

The Correlation between the Principal's Leadership Style and the Commitment of Teachers in Arab Schools in Israel

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to examine the influence of principal's leadership style on the teachers' commitment. The research question is: What is the correlation between the school principal's leadership style and teachers' sense of commitment? The research population is from The Triangle, Israeli Arab towns and villages adjacent to the Green Line. The settlements are home to approximately 300,000 Arab citizens of Israel, representing about 24% of Israel's Palestinian Arab population who are Muslim. 352 teachers participated in the study. The teachers teach in middle schools and high schools. The research tools used in the study include two questionnaires: 1) Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire – MLQ by Bass and Avolio (1990). 2) The Allen and Meyer (1990) commitment to school questionnaire. Hypothesis H1 was confirmed, the study findings showed that there are positive relationships of moderate and significant strengths between all leadership indicators and commitment indicators. While high levels of leadership (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) the teacher reported about his principal, are associated with high levels of affective and continuance commitment. In addition, it was found that the relationship between transactional leadership and affective commitment is (slightly) stronger than the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez-faire leadership, affective commitment, continuance commitment.

JEL Classification: T21, M10, M12

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1. Introduction

Many organizational studies have dealt in recent years with the issue of leadership with respect to the leader's behavior at the individual, group, and organization level and the factors which bring to the organization success in achieving its goals. Levy (2008) believes that an organization, characterized by an efficient leadership and a management style enabling personal development and collaboration, improves the commitment of employees to the organization. Leadership takes place when the followers accept the goals group and organization as their personal goals (Friedman, 1992). The principal leadership style and the way

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he is perceived by his employees, has a profound effect on the goals achievement, the employees' sense of commitment, and the organizational climate.

The role of the school principal in Arab society is perceived as prestigious by the community (Addi-Raccach, 2006). The education system in the Arab society in Israel has experienced profound changes in recent years, especially an emphasis on the principal's educational leadership style importance for the school the teaching staff success (Arar & Haj Yahya, 2007).

The choice of subject: "The correlation between the principal's leadership style and the commitment of teachers in Arab schools in Israel" is due since the principals' leadership style influence key issues of school management including: school policy and culture, employment and promotion of teachers, etc. As a result, it has an effect on the functioning and success of the students and school, and especially on the teachers' commitment. The connection between the principal's leadership style and teachers' commitment is a significant factor of teachers' perceptions related to their responsibility for the students and the school and their collaboration for the school's success.

This research may indicate the suitable leadership style for a principal which will contribute to the teacher's sense of commitment, and allow to select principals suitable for the school management and progress.

2. Literature review

Educational researches point for a long time, to the close connection between school principal's leadership style and teachers' commitment (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Hoy et al., 2007; Hallinger, 2003; Silins et al., 2000). The theoretic frame of this research is based on two sources: leadership theories (Bass, 1985), and the teachers' sense of commitment models.

The research literature presents different theories dealing with leadership styles (Wagner & Manor, 2001; Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003), and especially, emphasizing Bass (1985) model which includes three main hierarchical categories of leadership:

2.1 Transformational leadership - represents the highest leadership level. It increases the motivation of the led people to make great efforts (Bass, 1985). This leadership style includes four sub-categories of behaviors which enable to motivate the subordinates:

1) Idealized Influence – sets moral and behavior exemplar, which causes the led people to identify with the leader and imitate his actions. This type of leader shows power, self-confidence and dedication. He is willing to sacrifice personal interests, do not hesitate to take risks, and take full responsibility for the led people actions. 2) Inspiration – create enthusiasm and optimism, raise expectations, confidence, and involvement of the led persons. 3) Intellectual Stimulation – encourage the led people to act creatively by examining assumptions, alternatives and new approaches. Also, appreciate new ideas and develop the subordinates'

critical thinking. 4) Individual Consideration – this leader devotes special attention to the leaded people's personal development. He creates personal contacts and gives the leaded people opportunities to learn and a supporting environment for development. The leader's personal attention reduces the frustration levels and competitiveness and increases his subordinates' cooperation.

