees and organizations such as job satisfaction, job performance, productivity, and making a positive voice (Bizri, Wahbi & Al Jardali, 2021: 138; Çankır & Arıkan, 2019: 1140; Nal & Sevim, 2021: 1136; Ofei-Dodoo, Long, Bretches, et al. 2020: 51; Ratnaningtyas, Handaru & Eryanto, 2021: 30; Şahin & Çankır, 2018: 394). In addition, studies show that work engagement has negative effect on behaviors and attitudes that have negative effects on the employee and the organization, such as organizational cynicism, intention to leave, and burnout (Gülbahar, 2020: 13; Meynaar, Ottens, Zegers et al. 2021: 3; Ofei-Dodoo et al. 2020: 50).

Recent studies show that employee loyalty has positive effect on organizational performance, employee performance, service quality, and organizational citizenship (Decha, Khlungsaeng, Bousri & Pulphon, 2020: 7; Nuryanto, Warman & Suharno, 2021: 21; Phuong & Vinh, 2020: 707; Unaam, Adim & Adubasim, 2018: 142; Zanabazar & Jigjiddorj, 2021: 475).

All these results show that paternalistic leadership, work engagement, and employee loyalty are important both for the employee and for the organization. In many studies, the relationships between paternalistic leadership with work engagement have been tested. However, studies examining the intermediating role of employee loyalty in the effect of paternalistic leadership on work engagement are very rare. For this reason, it is thought that this study is important in terms of being a new study on testing the intermediating role of employee loyalty in the effect of paternalistic leadership on work engagement in the health sector and this study will contribute to the literature.

### 1. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Paternalistic leadership is defined as a leader who has a virtuous and moral structure, attaches importance to hierarchy, creates a family atmosphere in the workplace, knows the employees closely, stands by their employees in good and bad times, protects them like a father, and expects respect and loyalty from their employees in return for their actions (Nal, 2020: 45).

Work engagement is the physical, cognitive, and emotional devotion of oneself to one's work while doing the job (Kahn, 1990: 694). Work engagement is thought to be the positive antithesis of burnout (Schaufeli, 2012: 4). Maslach et al. considered work engagement as the opposite of burnout and defined burnout as the erosion of work engagement (Maslach et al., 2001: 416). Employees with a high level of work engagement willingly use their energy to achieve difficult goals and feel compelled to do so. Also, employees with these characteristics show intense participation in their work (Bakker and Leiter, 2010: 2). Once employees are loyal to the business, they will fully believe in the goals of the organization and will work for the common goals of the company and will want to be committed to the business for a long time (Phuong, and Vinh, 2020: 701).

Leadership is the process of influencing and directing others to achieve goals and identifying important factors in an organization (Mujiatun, Jufrizen & Ritonga, 2019: 448). Behaviors and attitudes of employees within the organization are affected by many factors, but the most important of these factors is managers. Recent studies showed paternalistic leadership has a positive effect on work engagement (Koçak and Aydın Küçük, 2021; Nal and Sevim, 2021: 1135; Öge, Cetin & Top, 2018: 30). Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

H1: Paternalistic leadership has a positive effect on work engagement.

Hirschman defines employee loyalty (Loyalty) as being loyal to the organization in the face of dissatisfaction with the way things are going in an organization, regardless of whether or not a member has hope that the bad situation will improve (Hirschman, 1970: 76). No research has been found in the literature examining the effect of paternalistic leadership on employee loyalty. Recent studies show that paternalistic leadership positively affects employees in collectivistic countries

such as Turkey (Hashmi, et al. 2021: 1729; Nal, et al. 2021: 901; Shi, et al. 2020: 6). Paternalistic leadership behavior can have a positive effect on employee loyalty. Therefore, the following hypotheses have been formed:

H2: Paternalistic leadership has a positive effect on employee loyalty.

Studies show that there is a positive relationship between employee loyalty and work engagement (Ludviga & Kalvina, 2016: 103; Pološki Vokić & Hernaus, 2015: 9). Similar results are expected in this study. Therefore, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H3: Employee loyalty has a positive effect on work engagement.

