

Leadership skills of napoleon bonaparte



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In the late 1700s, France became engulfed in an era of social and political degradation, and the empire began to weaken and crumble. However, the French empire made its way towards restoration due to the leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte, a French military leader and the first emperor of France in the early 19th century. Considering his high amount of experience within military related ordeals, Napoleon was considered to be a strong, efficient leader of the French Empire.

During the French Revolution, Bonaparte's leadership skills were challenged as he was responsible for the restoration of France. Napoleon Bonaparte became the key element of the French Revolution as he promoted concepts for the betterment of the French empire, making him a powerful individual with efficient leadership skills.

Contents

Napoleon Bonaparte was born on August 15th, 1796 on the island of Corsica, Ajaccio, France. He is the second born offspring of Carlo Maria di Buonaparte and Maria Letizia Ramolino. Napoleon had seven siblings within his family, consisting of four brothers and three sisters. His father was known to be a supporter of a Corsican resistance leader named Pasquale Paoli; however, Carlo Maria di Buonaparte's support for Paoli deterred towards his alliance with France after his beliefs changed and opposed of the leader (Harvey, n. d.). As a result, Napoleon's father made the decision to move the family to Brienne, France, where Napoleon's mother, an Italian noblewoman, committed an act of adultery with Comte de Marbeuf, who was the French military governor (Dugdale-Pointon, 2006).

Following the Buonaparte's move, Napoleon was enrolled in French College d'Autun, where he continued his studies for three to four years. His mother's relations with the French military governor prompted Napoleon to attend a military college in Brienne for approximately five years (Dugdale-Pointon, 2006). In 1784, he continued his military education in Paris, but the duration of his stay was curtailed due to his father's passing in 1786, leading Napoleon to graduate early and move back to Corsica (Harvey, n. d.). According to Dugdale-Pointon (2006), Napoleon excelled in academic subjects, such as science and mathematics, which became significantly useful for advancing his skills and caused him to later become an artillery officer.

After graduating and obtaining the title as an artillery officer, Napoleon began to make decisions similar to those of his father. He, too, began to support Pasquale Paoli, who returned to Corsica to become a Nationalist leader (Harvey, n. d.). However, their contrast in ideologies also resulted in Buonaparte's opposition towards Paoli and his family's move back to France. He was admitted into the military unit in June 1793 which was stationed in Nice, France, where he later supported another political party called the Jacobins. Similar to his following of Paoli, Bonaparte lost interest and opposed of the party, and he managed to become idolized by the French Government. Harvey (n. d.) mentions that Napoleon defended the government from counter-revolutionary fighters in 1795, and he was rewarded by being named the commander of the Army of the Interior and recognized as a trusted military advisor. Within the same year, Napoleon was promoted to brigadier general in France. However, in 1976, he was

imprisoned because the government changed from the progressive political party, the Jacobins, to Thermidorian Reaction (Rollyson, 2013). As a result, the new group in power caused those involved in the French Revolution to go against one another. Napoleon was soon released in October of 1795.

In the following years, Napoleon Bonaparte's military experience continued to flourish, and he became more successful and well-known. He increased his skills in warfare and obtained multiple titles, which aided in his efficiency on the battle field. In 1796, he held the title of the commander in chief of the Army of Italy, consisting of 30, 000 malnourished men with low moral (Harvey, n. d.). While under the leadership of Napoleon, the army effectively expanded the French borders and became victorious in their battles including those against Austria (Harvey n. d.). Bonaparte is credited from leading other armies, such as the Army of the Orient, which he led in Egypt against the British in 1798 (Dugdale-Pointon, 2006). His goal within the battle was to invade Britain's stationaries in the hopes of taking over Egypt and prevent the British from trading with India. Yet, Napoleon's strategy in Egypt was unsuccessful, so this prompted him to abandoned his army, return to Paris, and overthrow the weak, tyrannic French government (Dugdale-Pointon, 2006). As a result, Napoleon became known as the first consul of France's new government in 1799, resulting in him becoming a dictator then the emperor of France.

Upon obtaining one of his highest given titles, Bonaparte began to restore France from its weakened state caused by the previous government and the revolution. He provided the French with individual and collective rights that abolished any association with the tyrant monarchy, and he accomplished

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this by rejoining France to the foundation of laws, agreements, security and so on. Napoleon's reign was successful for majority of its duration, yet it began to dwindle over time. The once victorious leader soon began to be defeated; as a result, France's resources became limited and tensions arose throughout the empire. This led to Bonaparte's surrender and exile on March 30, 1814 to an island named Elba (Harvey, n. d.). The next year, Bonaparte returned to France, and he led his troops in the Battle of Waterloo, in which he was defeated and became known as his last fight. He then resigned from his title and powers over the empire, and he was exiled for a second time to St. Helena (Harvey, n. d.). Other aspects of Napoleon's life started to worsen, including his health as he developed a stomach ulcer in the year of 1817. Sadly, on May 5, 1821, Napoleon Bonaparte passed away, leaving his legacy as one of the most successful and efficient military leaders in history.