2.2 Transactional leadership

The relationship and influence between the leader and the leaded people are done by "exchange relations". This leadership includes two sub-categories: conditional reward and affirmative leadership. It is an active leadership that presents to the leaded people the required performance levels and grant reward for success. The main limitation of transactional leadership is that the leaded people are motivated by external rewards, so they do not exceed the required performance level (Gonen & Zakai, 1999).

2.3 Laissez-faire leadership

According to Bass (1985), a leader characterized by this leadership style avoid making decisions. He expresses renunciation of any attempt to make an impact. This leader does not give guidance or support and usually show indifference and carelessness and focus on achieving his personal goals.

2.4 Defining the role of the school principal

The main role of school principals is to lead the school educationally and pedagogically to improve the education of all students and success of the teachers and the school.

During the present period of reforms in education, there have been profound changes in the roles of the principal and the relationships between the principal and the teaching staff and other actors. In the last decade, following the process of decentralization and democratization in schools, the "new principal" has been required to fulfill roles that involve not only management skills but also leadership skills, communication skills, group management skills, and skills of diagnosis, evaluation, feedback and team development (Arar & Arar, 2016). Hefetz & Linsky (2007) refer to school management and emphasis systemic vision and a learning organization, which enable to deal with a complex and changing environment.

Arar & Arar (2016) focused specifically on the issue of teacher evaluation by the principal in the Arab education system which enables quality control of teaching and learning, professional development of teachers, and increasing teachers' motivation and reinforcements (Arar & Massry-Herzallah, 2016).

The literature emphasizes the challenges to the development of an efficient educational leadership in Arab society, and explains this by failures and lack of budgeting of social, political and cultural resources. This is expressed by insufficient

infrastructure, political, clan and gender challenges regarding the school's management roles, and hindering development of entrepreneurial and visionary educational leadership by the Ministry of Education (Abu-Asbah & Avishai, 2008; Arar, Shapira, & Aziza, 2013).

2.5 Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment, gained much interest in empirical and theoretical research as early as the 1970s. The research in the field has led to development of many definitions, questionnaires and measurement tools related to this term. Most definitions refer to organizational commitment as the person's relationship with the organization. Organizational commitment relates also to variables that influence organizational behavior (Dee, Henkin & Singleton, 2006; Allen & Meyer, 1990). Organizational commitment can also be defined as "the employee's strong belief and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, while investing efforts in achieving those goals and the employee's strong desire to maintain his or her membership in the organization" (Sharma & Bajpai, 2010). Bogler & Somech (2004) refer to commitment, noting that employees are interested in taking on active roles in the organization, and influencing the organization's plans, procedures and strategies.

Multidimensional models for organizational commitment have been developed. The most widely accepted in research today is Meyer and Allen's Three Components Model (1991), which has undergone changes. At first, the model was two-dimensional and included dimensions of 'affective commitment' and 'continuous commitment'. Affective commitment referred to the emotional identification, attachment and involvement of the person in the organization, while continuous commitment referred to the costs associated with leaving the organization. Later, a third dimension was added to this model – 'normative commitment' that reflected the obligation to remain in the organization due to a sense of commitment (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). The model of Meyer & Allen (1997) consists three dimensions:

Affective commitment – defined as emotional communication between the employee and the organization, identification and involvement with it and a desire to stay in it. This commitment evolves in response to work experiences that create a sense of personal fulfillment and satisfy professional and personal needs.

Continual commitment – described as the tendency to consistently manage activities as a result of aggregating benefits. This commitment is emotionally neutral, and people are committed to the organization based on benefits and rewards, and stay in it since they do not want to lose their achievements and status.

Normative commitment – a duty the individual feels to stay in the organization as a moral action. This refers to the employee's link with the organization based on work values, loyalty sense and moral commitment.

Researchers found significant links between transformational leadership and teachers' affective commitment (Leithwood & Day, 2008; Menon-Eliophotou,

2014; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Herold, Fedor, Caldwell & Liu, 2008). Oplatka (2010) adds that transformational leadership creates internal commitment among teachers due to the principal's personal example and accountability.