Recent studies show that paternalistic leadership has a positive effect on work engagement (Koçak & Aydın Küçük, 2021: 189; Nal & Sevim, 2021: 1135), while employee loyalty has a positive effect on job engagement (Ludviga & Kalvina, 2016: 103). According to these results, it is thought that employee loyalty may have an intermediating role in the effect of paternalistic leadership on work engagement. Therefore, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H4: Employee loyalty has an intermediating role in the effect of paternalistic leadership on work engagement.

#### 1.1. Model of the Research

The research model showing the intermediating role of employee loyalty in the effect of paternalistic leadership on work engagement is shown in Figure 1.

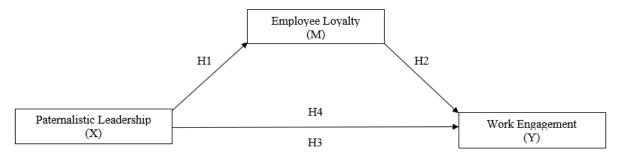


Figure 1. Research Model

#### 2. Materials And Methods

### 2.1. Research Design and Participants

This research was conducted on healthcare professionals working in a private hospital in Istanbul, which has JCI (Joint Commission International) accreditation certificate. The population of the research consists of 2600 health workers. No sampling selection was made in the study, and all healthcare professionals were contacted and informed about the research. Accepted for this study were 310 volunteer health workers. Research data were collected by face-to-face survey method between October and December 2021.

## 2.2. Data Collection Tools

# 2.2.1. Paternalistic Leadership Scale

The Paternalistic Leadership Scale developed by Pellegrini and Scandura (2006) was used to measure the paternalistic leadership perception of the participants. The scale consists of 13 items and one dimension. The scale is in a 5-point Likert type and the answer part is scored as "1 = I strongly disagree, 5 = I strongly agree". A high score indicates that the perception of paternalistic leadership is high. In the scale, there are statements such as "Consults / gets ideas from employees on work-related issues," "My manager creates a family atmosphere in the workplace". The Cronbach Alpha value of the scale was detected 0.86 by Pellegrini and Scandura (2006: 271). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale was determined as 0.88 in this study. The result shows that the scale is highly reliable (Yıldız & Uzunsakal, 2018: 19).

#### 2.2.2. Work Engagement Scale

The Work Engagement Scale developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002), and adapted into Turkish by Eryılmaz and Doğan (2012) was used to measure the participants' level of work engagement. The scale consists of three dimensions vigor, devotion, and concentration, and there are 17 statements on the scale. The scale is in a 5-point Likert type and the answer part is scored as "1 = Not at all appropriate, 5 = Completely appropriate". A high score indicates a high level of work engagement. In the scale, there are statements such as "I find my work meaningful and serves a purpose", "I am eager to go to work when I get up in the morning," and "I want it to never end when I work" in the devotional dimension. Eryılmaz

and Doğan (2012: 53) determined the Cronbach Alpha coefficient as 0.91 in the adaptation of the scale to Turkish. The Cronbach Alpha value of the scale detected for the sub-dimensions of the scale was 0.85 for the vigor, 0.84 for the dedication, and 0.76 for the absorption. In this study, The Cronbach Alpha value was determined as 0.94. The Cronbach Alpha values for the sub-dimensions of the scale were found to be 0.85 for the vigor, 0.88 for the dedication, and 0.84 for the absorption. This result shows that the scale is highly reliable (Yıldız & Uzunsakal, 2018: 19).

## 2.2.3. Employee Loyalty Scale

"Employee Loyalty Scale" was used to evaluate the loyalty of the employees to the organization. The scale was first developed in German by Homburg and Stock-Homburg (2001) and later adapted into English by Matzler and Rentzl (2006). The Turkish adaptation of the scale was carried out by Dede and Sazkaya, (2018). There are 5 items in a five-point Likert type (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree) on a one-dimensional scale: "I would like to continue working in this institution in the future," "If I received another job offer, I would never move to another institution." A high score obtained on the scale indicates a high level of loyalty to the organization. Dede and Sazkaya (2018: 72) determined the Cronbach Alpha value of the scale to be 0.92. In this study, the Cronbach Alpha value was determined as 0.85. The result shows that the scale is highly reliable (Yıldız & Uzunsakal, 2018:19).