As a leader of thousands of troops within each army, Napoleon held the trait of remaining persistent in his actions. He often times found a solution to his people's problems, and his tactics of overcoming his issues were typically bound for success. One of his first notable acts of persistence is his initial contribution to France, which was overthrowing its weakened government. Due to flaws in his plan during the Battle of Egypt, or the Battle of the Pyramids, Napoleon returned to France and discovered an alternative towards success. This prompted him to create a plan to position himself, as well as two other individuals, into power. Nearing the end of the Revolution, Napoleon demonstrated to France that he was destined to be positioned as the new ruler. He formulated a plan to overthrow the French government, or the Directory, in what is known as the Coup of 18 Brumaire. With the help of

his brother, Lucien Bonaparte, and others in association with the idea, Napoleon was able to falsely persuade the directors of the council to resign, thus overthrowing the system of government under the Directory in France (Stewart, 1951). As a result, Napoleon Bonaparte is successful in removing the corrupted government and is declared the First Consul of France.

Next, Napoleon was viewed as a leader who utilized his genius and personality to rule his empire. Considering that he was efficient in both science and mathematics, Napoleon was able to facilitate strategies and plans that were essential on the battle field and during the reconstruction period following the revolution. His advanced skill of thinking allowed him to understand the actions that needed to be carried out as well as how effectively those actions were to be preformed. Bonaparte also used his skillful thinking to condition his troops for battle, which occurred mentally and physically. Often, he was provided with an army of thousands of men who were not disciplined, malnourished, and unfit for battle, but he had the ability to shape them into strong individuals who were able to be victorious (Dugdale-Pointon, 2006). He even used his demeanor to personally build and improve his soldiers, such as those within the Italian army. In Italy, Bonaparte remains confident yet serious by stating, you have done nothing compared with what remains to be done (Bonaparte, 1796). His statement acknowledged the need for more effort from his men while congratulating them on how far they have made it. Napoleon's lenient yet ambitious demeanor conveys that he is tolerant of his encounters, but he has expectations meant for those under his leadership.

In addition to his personality aiding him in shaping and ruling his empire, Napoleon was also an authoritarian leader. He held a strong belief in the standards of himself and his soldiers, and it demonstrated his strong will to guide and maintain control while in power. His authoritarian style of leading was often noticed during battles, where he dictated how and when tactics were performed to ensure excellence. In battles, such as those in Italy, Bonaparte paired his military experience with the strength of his men to execute plans, and he controlled their actions to limit the risk of his army losing its discipline and morals (Dugdale-Pointon, 2006). By keeping his troops preoccupied with orders, Napoleon was efficient in regulating the army's morality and improving them mentally and physically. His leadership skills also acted as a method of guidance to his people as he strived to meet his goals, which were to be victorious over the opposing army. By considering the impact he has over his citizens, Napoleon understood that he had to be dictatorial in order to conserve the quality of his soldiers and remain successful (Dugdale-Pointon, 2006). His authoritarian standpoint remained consistent through 60 triumphant battles, however, his skill declined following the peak of his dominance.

Furthermore, Bonaparte took the needs and desires of his citizens into consideration during and after the revolution. He frequently constructed his own ideas and techniques in a manner which demonstrated his drive to personally conduct actions that were considered necessary for the benefit of his people. One of the actions that he formulated was the Concordat of 1801, in which he provided political and social relief to France. By signing the Concordat with Pope Pius VII, Napoleon was successful in mending France's

relationship with the Catholic Church, and it pronounced Catholicism as the prominent religion practiced in France with the tolerance of others (Bonaparte & Pius VII, 1801). The signing of the agreement, France became open to religious matters regarding Catholicism rather than restricting its citizens to a set of practices which the majority may not conform to. Another action that was performed for the political benefit of the citizens was the promotion of the Napoleonic Code, which was founded on the premise that a rational law should be created without the concern of past prejudices (Code Napoleon, 2017). Those prejudices were found to be conflicts emerging during the revolution from the previous government; however, Napoleon made sure that France's laws were based more on common principles instead of theories. As a result, the empire's citizens were granted with their proper individual rights rather than those enacted by the Directory prior to Napoleon's reign.

Upon observing the leadership traits of Napoleon Bonaparte, it is evident that his characteristics can be further examined along with the principles of leadership found in James Hunter's book, *The World's Most Powerful Leadership Principle: How to Become a Servant Leader*. The book effectively guides its audience through the basics of leadership and outlines the methods that should and should not be used to be successful. However, the book serves as a guideline for understanding the quality of Napoleon's traits, and it demonstrates leadership from an authentic standpoint of the historical figure.

Based on the principles that were outlined in the book, the concept of organization is influenced by the amount of leadership that is provided.