It was found that teachers' organizational commitment is correlated with satisfaction, performance, absences and employees' substitution (Loi, Lai & Lam, 2011). The focus in teachers' researches was on affective commitment which defines the employee's emotional link with the organization. Teachers who have high commitment level invest a lot of effort in work, high involvement and tend to stay in the school (Tsemach & Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2017; Hulpia & Devos, 2010; Shapira-Lishchinsky & Even-Zohar, 2011).

2.6 Principals and teachers' commitment

Teacher commitment describes the relations created among teachers and the degree of their commitment to the school (Choi & Tang, 2011). Commitment is considered a person's duty to cooperate with other colleagues in the organization (Wasko & Faraj, 2005). Teacher commitment is characterized by a sense of unity, team spirit, enthusiasm, a common sense of purpose, and high morale. It was found that the focus of the school reform, is based on the commitment of teachers (Choi & Tang, 2011; Abd Razak et al., 2010; Frankenberg et al., 2010; Sood & Anand, 2011). A positive school climate also contributes to teachers' commitment. Teachers themselves need to instill their love for the profession and understand the dynamics of their school culture and students' backgrounds to effectively support them (Leithwood & Day, 2008). Further evidence of teachers' commitment is their desire to strengthen their professional knowledge and to participate in professional development.

The role of the principal is extremely important as an educational leader in promoting the functioning and progress of his team. For example, Kelly (2004) found that principals rated their ability to encourage teachers to improve their practice and professional development as their first priority. Also, principals who have high expectations about their staff and students, and value teachers as professionals, demonstrate towards them equality, honesty and a high level of trust, encourage communication between parties, and create a highly committed team focused on collaborative relationships. Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk (2001) argued that the perception of principals' self-efficacy is an important factor contributing to teachers' commitment (Richards, 2003). Furthermore, teachers noted that commitment to school depends on the degree to which principals provide emotional support, open communication, and professional assistance (Avolio et al., 2004; Hulpia & Devos, 2010).

3. Method

Research Questions

- What is the correlation between the school principal's leadership style and teachers' sense of commitment?

The research population

The research population is from The Triangle, which includes Israeli Arab towns and villages adjacent to the Green Line, in the eastern Sharon plain. The settlements are home to approximately 300,000 Arab citizens of Israel, representing about 24% of Israel's Palestinian Arab population. Average statistics of the triangle area: Socio-economic index ranges from 2-4 out of 10; The settlements include cities and local councils and their population is Muslim; the settlements have primary and elementary schools, and the average number of students per class is 27. 352 teachers participated in the study, of which 275 were women (78.1%) and 77 were men (21.9%), most of them in the age range of 35-55 (63.6%). An absolute majority of the teachers are Muslims (99.1%) and academics (88.6%). The teachers teach in middle schools and high schools.

The research tools

1. Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire – MLQ was developed by Bass and Avolio (1990). The questionnaire includes 36 items measuring nine leadership styles indices. 20 items examine transformational leadership, 12 items examine transactional leadership and 4 items examine Laissez-faire leadership. Each item is graded on a scale between 1 and 4, while 1 – never and 4 – always. The teachers' questionnaire included a large number of items divided into several topics.

2. The Allen and Meyer (1990) commitment to school questionnaire. The questionnaire includes 16 items, 8 first items examine affective commitment to the organization and 8 last items examine continuing commitment to the organization. The scale is between 1 and 4, while 1 – not agree at all and 4- agree. The internal reliability of affective commitment is 0.70 and the internal reliability of the continuing commitment is 0.68.

The research procedure

First, I contacted the school principals in the Arab sector within "the Triangle Area" in Israel, to confirm their teachers' participation in the research and explain the research goals. Later I get the confirmation of the principals regarding the participation of their teachers, and the consent of the teachers to participate in the research. The questionnaires were distributed to teachers by "google docs". Data analysis is performed by SPSS software.