## 2.3. Data Analysis

IBM SPSS 25.0 program was used to analyze the collected data. Pearson Correlation Analysis was used to examine the relationship between the variables. Process Macro v4.0 application developed by Hayes, (2018: 100) and the IBM SPSS program were used in the mediation effect analysis. In the analysis, 5000 sample options and model 4 were preferred with the Bootstrap technique. In the analysis, the mediation effect analysis made with the Bootstrap technique was evaluated according to the 95% confidence interval (the interval where the CI values do not include the zero (0) value). To control the normality assumption of the scales, the skewness, and kurtosis values were checked.

## 3. RESULTS

## 3.1. Demographics of Participants

Participating in the research 67.7% were women, 64.8% were single, 43.2% were in the 26-35 age group, 51.3% had a bachelor's degree, 37.4% worked between 1-5 years and 38.7% were medical secretaries.

## 3.2. Validity

The paternalistic leadership perception mean score of the participants was 3.53±0.70, the mean employee loyalty score was 3.71±0.79, and the mean work engagement score was 3.55±0.71 (Table 1). To test the normal distribution feature of the data, skewness, and kurtosis values were checked. It was determined that the skewness, and kurtosis values of the scales were between -1.50 and +1.50 and the distribution was normal (Tabachnick ve Fidell 2013).

Scales	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach Alpha
Paternalistic Leadership	310	1.31	5.00	3.53	.70	44	.28	.88
Employee Loyalty	310	1.00	5.00	3.71	.79	53	.30	.94
Work Engagement	310	1.00	5.00	3.55	.71	27	.25	.85

**Tablo 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variable Scores.** 

## 3.3. Correlation Analysis Results

Pearson correlation analysis was applied to determine the relationship between paternalistic leadership, employee loyalty, and work engagement (Table 2). Correlation analysis result, it determined that there was a positive and moderately significant relationship between paternalistic leadership and employee loyalty (r=.523, p<.01). It was determined that there was a positive and moderately significant relationship between paternalistic leadership with work engagement (r=.535, p<.01). It was determined that there is a positive, and highly significant relationship between employee loyalty, and work engagement (r=.728, p<.01).

Tablo 2. Correlation Analysis Results.

Variables	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.
1. Paternalistic Leadership	3.53	.70	1		
2. Employee Loyalty	3.71	.79	523**	1	
3. Work Engagement	3.55	.71	.535**	.728**	1

<sup>\*\*</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

# 3.4. Regression Analysis

The Simple Linear Regression Analysis was performed to reveal the effect of paternalistic leadership on employee loyalty and work engagement (Table 3). Analysis result, it was determined that paternalistic leadership had a positive, and significant effect on employee loyalty ( $\beta$ =.523, t=10.766, p<.01). 27.1% of the total change in employee loyalty occurs with the effect of paternalistic leadership (R2=.271). According to this result, the H1 hypothesis was accepted. Analysis result, it was determined that paternalistic leadership had a positive and significant effect on work engagement ( $\beta$ =.535, t=11.103, p<.01). 28.4% of the total change in work engagement occurs with the paternalistic leadership effect (R2=.284). According to this result, the H2 hypothesis was accepted.

Tablo 3. Regression Analysis Results.

The Independent Variable: Paternalistic Leadership								
Dependent variables	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Beta (β)	t	F	р		
Employee Loyalty	.273	.271	.523	10.766	115.896	.000		
Work Engagement	.286	.284	.535	11.103	123.274	.000		

Regression analysis was performed to test the effect of employee loyalty on work engagement (Table 4). By the conclusion of the regression analysis, it was determined that employee loyalty has a positive, and significant effect on work engagement ( $\beta$ =.728, t=18.640, p<0.01). 52.9% of the change in work engagement is explained by employee loyalty (R2=.529). H3 hypothesis was accepted for this result.

Tablo 4. Second Regression Analysis Results.

The Independent Variable: Employee Loyalty								
Dependent Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Beta (β)	t	F	р		
Work Engagement	.530	.529	.728	18.640	347.466	.000		

## 3.5. Bootstrap Regression Analysis Results

Bootstrap regression analysis was made with the Process module to test the intermediating role of employee loyalty in the influence of paternalistic leadership on work engagement (Table 6 and Figure 2).