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Within the early chapters of the book, Hunter acknowledges the idea of organizations and the differentiation of those that are healthy or dysfunctional. With that idea, he states, [w]e have found the single greatest predictor of organizational health or dysfunction to be leadership or lack thereof (Hunter, 2007, p. 28). Hunter's statement relates to the leadership of Napoleon in the sense that he was willing to come to an agreement with others for beneficial reasons. Collaborations with others are observed in Napoleon's decision to sign the Concordat of 1801 with Pope Pius VII as well as his willingness to improve the morality of thousands of men to construct successful armies, which are identified as dysfunctional then healthy organizations. By continuously understanding and working with those he has encountered, Napoleon was able to excel in nearly any given task and maintain his respected roles throughout his life.

Next, Hunter reflects on the idea that one's character and leadership are intertwined. The author states, leadership has everything to do with character, and he continues by writing that the two terms refer to doing the right thing (Hunter, 2004, p. 31); therefore, Hunter is mentioning the relationship between an individual's morals and his or her leadership skills. One of the key elements that Napoleon strived to improve was the morality of his soldiers. According to Dugdale-Pointon (2006), Napoleon was frequently met with men who lacked morals, and he took it upon himself as their commander to discipline them. In order to fulfill that goal, the general gradually taught them the importance of perseverance while in battle to demonstrate the advantages of overpowering the opponent and the benefits of the empire in which they are fighting for. He also improved them

psychologically with the use of imagery to foreshadow the possibilities of being successful and doing what is right for France by stating, I seek to lead you into the most fertile plains in the world. Rich provinces, great cities will be in your power. There you will find honor, glory, and riches (Bonaparte, 1796). Napoleon's use of imagery may also be viewed as an act of motivation and guidance from his troops, which is what some leaders resort to in order to gain a better performance from their followers.

Additionally, it is established that an individual must have the experience as a servant before being recognized as a leader. Hunter (2004) identifies this principle as the essence of leadership while writing about the definitive statement of Jesus Christ, which he paraphrases with the words, anyone who wishes to be the leader must first be the servant, and he adds, [i]f you choose to lead, you must serve (p. 72). The principle is associated with the differences of power versus authority, or what is described in the book to be the influence one has over people versus the potential to provide those people with commands; yet, it is discovered that authority was the primary element. By analyzing Napoleon, authority was also the premise of his leadership; and he, too, was a figure who know how to gain control while delivering orders. Based on the words of Dugdale-Pointon (2006), Napoleon was the type of leader who did not tolerate [any] argument, [and was] one who did not know when the possible ended and the impossible began. Even Hunter (2004) quoted the general, who stated, Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did rest the creations of our genius? Upon force (p. 72); therefore, Napoleon was a man of force and authority in order to receive what he desires. Evidence of this

idea was displayed in his plans, such as his military tactics in battle, the acceleration of his troops, the Coup of 18 Brumaire, and so on. The authoritarian characteristics of Napoleon allowed him to effectively complete tasks either during battle or in politics despite the given disadvantages.

Moreover, a true leader should be able to make sacrifices to benefit and serve his or her followers. Having the ability to sacrifice one's own wants and conforming to the needs of others is another founding principle of leadership. The act of sacrificing may include letting go of one's ego, lust for power, pride, reputation as well as other factors, such as avoiding conflict or receiving answers of issues to positively influence other people or events (Hunter, 2004, p. 78). An example of a sacrifice Napoleon made was during his time of illness on September 7, 1812 in the Battle of Borodino, where he did not cease to lead his troops against the Russians to prove himself as a restless leader (Dugdale-Pointon, 2006). In addition to defining the purpose of making sacrifices, Hunter discusses the meaning of serving others. While serving other individuals we will have to forgive, apologize, and give others credit [but] we will be rejected, under appreciated, taken advantage of at times (Hunter, 2004, p. 78). Napoleon served the French by becoming the commander in chief of their armies, which were victorious majority of the time. Yet, he was seen as an unsuccessful leader after Paris fell on March 31, 1814, leading to his abdication and exile (Rollyson, 2013). His actions showed his willingness to be an influential leader, but he was still looked down upon in the end of his ruling.

Napoleon Bonaparte's legacy illustrates the impact of effective leadership skills. Throughout his life, he was placed into positions that exposed him to

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the responsibilities of leading a group of people, and those factors drove him to improve his skills to exceed alongside others under his command. He demonstrated characteristics of a reasonable leader through trial and error paired with the regulation of authority, sacrifices, servitude and his own persona. Although, not all leaders are perfect and follow the principles outlined by others to define their title, considering that Napoleon had his pros and cons. He was a military genius and an influential figure, yet his autonomy ruled over him nearing the end of his period in power. However, he remained consistent and persevered through the tasks he was presented with for the sake of his citizens. As a result, he became an individual with the ability to guide his people to victory while providing them with social, economic and political relief, making him one of the most notable leaders of his time.