Independent and Dependent Variables

- **Independent variable:** principal leadership style
- **Dependent variable:** Teachers' sense of commitment style (Affective, continuance)

Results

For each teacher, the average of his answers to each questionnaire was calculated, and this is how the research indices for the teachers were defined. Table 1 shows general characteristics of the indices.

**Averages, standard deviations and significance
of the research indices – teachers (N=352)**

Table 1

	No. of Items	Min.	Max.	Average	s.d	α
Transformational leadership	20	1.20	4.00	3.29	.58	.952
transactional leadership	12	1.00	4.00	2.49	.46	.720
Laissez-faire leadership	4	1.00	4.00	2.55	.60	.481
affective commitment	8	1.00	4.00	2.63	.50	.606
continuance commitment	8	1.00	4.00	2.42	.62	.710

The reliabilities of the indices, as tested according to Cronbach's alpha (α), were found to be high in most of the indices (with the exception of the laissez-faire leadership index), a figure that characterizes a high degree of stability and consistency in the responses of the participants for terms of each index.

The reliabilities of the indices were found to be high in the transformative leadership and transactional leadership indices, which characterizes a high degree of stability and consistency in the responses of the respondents, in terms of these two indices. On the other hand, in the laissez-faire Leadership index, low reliability was found, which characterizes a low degree of stability and consistency of the respondents' answers to the four questions.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis H1. There is a relationship between the school principal's leadership style reported by the teachers' sense of commitment to the school, in such a way, that the higher the teacher's report high level of transformational leadership of his principal, the greater will be the teacher's commitment to the school. In addition, the more the teacher reports higher levels of transactional or laissez-faire leadership of his principal, the higher the teacher's commitment to the school will be, but not as strong as for transformational leadership.

**Pearson correlations between leadership indices
and commitment indices - teachers (N=352)**

Table 2

	Affective commitment	Continuance commitment	Total commitment
Transformational leadership style	.514**	.163**	.385**
Transactional leadership style	.535**	.398**	.555**
Laissez-faire leadership style	.458**	.280**	.434**

*p<0.05 ** p<0.01

As it appears, there are positive relationships of moderate and significant strengths between all the leadership indicators and the commitment indicators. That is, the high levels of leadership (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) the

teacher reported about his principal, are associated with high levels of affective and continuance commitment to the school. Examining the strength of the relationships, it was found that the relationship between transactional leadership and affective commitment is (slightly) stronger than the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment. These two relationships were found to be slightly stronger than the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and affective commitment, in accordance with the hypothesis. Also, the relationship between transactional leadership and continuance commitment is stronger than the relationships between laissez-faire leadership and continuance commitment, as well as between transformational leadership and continuance commitment, and this is in accordance with the hypothesis. It was also found, that there are relationships between transformational leadership and total commitment, between transactional leadership and total commitment, as well as between laissez-faire leadership and total commitment, and this is in accordance with the research hypotheses. Hypothesis H1 was confirmed.

3. Discussion

This chapter deals with the results of the study, the research hypothesis, and conclusions that were drawn from the findings. Limitations to the study are identified, and recommendations for future research are discussed. The research goals are to examine the influence of principal's leadership style on the teachers' commitment, and to recognize and recommend principal's management strategies to increase teachers' commitment.

This study was conducted using the qualitative method. The data collection was done by questionnaires. The samples were selected to represent a population to which the findings can be generalized. The data were analyzed by utilizing the statistical software package SPSS using descriptive statistics, averages, Pearson correlations and t-test. Cronbach's alpha was run to test reliability.

Hypothesis H1 was confirmed, as there are positive relationships of average and significant correlations between all the leadership indices and the commitment index. That is, high levels of leadership (transformative, transactional and laissez-faire) the teacher reported about his principal, are associated with high levels of teaching staff commitment. Furthermore, it was found that, in accordance with the hypothesis, the relationship between transformative leadership and commitment are significantly stronger than the relationship between transactional and laissez-faire leadership and commitment.