Variables	Effect (b)	SD	t	р	LLCI	ULCI
The total effect of X on Y	.5399	.0486	11.1029	.000	.4442	.6356
Direct effect of X on Y	.2140	.0447	4.7851	.000	.1260	.3019
		Effect (b)	Bootstrap SD	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
Indirect effect of M on the effect of X on Y		.3228	.0451	.2382	.4180	

Tablo 5. Regression analysis results.

X= Paternalistic Leadership, Y=Employee Loyalty, M=Work Engagement

As a result of the analysis, it has been determined that employee loyalty has an intermediating role in the effect of paternalistic leadership on work engagement (c'=.3228, %95 CI [.2382, .4180]). According to this result, hypothesis H4 was accepted.

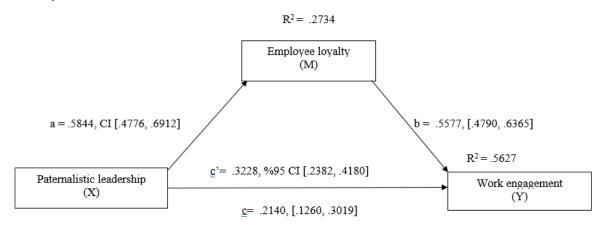


Figure 2. Regression Analysis Results

#### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This research was conducted to test the intermediating role of employee loyalty in the influence of paternalistic leadership perception on work engagement levels of healthcare employees. In this study, firstly, the influence of paternalistic leadership on employee loyalty was tested. It has been determined that paternalistic leadership has a positive effect on work engagement. This result supports the results of previous research. (Koçak & Aydın Küçük, 2021: 189; Nal & Sevim, 2021: 1135; Öge et al. 2018: 30). According to this result, it can be said that health managers can increase healthcare employees' work engagement by showing paternalistic leadership behavior.

Studies show that paternalistic leadership positively affects employee behavior in collectivist countries (Hashmi et al. 2021: 1729; Nal et al. 2021: 901; Shi et al. 2020: 6). For this reason, with the assumption that paternalistic leadership may have a positive effect on employee loyalty, the effect of paternalistic leadership on employee loyalty was tested secondly in this study. As a result, it has been determined that paternalistic leadership has positive influence on employee loyalty. No research has been found in the literature examining the influence of paternalistic leadership on employee loyalty. It is thought that this result will make an important contribution to the literature and health managers. According to this result, it is thought that health managers can increase employee loyalty by showing paternalistic leadership behavior. In addition, it is thought that it would be appropriate to test the relationship between paternalistic leadership and employee loyalty by conducting new research on different sample groups.

Thirdly, the effect of employee loyalty on work engagement was tested in this study. In this study, it has been determined that as employee loyalty increases, work engagement also increases. The results obtained support the literature (Ludviga & Kalvina, 2016: 103; Pološki Vokić & Hernaus, 2015: 9).

Fourthly, in this study, the intermediating role of employee loyalty in the influence of paternalistic leadership on work engagement was examined. As a result, it has been determined that employee loyalty has an intermediating role in the influence of paternalistic leadership on work engagement. No other research has been found in the literature examining this issue. In this respect, it is thought that this result is important in terms of literature.

As a general result, it would be appropriate for health managers who want to increase the level of work engagement and employee loyalty of healthcare employees to show paternalistic leadership behavior. Since employee loyalty has an intermediating effect on the influence of paternalistic leadership on work engagement, it is possible to increase the level of work engagement with the behaviors and practices of managers to increase employee loyalty.

#### **Limitations and Dimensions for Future Research**

As a limitation of the study, those working for less than one year were excluded. In addition, the results of the research are limited to 310 health workers participating in this research. In future research, the intermediating role of other variables in the effect of paternalistic leadership on work engagement can be examined. Future research can be done on different sample groups.

#### **Ethics Statement**

The ethics committee approval of Acıbadem Mehmet Ali Aydınlar University Medical Researches Evaluation Committee, numbered 2021-20/15, was obtained for the research. Written permission was taken from the hospital where the research would be conducted. Participants were informed about the research and their written consent was obtained. The study was conducted by the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

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