Consistent with our study, a study by Biggerstaff, (2012) found that transformational leadership style had significant positive relationship with job satisfaction, which increase commitment, while a passive style such as laissez-faire style, had a significant negative relationship with job satisfaction. Similar to the present study, previous studies (Yielder & Codling, 2004; Sowah, 2017) have found that the leadership style of principals can strengthen commitment and teamwork, efficiency, and the learning of new skills by teachers. For example, the research of Sowah, (2017) found that, despite the weak relationships between leadership and

commitment, there is a distinct and positive correlation between overall leadership and commitment. This means that the teachers' commitment is strengthened indirectly by promoting the leadership style of managers. This finding is consistent with Ahmadi's (2012) findings, showing that there is a strong correlation between managers' leadership and commitment. It was also found, that transformational leadership is more strongly correlated than transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership, with commitment (Bono & Judge, 2003), consistent with our research. However, the research of Sowah, (2017) is not similar with the research of Walumbwa & Lawler, (2005) who found a negative correlation between Laissez-faire leadership and affective commitment. This is explained by the fact that affective commitment is an internal commitment, and therefore is not affected by external factors, such as passive or negative leadership of the principal.

Other researchers found significant connections between transformational leadership and teachers' affective commitment (Leithwood & Day, 2008; Menon-Eliophotou, 2014; Leitwood & Sun, 2012). Oplatka (2010) adds that transformational leadership creates internal commitment among teachers due to the principal's cooperation support and accountability.

Furthermore, it was found that teachers' organizational commitment is correlated with job satisfaction, performance, and employees' turnover (Loi, Lai & Lam, 2011). The focus in teachers' researches was on affective commitment, which defines the employee's emotional involvement with the principal and the organization. Teachers who have high affective commitment level, invest considerable efforts in work, are involved and tend to stay at work more (Tsemach and Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2017; Hulpia & Devos, 2010; Shapira-Lischinsky & Even-Zohar, 2011).

This study emphasized, in a special way, the effectiveness of a transformational leadership style in school management. The research findings that found a connection between principal's transformational leadership style and teachers' commitment were also proven in previous studies of other populations (Hallinger, 2003). In light of the literature and the findings of the current study, which show that transformational leadership style affects the promotion and improvement of educational organizations, it is important that researchers continue to investigate effective and productive leadership styles in education. Although, many leadership styles are described in the research literature, this study focused on Bass and Avolio's three basic leadership styles (Bass, et al., 2003; Bass, 1985). Other leadership styles that are similar in their characteristics to transformational leadership style are: instructional leadership, integrative leadership, authentic leadership, and servant leadership. These leadership styles also emphasis teacher commitment, related to school improvement and student success (Neumerski, 2013) including school processes, student learning, teacher collaboration, empowerment and principal support (Louis et al., 2010; Supovitz et al., 2010; Hallinger, 2007; Avolio et al., 2009; Laub, 1999). Such leaderships styles are consistent with the school principal's educational responsibility to meet the needs and expectations of the school, students and teachers.

Limitations of the study

The sample in this study is not ethnically different and includes only an Arab population from a specific region of Israel. This fact does not allow the results to be generalized to another population. In addition, most of the teachers who received the questionnaires, refused to answer it for fear of revealing personal details, that could harm their work and career, or due to lack of time to complete the long questionnaires. These reasons, caused an extremely low response rate. Furthermore, the method of data collection in the study was based on self-report questionnaires, which may create a tendency towards social desirability bias, when respondents tend to give answers perceived by them as preferred by the researcher.

Implications for future research

Future research will include similar studies that will be done with different populations, to find out if different demographic data can affect the findings. In addition, personality and psychological variables can be included in future qualitative research, to understand whether they influence the principal's leadership style and teachers' commitment. studies using qualitative method, will enable to investigate the perceptions, beliefs and behaviors of teachers, referring to certain leadership styles. Also, it is recommended to carry out longitudinal studies, that will follow intervention programs dealing with effective educational leadership, and examine the changes that have occurred among participants over time.

The knowledge gained about certain leadership styles and their impact on teachers' commitment, will enable policy makers and educational administrators to optimize the choice and training of principals, according to their skills, strengths and weaknesses .

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